

The Basques

of Lapurdi, Zuberoa, and Lower Navarre:
Their History and Their Traditions

by Philippe Veyrin

With an Introduction by SANDRA OTT



Center for Basque Studies
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by

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Illustration 4, page 27. In Zuberoa, subterranean streams have carved real canyons through the limestone rocks—canyons that are splendid natural curiosities. The Ibarrezker (Val Senestre) contains the famous gorges of Kakueta.

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Illustration 25, page 155. “As they swept through, our men found that their route passed through a village of the aforesaid Ogerot de Saint-Pé, in which village [Senpere] the said de Saint-Pé had a moderately fortified house, enclosed by ditches.”

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Illustration 27, pages 182–83. The Ile de la Conférence (also known as Konpantzia in Basque and the Ile des Faisans in French), which had been splendidly decorated and brought to a pitch of perfection by Velasquez himself, was again the theater for scenes as brilliant as they were moving.

Illustration 28, page 186. The fort of Hendaia (Hendaye) and that of Sokoa (Socoa), hitherto rather rudimentary buildings, were reconstructed from top to bottom and assumed the powerful appearance that the second of them has preserved until the present day.

Illustration 29, page 188. The Haraneder house, the residence of Anne of Austria, where the Infanta Maria Teresa lodged for a few nights, is barely changed.

Illustration 30, page 196. The meetings were held out in the fields, near Ainhize-Monjolose (Ainhice-Mongelos), in the Galtzetaburu (Galcetaburu) pass. An old stone cross still marks the spot. Later, they preferred to meet at Irisarri (Irissarry) which is not much farther from the middle of Lower Navarre.

Illustration 31, page 206. If he had been content to build—as he later did—the pretty little château in his home village, to plans by Mansard (it still exists), the Captain de Troisvilles would not have left a bad memory behind.

Illustration 32, page 210. Vauban completed his work by improving the old fortifications of Donibane Garazi (Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port), but his plans were realized only very partially.

Illustration 33, pages 212–13. Map of *The French Basque Contry*.

Illustration 34, page 214. Up until then, the Baioneses had always wanted to assume the guardianship of their own city themselves, with the help of a few reserve soldiers in barracks in the Château-Vieux.

Illustration 35, page 215. For these passages, these sojourns of great personages, Baiona and Donibane Lohizune (Saint-Jean-de-Luz) laid out a great deal of money on honor guards, illumination, and in particular *pamperruques*, or processions of Basque dancers.

Illustration 36, pages 220–21. Baiona was judged worthy to appear in the series of “Great Ports of France” painted by Joseph Vernet.

Illustration 37, page 269. Only the techniques of composition and direction can give a vivid idea of the “Mysteries” of the Middle Ages, now that all other rural theaters have disappeared.

Illustration 38, page 297. The Basque priest, who possesses great authority over his flock, is a transcendental element in the physiognomy of the country.

Illustration 39, page 298. Among these priests, who are not above playing pelota, there has never been any lack of strong personalities.

Illustration 40, pages 302–3. It is in Zuberoa that we find the most original version of this primitive bell tower and facade: the crest of the wall is completed by three points that are said to represent the Trinity.

Illustration 41, page 304. And one is surely reminded of a theater by the monumental galleries of sculpted oak.

Illustration 42, page 307. Basque oratories look more like little houses whose doors, sheltered by deep awnings, allow one to glimpse, through their bars of painted wood, the image of a sculpted and illuminated saint.

Illustration 43, page 310. The Corpus Christi procession constitutes, especially in Lower Navarre, an exceptionally picturesque spectacle.

Illustration 44, page 334. With these strange works of funerary art, we come to one of the most ancient traditions in the Basque Country.

Illustration 45, page 338. For thirteen months, a woman comes every morning for mass to occupy the *yar lekhu*.

Illustration 46, page 344. *Rebot*, the finest, most complete, and most original of the Basque sports.

Illustration 47, page 345. Gantchiki Harotcha, a young lad from Senpere (Saint-Pée-sur-Nivelle), is credited with inventing, in 1857–8, a method for fixing little oval baskets in strips of chestnut to the wrist.

Illustration 48, page 353. “They sometimes dance with a long instrument which they place against their necks and then extend it down to near their belts, and beat it with a little stick.”

Illustration 49, page 359. The culmination of the whole display is always the successive dance of the first five roles around the wine-filled glass.

Illustration 50, page 360. The last great leap of the dazzling *Zamalzain*.

Illustration 51, page 362. The tumultuous and chaotic parade lasts an entire afternoon, since several dance interludes precede and interrupt the episodes of the judgment. It comprises a shimmering, strange spectacle in which the short spoken or mimed scenes are drowned out.

Illustration 52, page 365. The *pastorale* is performed solely by the boys (more rarely by the girls alone) of a single village, under an “organizer of *trageries*,” a director, stage manager, and prompt, often the author himself. At the conclusion victors and vanquished join forces to sing a chorus of thanksgiving.

Illustration 53, page 369. Many *etchekeo-andere* also use the *kaputch*a just to attend church services.

Illustration 54, page 372. “Marriageable daughters go around bareheaded, with their hair shaven off, and on their heads, even without a scrap of cloth or anything at all, they carry vessels and other quite heavy loads.”

Illustration 55, page 373. “As soon as they are married, they cover their heads with a hat made more or less like a cap or burgonet, yellow in color, and wrap it round so that it looks like a horn on their forehead.”

Illustration 56, page 378. The creation of the *makhila* owes a great deal to a whole line of craftsmen, the Ainciart, makers of distaffs, in Larressore (Larressore).

Illustration 57, page 382. Lapidary art is especially carried out for the sake of the ancestral house. The church also plays its part—a somewhat lesser one, admittedly—in this quest for artistic adornment. Here or there, sometimes a porch, sometimes a strange font reveal the hand and mind of a local craftsman.

Illustration 58, page 383. In Arberoa (Arbéroue) for example, a whole school of stone carvers splendidly decorated even the front of the humble charcoal stove, raised, it might be said, to the dignity of an altar to the household gods.

Illustration 59, page 385. But in the final analysis, it is the *hil harri*, “funerary stones,” that most completely attest to Basque artistic tendencies.

Note on Basque Orthography

The standard form to refer to the Basque language today is Euskara. However, both Euskera and (especially in Iparralde or the Basque Country in France) Eskuara are also used. Likewise, a standard rendering of the Basque Country today in Basque would be “Euskal Herria,” but here we also use “Eskual Herri” (a Basque variant) and the Basque Country.

Most English-language texts on the Basque Country have traditionally employed only the French and Spanish orthographic renderings of Basque place names. Here, in light of the standard Basque orthographic renderings of these same place names by the Basque Language Academy (Euskaltzaindia), we will endeavor to use these Basque versions, with an addition in parentheses of the French or Spanish equivalents on first mention in each chapter.

Some exceptions to this rule include the use of Navarre (Nafarroa in Basque, Navarra in Spanish) and Lower Navarre (Nafarroa Beherea in Basque, Basse Navarre in French); the hyphenated bilingual cases of Donostia-San Sebastián, Vitoria-Gasteiz, and Iruñea-Pamplona; and occasions where Veyrin specifically uses the French or Spanish place name variants to make a linguistic point. In the latter case, the Basque equivalents appear in parentheses after the French or Spanish place name. While we have preserved the original renderings of surnames, on occasion—where the surname clearly corresponds to a town or village—a Basque equivalent of these is provided in parentheses.

Additionally, on occasion we anglicize certain Basque terms, rather than use the original Basque, French, or Spanish terms themselves. Thus, for example, inhabitants of Zuberoa (Soule), instead of being rendered here as *Zuberotarrak* or *Xiberotarrak* (from the Basque alternative Xiberoa), or *Souletines* (in French), are described here as Zuberoans. Baiones and Baioneses is our anglicization of the “people of Baiona” (Bayonne) instead of *Baionesak* (Basque) or *Bayonnais* (French).

Occasionally, Veyrin cites words and phrases in Basque to make a point. We have preserved his original renderings, but where applicable added the standard modern Basque variants of these words and phrases in parentheses. For longer phrases—proverbs and sayings for example—we have maintained the original orthography used by Veyrin.

It should be noted that, for much of the period under study here, there was little consistency in the rendering of either place names or personal names in any of these languages—a fact of life that is apparent in a region of Europe where multiple cultures and identities overlap (In fact, Veyrin himself renders some place names in a mixture of French and Basque, although we have standardized the toponyms here.) We see such lack of consistency as a more flexible way of appreciating this diversity.

Introduction to the First English Edition

I first read Philippe Veyrin's classic work *Les Basques* in 1975, as I prepared to do fieldwork in the French Basque Country for my doctorate in social anthropology at Oxford. The book not only provided me with my first general overview of Basque history and culture but it also sparked my interest in the Basques of the easternmost province, Zuberoa, which I chose as the focus for my research and to which I have returned annually for the past thirty-four years. On the advice of William A. Douglass, coordinator of the Basque Studies Program at the University of Nevada, Reno, I contacted a French Basque scholar, Eugène Goyheneche, who recommended the borderland mountain community of Santazi as a fieldwork site and directed me to a Basque language school willing to tutor me in the Zuberoan dialect. He also took me to Santazi for the first time. Although I did not realize the connection at that time, Goyheneche had worked closely with Philippe Veyrin during the late 1940s, when both men actively participated in a newly created Basque research institute known as *Ikuska*, among other activities relating to the study of the Basque people, their language, history, and culture.¹

In 1962, when Veyrin died at the age of sixty-two, his former colleagues paid justifiably ample tribute to his work as an author, painter, and historian of the Basques. Goyheneche described Veyrin as “Basque by reciprocal adoption”: a committed “Bascophile” who had chosen the Basque Country as his lifelong home and whom many Basques likewise regarded as “one of their own.”² As Goyheneche also noted, Veyrin wrote *Les Basques* dur-

1. I am grateful to my colleague, Xabier Irujo, for having provided me with this information about Veyrin and Goyheneche.

2. Eugène Goyheneche, “Philippe Veyrin, historien,” *Gure Herria* (Baiona: July–August 1962), 205. The issue also commemorates Veyrin's longstanding involvement in and devotion to the Basque Museum in Baiona (Bayonne), as well as his close relations with other non-Basque “Bascophiles” such as Rodney Gallop and Violet Alford.

ing an extraordinarily tumultuous period in French Basque history. Veyrin started the manuscript in 1941, one year into the German occupation when many Catholic, politically conservative Basques still supported Marshal Pétain, and when Vichy propaganda about regionalism gave some Basques hope for a new ethnic status and a restoration of ancient rights under the regime.³ In the French Basque Country fractious debates sometimes took place about ethnic self-interests and the wisdom of cultivating relations with the Germans to further such interests.⁴ As the leading regional institutional base for Basque ethnic identity at the time, the Basque Museum in Baiona was ideally placed to publish the first edition of *Les Basques* in 1942, by which time many French citizens had lost faith in Pétain as their self-styled savior and had come to detest his deputy prime minister, Pierre Laval, architect of the deeply unpopular forced labor schemes in Germany and of the massive deportations of Jews from France to the east. A second edition of *Les Basques* appeared in 1943, as the French resistance began to gain strength under Charles de Gaulle; the Allies successfully invaded Sicily, and Mussolini fell.⁵ In order to place Veyrin's masterpiece in its proper historical and cultural context, I will trace the genesis of *Les Basques* to the relationship Veyrin formed during the interwar years with the founding director of the Basque Museum, William Boissel, who persuaded Veyrin to write his masterpiece.

Philippe Veyrin had a connection with the Basque Country from his earliest childhood. His family owned a vacation home in the coastal Basque town of Donibane Lohizune (St-Jean-de-Luz). When Veyrin was orphaned as a small child, his relatives entrusted him to the care of a Basque woman, Mlle. Theresa Okelar, a longstanding friend of the Veyrin family. Mlle. Okelar gave French lessons to young Veyrin and his English friend, Rodney Gallop, whose family spent winters in Donibane Lohizune. While Gallop took a keen interest in learning the Basque language, Euskara, young Philippe adamantly refused to learn Basque as a child because it was "the language of the kitchen," an attitude he later greatly regretted.⁶

3. James E. Jacob, *Hills of Conflict: Basque Nationalism in France* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1994), 106–107. Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order* (New York: Columbia University Press), 198.

4. Jacob, *Hills of Conflict*, 106.

5. Goyheneche, "Philippe Veyrin, historien," 206, 210. Goyheneche erroneously states that the book appeared in 1942.

6. Violet Alford, "Philippe Veyrin et ses amis anglais," *Gure Herria* (July–August 1962), 180. Veyrin did, however, go on to achieve an understanding of the language.

Veyrin completed his baccalaureate but was unable to undertake university studies owing to ill health. In preparation for entering the diplomatic service, Gallop enrolled at the University of Hamburg, where he studied both German and Basque. During university vacations, the two friends explored the Basque Country together. With a mutual interest in Basque culture, history, and popular art, they often collaborated on artistic and literary projects, for Veyrin was an accomplished artist as well as an author. Among other publications, he illustrated the cover of *Pays Basques de France et d'Espagne* (1951), which he co-authored with Gallop, who is best known for another classic work about the Basques, *A Book of the Basques*.⁷ Veyrin had other English friends who also specialized in Basque studies. In 1926, he met Violet Alford, a leading authority on Basque folklore, festivals, and folk dance. They often saw each other, and Gallop, at conferences and lectures held at the Basque Museum in Baiona.⁸

In 1948, Gallop died of an incurable illness contracted during the war. In 1977, I had the privilege of meeting his widow at her home in London. She shared her husband's passion for all things Basque and was delighted to hear about my own research. As a token of her appreciation, she gave me her late husband's set of prints by the Basque artist Ramiro Arrue, a mutual friend of Gallop, Veyrin, and Alford, and an admirer of Veyrin's beautiful paintings of Basque landscapes.

For thirty-three years Veyrin variously did research for the Basque Museum in Baiona, served on its advisory board, edited and contributed regularly to its journal (*Bulletin du Musée Basque*), donated his own works of art to its permanent collection, and greatly aided its founding curator, Commander William Boissel, his close friend and mentor. Their relationship played a formative role in the writing of *Les Basques*. As a young officer in the largely Basque and Gascon Forty-Ninth Infantry Regiment, Boissel had spent long periods of his military service in the Basque Country and thus had become well acquainted with the Basque people and their culture. On his retirement Boissel settled in Baiona and worked indefatigably to establish a Basque museum there. Veyrin first met Boissel in 1922, the year in which the retired officer finally overcame

7. *Ibid.*, 181–182.

8. *Ibid.*, 180. Miss Alford died in 1971, two years before I arrived in Oxford, where she spent much of her life. The Taylor Institution Library in Oxford has an impressive collection of her works and private correspondence.

numerous obstacles to the museum's foundation, including regional indifference to and skepticism about the project, which had been first conceived in 1908 but had been hindered by squabbling between Basques and Gascons in Baiona. In the wake of the Great War, both groups strongly resisted what they perceived to be a process of "deculturation" across France by establishing the *Musée Basque* in 1922 and the Gascon Academy (*l'Académie Gasconne*) in 1926, in an attempt to reaffirm their cultures and regional identities.⁹ Their concerns echoed a wider trend across France during the interwar years, when "sentimental rural nostalgia" often gave rise to folkloric revivals that exalted the peasant family and rural way of life as an "antidote to the decadent, abstract, rootless culture of the city masses."¹⁰

By 1922, at age twenty-two, Philippe Veyrin had already become a "Bascophile" and felt greatly honored to be asked by Boissel to help him create the museum's collection. Boissel traveled from village to village across the Basque Country seeking the assistance of notables, politicians, clergymen, teachers, artists, artisans, as well as ordinary rural folk whose farmhouses served as models for the museum's reconstructions of the Basque house.¹¹ Veyrin was the youngest in the group of advisors whom Boissel regularly consulted. In addition to Rodney Gallop and Violet Alford, the group included (among others) Georges Hérèlle, specialist in Basque popular theater; Henri Gavel, master philologist in the Basque language; and Louis Colas, the leading authority on Basque discoidal steles.¹² In 1924, Boissel dispatched Veyrin to seek the patronage of the Spanish Basque artist Ignacio Zuloaga, in the village of Zumaia. The artist graciously received him in his magnificent residence, Santiago Echea, and promised his support, which was not immediately forthcoming. Eight years later Boissel sent Veyrin a second time to see Zuloaga. As Veyrin recalled in 1959, "The great painter received me in his studio. Characteristically good natured, he welcomed my request for a simple sketch by giving me the marvelous charcoal drawing of a Basque that is today one of the museum's most important treasures."¹³

9. Josette Pontet, ed., *Histoire de Bayonne* (Toulouse: Privat, 1991), 226.

10. Paxton, *Vichy France*, 201.

11. Philippe Veyrin, "Souvenirs sur le Commandant Boissel et la création du Musée Basque de Bayonne," *Gure Herria* (July 1959), 5.

12. *Ibid.*, 8.

13. *Ibid.*, 12-13.

From 1926, the museum expanded its activities to include exhibitions by regional artists, as well as lectures and concert series that led to the creation of a “Center for Basque and Regional Gascon Studies” patronized by the University of Bordeaux. At the invitation of Violet Alford and the English Folklore Dance Society and with the sponsorship of the Basque Museum, dance groups from each of the seven historic Basque territories traveled to London in 1927 to perform for an enthusiastic audience. The trip was such a success that Boissel organized similar performances in Barcelona, Bucharest, and Paris, whose citizens “welcomed an evening of Basque folklore as a unique and charming novelty.”¹⁴

With civil war in Spain (1936–1939) and France’s war with Germany in 1939, the Basque Museum, its curator, William Boissel, and his advisors entered a new phase. Soon after mobilization was decreed in September 1939, Boissel adapted to the new circumstances by converting the ground floor of the Basque Museum into a “Foyer for Soldiers” and placing all rare and fragile museum pieces in storage. “Indisposed” during a visit to Biarritz, Marshal Pétain was unable to preside at the opening ceremony for the foyer. Nevertheless, the distinguished guests enjoyed Baiona chocolates served by museum staff, who “being Basques danced a fandango.”¹⁵ The foyer included a kitchen, dining hall, library, lecture hall, and game room for soldiers stationed on the Basque coast. In December 1939, Boissel asked the Minister of War in Paris to send lecturers to the museum “to combat the insidious propaganda being spread by the enemy.”¹⁶ According to Boissel, the foyer attracted an astonishing number of soldiers. On one occasion in February 1940, the foyer allegedly served sixty-two thousand refreshments, which the curator took to be “a sign of French generosity.”¹⁷

France’s sudden defeat by Germany ended with the signing of the armistice on June 22, 1940. Four days earlier in London, General Charles de Gaulle had delivered his celebrated call for resistance by the French people. The terms of the armistice divided France into an occupied zone and an unoccupied, so-called free zone that fell under the administration

14. *Ibid.*, 13.

15. William Boissel, “Du Musée Basque au Foyer du Soldat,” *Bulletin du Musée Basque* 18 (April 1939): 334–335.

16. Boissel, “Du Musée Basque au Foyer du Soldat,” 338. It is not known whether such lectures took place.

17. *Ibid.*, 343.

of the Vichy regime with the eighty-four-year-old “hero of Verdun,” Marshal Pétain, as prime minister. The occupied zone included the Atlantic coast, the industrial and heavily populated north, and the eastern frontier from the Alps to the Mediterranean. The Vichy zone included much of central and inland southern France. The line of demarcation separating these zones divided the French Basque Country into two parts. The Basque coastal province of Lapurdi (Labourd) and adjacent Lower Navarre fell within the occupied zone, while Zuberoa came under Vichy control.

German troops entered Baiona on June 27, 1940. The *Feldkommandantur* set up his headquarters in nearby Biarritz. Soon thereafter the Todt organization, charged with building fortifications along the Basque coast, established bases in Baiona and Biarritz and employed as many as 1,500 workers.¹⁸ In Baiona, the sub-prefect asked the citizenry to be prudent, well-behaved, and dignified; he also decreed that the “rights of the occupiers must be respected” and the rights of the French preserved. The occupiers at once restricted civilian circulation by imposing curfews and limiting movement between the occupied and unoccupied zones, which in turn quickly led to food shortages and rationing on the coast. Other shortages—of fuel, textiles, coal, wood, and paper—followed. The occupiers prohibited listening to foreign radio broadcasts, especially the BBC, though many people did so regularly and increasingly became subject to denunciation by their fellow citizens. French radio exhorted people to unite in support of Pétain’s National Revolution.

On July 5, 1940, one Catholic and one Protestant German chaplain went to the home of William Boissel and asked to visit the Basque Museum, which Boissel planned to reopen within two weeks. The Germans also wanted Boissel to help them organize a lecture series about the Basque Country. “We talked further,” Boissel noted in an article about the museum during the first weeks of the occupation, “and I profusely thanked those two young collaborators whose zeal and devotion enabled us to accomplish that not inconsiderable task [i.e., organizing the lecture series] in so little time. From the very first day [that the museum opened] and during the months that followed, visitors flocked to the museum, until the time when many refugees left our region.”¹⁹ Boissel went on to

18. Louis Poullenot, *Basses-Pyrénées, Occupation Libération, 1940–1945* (Biarritz: J&D Éditions, 1995), 28.

19. William Boissel, “Le Musée Basque en 1940,” *Bulletin du Musée Basque* 18 (1940): 361. It is unclear but likely that Boissel’s comment refers to Jews in the area. On September 27, 1940, the Germans forbade Jews in the Vichy zone to enter the occupied

name some of the visitors, including a French countess and the duchess of Gramont, whose family's history had been closely intertwined with that of Baiona for three centuries.

Vichy celebrated the past and exalted peasant folklore, a traditionalist approach that Boissel applauded.²⁰ In the autumn of 1940, the Basque Museum opened two new exhibition spaces, and its curator hoped for financial assistance from Vichy to repair the building's façade. As Boissel observed, "We received neither aid nor a word of encouragement from the previous government. We know that our current leader (Pétain) is a great friend of museums that foster, as we do, a passion for the regional way of life." Boissel also hoped "to satisfy the Marshal's other desire to see our diverse *pays* across France henceforth escape the industrial uniformity that imposes itself upon them more and more" and to adopt architectural styles that reflected the local "way of life, its traditions and tastes."²¹

It is not known whether the reopening of the Basque Museum during the first weeks of occupation was directly linked in any way to the Germans' longstanding interest in the Basques and their language, culture, and history.²² As chapter 5 of *Les Basques* shows, Veyrin was aware of that interest and familiar with the theory of one celebrated contemporary German linguist, Karl Bouda, that the Basque language and certain surviving languages of the Caucasus shared certain features in common. Professor of Caucasian and Basque languages at the University of Berlin and later at Erlagen, Bouda knew the militant young Basque scholar Eugène Goyheneche before the Second World War broke out. Bouda visited the French Basque Country on several occasions during the occupation.²³ It would be interesting to know whether Bouda ever met Philippe Veyrin and others closely associated with the Basque Museum.

zone. On October 3, Vichy passed the first of the "Jewish Statutes," which placed strict controls on the kind of jobs Jews could undertake.

20. Nicholas Atkin, *The French at War, 1934–1944* (Harlow, NJ: Pearson Education, 2001), 45.

21. Boissel, "Le Musée Basque en 1940," 364.

22. Veyrin, "Souvenirs," 15. Santiago de Pablo, "The Basque Country through the Nazi Looking Glass, 1933–1945," in *War, Exile, Justice, and Everyday Life, 1936–1946*, forthcoming (Reno: Center for Basque Studies). In the summer of 1942, however, the entire collection had to be put into storage, under German orders.

23. Acting as an intermediary, Bouda introduced Goyheneche to high-ranking Nazis during the war, including Dr. Werner Best, responsible for German military adminis-

Soon after the museum reopened in July 1940, the German military commander on the Basque coast issued his first warning to the civilian population following unspecified anti-German actions, which one Pétainist journalist described as “contemptible . . . not guided by noble sentiments.”²⁴ Certain journalists expressed their fears that the occupation endangered the Basque language, Basque customs, and way of life. William Boissel, however, did not share such concerns in 1940. He had “confidence in the Marshal” and felt certain that the Basque Country would retain its individuality and that its “essential characteristics would certainly not be altered.” In an article entitled “Why a new book about the Basques?” Boissel explained why, in 1941, he had asked his friend and colleague, Philippe Veyrin, to write *Les Basques*. Boissel argued that recent political and social upheavals in France during the collapse of the Third Republic called for a reexamination of values. Basque studies, he claimed, continued to make progress, and it was time “to make available a portrait of the Basques to all those who are curious to know more about or who love the most interesting, albeit smallest, *pays* in France, known throughout the world for its language, traditions, and virtues,” a *pays* that “arouses intellectual interest and commands respect.”²⁵

Initially, Boissel and Veyrin envisaged a simple school textbook but quickly saw the need for a much more detailed study. They recognized the challenges of publishing such a work in wartime France but regarded such challenges not as insurmountable but rather as “a stimulant” with which to “sweep away” the humiliation of defeat and “to reconstruct France.” They faced paper shortages, high labor costs, distribution problems, and high production costs. Yet Boissel remained confident of success in a time “of national recovery” under the Vichy regime. He belonged to a generation of politically conservative veterans of the Great War who held Marshal Pétain in high esteem, even when the celebrated “hero of Verdun” became increasingly unpopular, from 1941, for his policy of collaboration with Germany.

Boissel chose Philippe Veyrin to write a new book about the Basques because of his “cultivated manner and excellent powers of observa-

tration in all of France from July 1940 until July 1942. Jean-Claude Larronde, *Eugène Goyheneche* (Donostia: Eusko Ikaskuntza, 1989), 60.

24. Pontet, *Histoire de Bayonne*, 275

25. William Boissel, “Pourquoi un nouveau livre sur les Basques,” *Bulletin du Musée Basque* 20 (April 1941): 56–57.

tion . . .” Moreover, “having spent his entire life in the Basque Country, [Veyrin] possessed a close knowledge of all things Basque,” and was also well-placed as an artist to illustrate the book.²⁶ Boissel hoped that Basque youth, in particular, would enjoy this new work on their history and heritage. Young people, Boissel observed, were aware of the power and the role they had to play in the rebirth of France. The book would, he hoped, reinforce their sense of attachment to their own territory and link them to the character of the Basque people. According to Boissel, Veyrin was also well-placed to show how the “Basque race” has been preserved by its “strong traditions, by its faith . . . its language . . . its independent character . . . by boundaries that have not changed for centuries.”²⁷

The Basque Museum in Baiona published four hundred copies of Veyrin’s *Les Basques* in the spring of 1942, an inauspicious time. In March the Vichy regime sent the first French Jews to Auschwitz. By April, Pierre Laval had returned to power, with Marshal Pétain no more than an elderly figurehead whom Laval had pressed into granting him “dictatorial powers” to issue laws and decrees in order to further Franco-German collaboration.²⁸ In mid-November 1942, German and Axis forces occupied all of France. The German security and intelligence service (*Sicherheitsdienst*, the SD) established headquarters in the Béarnais capital, Pau, and set up satellite units in the “forbidden zone” along the Franco-Spanish border. The German Army (*Wehrmacht*) retained its bases in Baiona, Biarritz, and Donibane Lohizune on the Basque coast. By 1943, with an increasing number of young men refusing to work in Germany under Vichy’s obligatory labor scheme and joining organized resistance groups, German aggression against the civilian population became more widespread. By the end of 1943, the German authorities had deported more than one thousand people from that part of southwestern France.²⁹

In Baiona, the Basque Museum continued to sponsor lectures several times a month on aspects of Basque history and culture until April 1943, when the museum stopped publishing its bulletin; but before its cultural

26. *Ibid.*, 57.

27. *Ibid.*, 59. As a parallel achievement alongside Veyrin’s *Les Basques*, the Gascon Academy of Baiona planned to publish a handbook of the Gascon dialect spoken in Baiona that also appeared in 1942. William Boissel, “Un manuel sur le gascon de Baiona,” *Bulletin du Musée Basque*, no. 20, (1941), 72–74.

28. Paxton, *Vichy France*, 319.

29. Poullenet, *Basses-Pyrénées*, 149.

activities ceased the museum brought out the second edition of Philippe Veyrin's *Les Basques*, with a print run of two thousand copies that sold out almost immediately. According to William Boissel, some readers regarded the book with distrust, although he does not elaborate on the reasons underlying such a reaction. Most readers, however, reportedly received the book "warmly."³⁰ In his foreword, Veyrin explained that he sought not so much to describe as to explain the Basques and their land and, at every turn, to link the present with the past. The book is divided into three parts: the land and the people, the history of the Basques, and their traditions. In chapter 13 the author takes a sweeping overview of Basque history, from the French Revolution of 1789 to 1940. Very little space is devoted to the twentieth century. Veyrin notes the development of tourism on the Basque coast and the influx of outsiders and the prosperity they brought; he wonders whether the invasion of "summer visitors" at Basque resorts will have a negative effect on the "personality of the Basques." He finds, however, that the Basques were more aware of their ethnicity than ever before. Wars in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had given rise to an "ethnic fraternity" between Basques on both sides of the Franco-Spanish border. Yet Veyrin refers to the Spanish Civil War twice and only briefly. In his passing references to Spanish Basque nationalism, the author insists that the issue of "autonomy" is "out of place" among French Basques (including "adopted" Basques like Veyrin himself), whose "noble efforts have long aimed to safeguard the Basque language, literature and art as part of a properly Basque culture" that has resulted from "a worthy, perfectly legitimate regionalism." Understandably, given the times and the circumstances, in the first edition of the book Veyrin makes no reference to the Second World War or to the German occupation before moving on to his last section on Basque traditions. Interestingly, he makes no reference to Marshal Pétain either.

After his death in 1962, the Basque journal *Gure Herria* devoted an entire issue to the life and works of Philippe Veyrin as homage to the outstanding contributions he made to Basque studies over a period of forty years. Not all contributors agreed with some of the conclusions Veyrin reached, but all concurred that he had produced "the most complete work" on the Basques to date that had built upon the earlier folkloric study of the Basques by Francisque Michel, *Le Pays Basque*, and

30. William Boissel, preface to *Les Basques* by Philippe Veyrin (Bellegarde: SADAG, 1947 edition), 7.

the primarily ethnographic study made by Julio Caro Baroja in his *Los Vascos*.³¹

Shortly before Philippe Veyrin passed away, the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR), agreed to create a Basque Studies Program. Closely linked to that decision, Robert Laxalt laid the foundations for a library in Reno to support scholarly research about the Basques. During sabbatical leave in the Basque Country in 1961, Laxalt began to search for appropriate acquisitions for the proposed special collection. With the help of contacts such as Jean Haritschelhar, then director of the Basque Museum in Baiona, and Eugene Goyheneche, then professor of Basque Culture at the University of Pau, Laxalt had the good fortune to meet Veyrin, who had, during his lifetime, amassed a personal collection of more than one thousand, carefully selected volumes devoted to Basque studies. Gravely ill when he met Laxalt, Veyrin granted UNR the first opportunity to buy the collection from his estate. In 1967, through the efforts of Laxalt and the newly appointed coordinator of the Basque Studies Program, William A. Douglass, UNR purchased the outstanding collection as the basis for a Basque Studies Library, which has long been recognized as the most important resource on the Basques outside the historic Basque territories in southwestern France and northern Spain.³² In the late 1960s, the Basque bibliographer Jon Bilbao negotiated with Veyrin's widow to acquire what remained of his personal papers, for according to Mme. Veyrin, her husband had ordered the destruction of his correspondence when he passed away. Mme. Veyrin kindly donated the only surviving documentation—primarily folders of his research notes—to the Basque Studies Library. Those notes had served as the basis for *Les Basques*.

In the late 1960s, under the direction of Robert Laxalt, the University of Nevada Press decided to establish a Basque Book Series with William A. Douglass acting as editor. Laxalt and Douglass wanted the first three books in the series to be classical overviews of the Basques and chose Rodney Gallop's *A Book of the Basques*, which first appeared in 1930; *Los Vascos* by Julio Caro Baroja; and *Les Basques* by Philippe Veyrin. Owing to the high cost of translating the latter two books and to difficulties with publishing rights, Laxalt and Douglass launched the

31. Translated as *The Basques* (Reno: Center for Basque Studies, 2009).

32. William A. Douglass, "El Programa de Estudios Vascos de la Universidad de Nevada Reno: Historia, Principales Actividades y Proyectos," *Revista Internacional de los Estudios Vascos* 32, no. 1 (January–June 1987): 158.

Basque Book Series with Gallop's book, which had long been out of print. In 2001, the Center for Basque Studies (as the Basque Studies Program became known) started to publish its own books about the Basques and launched the CBS Press, which published the first English translation of Caro Baroja's *Los Vascos* in 2009. More than forty years after the creation of the Basque Book Series, the CBS Press is now proud and pleased to publish the first edition of Philippe Veyrin's *Les Basques* in English translation for the first time.³³

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33. Jon Bilbao, "La Biblioteca Vasca de la Universidad de Nevada Reno," *Revista Internacional de los Estudios Vascos* 32, no. 1 (January–June 1987): 167. In the edition of *Les Basques* published in 1975, Jean Haritschelar added a postscript to Veyrin's work in which he examined some of the socioeconomic, political, and cultural changes that had taken place in the Basque Country during the first half of the twentieth century, with special reference to the particularly rapid rate of change since the end of the Second World War.

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The Basques

of Lapurdi, Zuberoa, and Lower Navarre
Their History and Their Traditions

by

Philippe Veyrin

Preface

This book was published in Baiona (Bayonne) by the *Musée Basque* (Basque Museum) in 1943, in a print run of just two thousand copies that were sold out in a few weeks, and became impossible to find within a few months. It was greeted warmly by most readers but with a certain distrust by others, whether authentic Basques or notorious “specialists” in Basque affairs, who were wary of the facile literature, superficial documentation, and fantastical theories to which *Eskual Herri* has all too often lent itself. In the end, it was appreciated by everyone. The *grand prix* Gustave Schlumberger, awarded by our neighbors in Béarn, came as recognition of its merits. The president of the jury that awarded the prize was M. Adrien Blanchet, *Membre de l’Institut*, and the other members were MM. Joseph Calmette, *Membre de l’Institut*, honorary professor at the University of Toulouse; Paul Courteault, *Correspondant de l’Institut*, honorary professor of the *Faculté des Lettres* of Bordeaux; René Vallois, *Correspondant de l’Institut*, professor at the *Faculté des Lettres* of Bordeaux; Henri Gavel, professor of the *Faculté des Lettres* of Toulouse; and Paul Orliac, professor at the *Faculté de Droit* of Toulouse.

These eminent specialists thereby demonstrated their full agreement with general opinion, and the reasons for the book’s success are clear.

They are to be found, first and foremost, in the subject itself. Rare are the regions of France, as has often been said, which possess—with so much charm—more diverse aspects, more varied ways of life, or more ancient traditions, and which raise more inextricable and alluring problems of both race and language.

This attractive and many-sided subject was one that Philippe Veyrin was particularly fitted to discuss. He can place his artistic temperament at the service of a cultivated and precise mind. He has been a fellow worker at the *Musée Basque* since its foundation; he is an excellent observer, having spent all his life in the Basque Country, and he has an accurate and extensive knowledge of the area. He keeps his knowledge constantly

up to date, with the help of his numerous friends; few books are published, few events occur, few new tendencies arise between the Ebro and the Adour without his being informed of them in one of his studious retreats, where he judiciously sifts out what deserves to last.

His book sums up the most well-founded and the most recent discoveries in Basque studies, as well as describes the life that is currently led in our three provinces; finally, he clearly sets out the questions that still need to be answered. He thus offers us that overall view that needs to be taken from time and time and which, as we wrote in 1943, could soon be useful, both to those whose mission it will be to reorganize France, and to those who will be the raw material of this reorganization.

So a rapid new printing of this work was highly desirable; it was being demanded on every side. But too many obstacles, and too many difficulties, condemned us to a period of waiting, if not inactivity. These obstacles have finally been overcome and we now have a free hand.

The hour is ripe. It so happens that our Basque Country, preserved as if by miracle during these last tragic years, has not been affected by the blows that threatened it from every side and might have reduced it to ruin. The dangers it has faced will eventually be described in detail later. But the land is still materially intact and has maintained its identity as much as could be hoped for after all the events that seemed designed to upset its balance. So we are fully entitled to believe that, when the times are right, its ever-mobile population will increase even more rapidly than in the past. Many of those who stop off in the Basque Country, coming as in bygone days from all corners of the world, will not remain content—as experience has proved—with making superficial contact with it; rather, yielding to its allure, they will wish to know it on a deeper level. This book will help them in this task, and we are delighted, for all these reasons, to be able to present a new edition of it today.

—W. Boissel
Baiona, 1947

Foreword

This book is, first and foremost, a history book; it sets out less to paint or to describe—as has already been done successfully by others—than to try and explain the Basques and their land. In writing these pages, my main preoccupation has at every turn been to link the present to the past, to show the bond between the sites of *Eskual Herri* and the grandiose or tiny events that occurred there, and the ancient or relatively recent traditions that have partly survived.

More favored than my predecessors, I have been able to base this overall view on a multitude of remarkable works, which—especially since the start of the twentieth century—have almost entirely reshaped our knowledge of this enticing subject.

The limits that were assigned to me—already quite generous for a single volume—do not extend beyond the French Basque Country; however, I urge the reader to remember that this is but a very small part of a bigger ethnic, linguistic, and cultural whole, whose heartland lies beyond our borders, in the mountains of Navarre and Gipuzkoa.

Baiona (Bayonne), on the other hand—which, with its immediate surroundings, forms an advanced bastion of Gascony—has found a place in many chapters of my book. This should come as no surprise. While it is true that the union of the Basque Country with this small provincial capital has often been stormy, the fact remains that, from this very antagonism, the enduring web of a long shared history has been woven. Basically, Basques and Baioneses, who both are to be understood in the light of their differences, have always been pitted against other: their separate interests and points of view are those that, always and everywhere, set town dwellers against country dwellers. Questions of race and language seem never to have occupied more than a subsidiary place in them. In fact, Baiona—and this, perhaps, is its greatest attraction—has remained through the centuries the point of contact and of fusion between two languages and two temperaments. The most Gas-

con of its children find it difficult to deny a certain quantity of Basque blood. On the other hand, we know how the massive and continuous contribution made by Romance languages to the vocabulary of Euskara currently constitutes one of the main reasons for the interest that linguists are taking in Basque studies.

As far as the numerous words or phrases in Basque incorporated into this work are concerned, I have followed the modern, simple, and practical orthography adopted by the publishers of *Eskualduna* and *Gure Herria*—with the exception of quotations from ancient texts, or a few words, such as *Bilçar*, whose form is consecrated by traditional use in historical documents. Furthermore, when I have introduced Basque words into one of my sentences, I have—on the advice of Basque specialists—written them without any grammatical markers, such as plural forms. Any reader unfamiliar with Basque grammar should bear this in mind. So I have not modified the endings of words such as *eskualdun* and *pilotari*, even when the words are to be taken in the plural.

Habent sua fata libelli. If I may be permitted, before I leave this book to make its own way in the world, I would like to thank all those who have helped me to iron out some of its imperfections. The table of illustrations provides the names of the photographers—professional or amateur—who have contributed their talents to enriching this volume with evocative and picturesque images; in particular, M. Pierre M. Moreau has been an especially constant and efficient collaborator. The map of the French Basque Country, including the main place names mentioned in the work, was drawn with care and taste by M. Maurice Haulon. As for the text itself, MM. Pierre Dop, Martin Elso, Louis Dassance, Léon Vaslin, and the erudite ethnologist and prehistorian M. l'Abbé Barandiaran, have kindly read various chapters and communicated their judicious observations to me. I owe a particular mention to Commander Henry Dop, who had the friendly patience to review my entire manuscript, with a conscientiousness and competence to which I gladly pay homage. Two eminent masters, whose names will be familiar to all interested in Basque studies, have also agreed—in spite of their own important occupations—to acknowledge my work: I am deeply grateful to Professor Paul Courteault of the Faculté des Lettres of Bordeaux and to Professor Henri Gavel of the Faculté des Lettres of Toulouse, both for their invaluable remarks (from which I derived great profit), and for the highly favorable assessments they made of this modest work as a whole. Their justified approval will remain, for me, the best reward imaginable. Finally, I cannot omit from this list the name of

my friend Commander Boissel, the curator of the Musée Basque; he had the first idea for this book, persuaded me to write it, and has made it his responsibility to see it into print.

—Philippe Veyrin
Irisarri, March 1942

P.S. —The present edition, whose typography and illustrations have been revised, has made possible a more complete updating of the text than all the previous versions. It has drawn on the most recent research, as well as the observations that the most highly qualified people have been kind enough to communicate to me. The bibliography at the end of the book has also been revised to take into account progress in Basque studies over the last ten years.

Donibane Lohizune, January 1955

Part I

The Land and Its People

Contours — Soil and Subsoil — Mountains and Rivers

Contours

What is the Basque Country? On this point, the genius of the people as materialized in language came up with a definition that scholars reached only gradually and much later. In fact, a Basque calls his own language *Euskara* or *Eskuara*.¹ He calls himself *eskualdun*, an abbreviation of *Euskara-dun*, “the person who possesses *Euskara*.” The region he inhabits is the *Eskual Herri*, “the land of *Euskara*.” This latter designation has ceased to apply exactly to a significant part of the territory south of the mountains (Navarre, Gipuzkoa [Guipúzcoa], Bizkaia [Vizcaya], and Araba [Alava]) where the age-old language has long been in continuous retreat, but it turns out to be still perfectly adequate for the French Basque Country: the linguistic borders of Lapurdi (Labourd), Lower Navarre, and Zuberoa (Soule) have remained pretty much constant, and still coincide, more or less, with the historical limits formed in the Middle Ages.

Let us have a look at the map: at the extreme southwest point of France, forming strips of territory that run more or less parallel to the Atlantic coast, our three little regions present, overall, a certain natural geographical unity, due mainly to the combined influence of the northern flank of the Pyrenees and the proximity of the Atlantic.

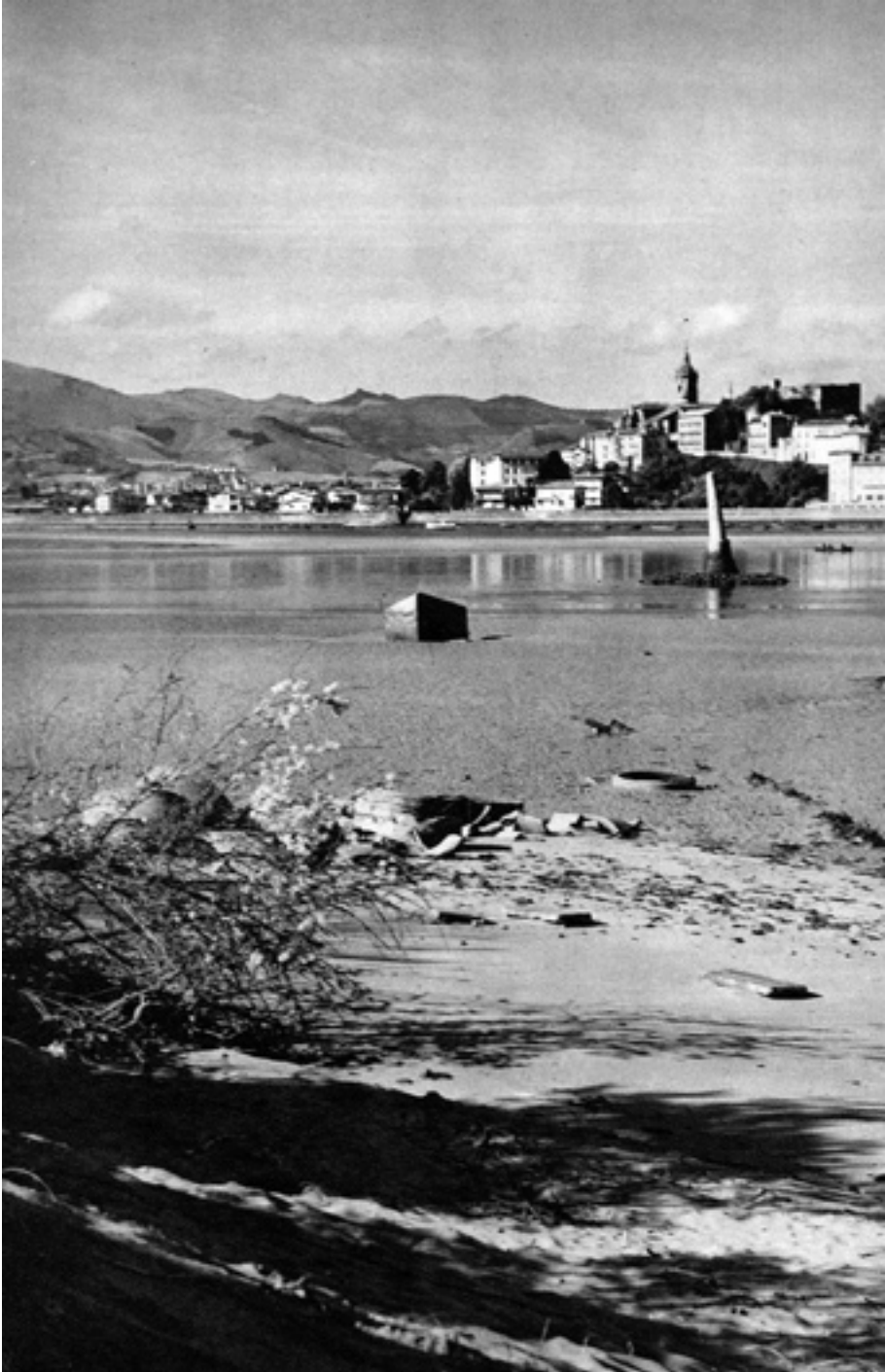
Framed on the west by the sea shore that extends from the estuary of the Aturri (Adour) to that of the Bidasoa, and on the east by the mountains overlooking the right bank of the Uhaitzandi (Saison) to the

1. Please see the Note on Basque Orthography on page XIII for a discussion of the Basque usages in this book.

south, the French Basque Country stretches right down to the border with Spain. This border in theory follows the sinuous curve of the watershed, but with several bends that international treaties, since the treaty of 1659, have continually endorsed. It is first and foremost the course of the Bidasoa itself that, along its last seven or eight miles, acts as a boundary between the two states. This is rather what one would expect. What is more surprising is the existence of two Spanish enclaves in the upper valleys of the Urdazuri (Nivelle) and the Errobi (Nive) of Arnegi (Arnéguy). One is in Lapurdi, where Zugarramurdi and Urdazubi (Urdax) advance into the French basin of Ainhoa-Sara (Sare), while, geographically speaking, the border ought to cross over the Maya Pass. The other is in Lower Navarre, and is a deeper gash that, coming over the Ibañeta Pass (Garazi [the Ports de Cize] of the *Song of Roland*), descends on the French side via Luzaide (Valcarlos) as far as the bridge at Arnegi (Arnéguy). On the other hand, it is in France that, on the southern flank, the highest course of the Irati (Iraty) River lies. Finally, around Aldude (Aldudes), there is the Kintoa (Basque —ed.), Pays Quint (French —ed.), or Quinto Real (Spanish —ed.), a region of pastureland and woods that was long the object of bloody struggles between the inhabitants of the Erroibar Valley (Valle del Erro) and those of Baigorri (Baïgorry). In this respect, the treaty signed in Baiona (Bayonne) on December 2, 1856, at the instigation of Empress Eugénie, established a division of territory more favorable to the Spanish—mitigated, admittedly, by a system of undivided possession, with an annual rent being paid by the French valley.

To the north and east, the French Basque Country is completely contained within the ample curve traced, in their successive encounters, by the Gave d'Oloron, the Gave de Pau, and the Aturri, but it falls far short of their banks. In fact, it is an ideal line that joins Lehuntze (Lahonce) in Lapurdi to Montori (Montory) between Atharratze (Tardets) and Oloron: it passes through Ahurti (Urt) and Bardoze (Bardos), bends as far as Arrueta (Arraute) and Martxueta (Masparraute), picks up again to the north of Donapaleu (Saint-Palais) as far as Arboti (Arbouet), and comes down again via Arberatze (Arbérats), Domintxaine (Domezain), Etxarri (Etcharry), and Arüe (Aroue) to Sarrikota (Charritte). On the other bank of the Uhaitzandi, Ürrüstoi (Arrast), Mitikile (Moncayolle, l'Hôpital), and Ospitalepea (L'Hôpital-Saint-Blaise), then the salient formed by Barkoxe (Barcus) and Eskiula (Esquiule), all mark out the borders of Béarn. All these localities are entirely Basque in language, apart from Ahurti and Bardoze at one extremity and Montori at the other—these have become more than half Gascon or Béarnais.





Before the French Revolution, political limits coincided almost exactly with those of the language; however, the villages of Gixune (Guiche) and Jeztaze (Gestas), where only Gascon and Béarnais are spoken, fell within Lapurdi in the former case and Zuberoa in the latter. On the other hand, Eskiula, a purely Basque commune, seems always to have belonged to Béarn.

Within the actual Basque territory as defined by these boundaries, the Gascon vernacular made several significant inroads, not recently but right back at the start of historical times. The most important of these concerns the territory of Baiona-Angelu (Anglet)-Biarritz, which tends to bilingualism. Farther to the east, on the borders of Lapurdi and Lower Navarre, Bastida (Labastide-Clairence, whose name is a reminder that it was fully populated by the start of the fourteenth century, probably by emigrants from Rabastens in Bigorre), constitutes another advance on the part of the Romance dialect of Gascon. In addition, in the Béarnais canton of Aramits (Baretous Valley), place names, and sometimes the physical appearance of human beings, too, seem to attest to an ancient withdrawal of Euskara.

In the shape they occupied until 1789, the historical contours that divide the French side of the Basque Country into three very distinct regions (“*pays*”—we are deliberately avoiding the word “province,” which was never used to designate them in the *ancien régime*) are less arbitrary than at first appears.

The “Païs de Labourd” or Lapurdi (74,152 hectares) is, basically speaking, the undulating, western coastal zone that includes the valley of the Urdazuri and the lower course of the Errobi, and is limited approximately by the Behotegi (Joyeuse) on the east. Apart from Baiona (an economic, religious, and intellectual capital, albeit one that has almost always led an independent administrative existence), Lapurdi formed a single block, with some forty or so parishes, without subdivisions.

Toward the east, Zuberoa (the “Païs de Soule”; 75,345 hectares) is simply the valley of the Uhaizandi, narrow and elongated. From south to north one could distinguish—with districts corresponding to reasonably clear natural divisions (high mountain terrain, forest, and plain)—three “*messengeries*”: Basabürüa (Upper Soule, Haute-Soule in French, also Soule Subiran and Basaburia —ed.) formed by the Ibarresküin (Val Dextre) and the Ibarrezker (Val Senestre); Arbailak (Les Arbailles); and Pettarra (Lower Zuberoa or Barhoue or La Basse-Soule in French —ed.)—all in all, some sixty or so parishes, some of them really tiny.

Between these two small “*pays*,” geographically quite highly defined, lies Lower Navarre (126,366 hectares; Nafarroa Beherea in Basque, Basse-Navarre in French —ed.), the former Merindad de Ultra Puertos (transmontane county —ed.) of a real Pyrenean kingdom that is much less homogenous. It is bigger and more uneven in relief, and was indeed formed, toward the end of the twelfth century, from several small groups of territory that even in our day have kept a certain individual physiognomy: the valleys of Baigorri (Baïgorry), Ortzaize (Ossès), Landibarre (Lantabat), and the *pays* of Garazi (Cize) and Amikuze (Mixe), Arberoa (Arbéroue), Oztibarre (Ostabarret), and Irisiarri (Irissarry). Altogether there were a hundred or so parishes that, since Henry IV, justified the right of the kings of France to call themselves kings of Navarre also.

The reason for dwelling somewhat on these geographical entities is that we will be meeting them again and again. A very diverse historical life shaped each of them individually, and made them into living realities for the Basques, in the face of which neither *département*, nor *arrondissement*, nor canton have ever been able to prevail. The administration itself still recognizes several of these designations, in the shape of intercommunal syndicates, in both forest and pastoral areas, which continue to coincide with the ancient subdivisions of the region.

Soil and Subsoil

Not all that long ago, a somewhat clearer view of the extreme complexity of the geological features characterizing the Basque Pyrenees was reached.

The soil of the Eskual Herri, with its layers of very diverse nature and age, turns out in fact to be just as fragmented in its structure as in its relief. Thus it differs from the relatively simpler and more recent terrains that border it to the north—the tertiary plains of the Aturri, sprinkled here and there with the quaternary sand of the Landes.

Generally speaking, three successive features have contributed to shaping the overall physiognomy of the whole range of the Pyrenees.

In the Primary era, there was a first rise of land, the *Hercynian folds*.

In the Secondary, on the northern edge of that ancient range, worn down by erosion, there was an extensive furrow, a vast submarine ditch, where thick masses of sediment would accumulate.

Finally, during the Tertiary, the *Pyrenean folds*, which, again lifting up the deep masses of the old Hercynian structure, enabled them to play

a major role. As the land was folded, these cores of very hard primary rocks acted like the jaws of a vice, and pinched and pulverized the ragged sedimentary rocks covering them, as these were more tender and easier to deform. Hence the brittle, tectonic style proper to the Pyrenees, very different from the great horizontal folds and the vast layers of overthrust of the Alpine folds.

The structure of the Basque Pyrenees is not essentially different from that of the rest of the range: it is just less simple and not as easy to interpret. In the central Pyrenees, we have a primary axial zone that is wide and high, rising up uniformly like a dam, shedding quite regular longitudinal bands of secondary sediments to either side: Triassic, Jurassic, and Cretaceous. This symmetrical arrangement completely disappears to the west of the Vallée d'Aspe. In the vicinity of the Pic d'Anie (Auñamendi in Basque —ed.), a younger surface—which coincides with the gradual decline in altitude—covers the central crest almost entirely.

The Hercynian shelf, half submerged under this secondary covering, reappears shortly afterward in the Basque Country, but does not form a continuous axis. One can distinguish, often straddling the frontier and ramifying in the most diverse directions, the Hercynian massifs of Iguntze (Igouze) and Irati (Iraty), of Aldude-Kintoa, of the Bortziriak (Cinco-Villas, an area in Navarre —ed.), of Lapurdi, and of Mount Larrun. A very pronounced fragmentation of the secondary terrains, and the intense effects of crushing, can be observed on their periphery.

This profoundly disjointed geological structure conditioned the surface relief: “the hydrographic network was scooped out in the most capricious way: deep valleys, hemmed in by mountains, run through the massifs and divide them into a great number of isolated peaks—secondary ranges lying every which way, where it is impossible to make out any major cuts or define any principal ranges” (P. Lamare).

This brief schematic description enables us to explain the extreme variety of the terrains that are, in our part of the world, discontinuously superposed or juxtaposed.

Where the old Hercynian core emerges—more or less exposed by the erosion of unresisting sediments—there appear the hardest cristallo-primary rocks: granites of Luhuso (Louhossoa), quartzites of Arrokarai (Arrokagaray) and Mondarrain, gneiss of Urtsua (Ursouia), and so on. At the periphery of the primary mountains, other resistant materials often predominate: Permian puddingstone and, in particular, reddish or purplish permotriassic sandstones. Both are also found in Haute-Savoie

and Irati as well as on the crests of Iparla near Baigorri, at the Arradoi (Arradoy), at Hartzamendi and mount Larrun.

Of the three great subdivisions of the secondary, the Cretaceous terrain in the Basque Country is much more significant than its predecessors, both in mass and in extent. The Jurassic in particular, although frequently associated with the marbles of the Lower Cretaceous, occupies only a small area.

The limestones of the Spanish side (belonging to the Upper Cretaceous), between the Pic d'Anie (Añamendi) and Orhi (the Pic d'Orhy), form the high plateaus of Zuberoa: white, chalky ground, with deep gorges and vertical canyons running through them, such as those of Holtzarte (Holçarté) and Kakueta (Kakouetta). Between Zuberoa and Lower Navarre, the limestone plateau of Ahuski (Lower Cretaceous) is another example of a much-fissured limestone zone.

Fertile and populous depressions—such as the Atharratze (Tardets), Donibane Garazi (Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port), Baigorri, Ortzaize, and Sara basins—are generally cut either out of the Higher Triassic, or out of Cenomanian flysch.

The aspect of flysch—a set of terrains that are in turn schist-marl, sandstone, sand, or limestone, also including conglomerates in places—is also the main constituent of the lower area of Lapurdi and the region of Amikuze. All this soil, belonging to the Upper Cretaceous, was made markedly hilly by the aftershock of the uplift of the Pyrenees. From Hendai (Hendaye) to Biarritz, the cliffs of the Basque coast show, in cross section, the many different variants of this formation; to the north of the Bay of Donibane Lohizune (Saint-Jean-de-Luz), the schists, literally folded over themselves, are a remarkable demonstration of the extent of the upheavals of the Tertiary.

One last characteristic feature of Basque soil, especially in its less elevated levels, derives from the numerous outcrops of an eruptive rock: ophite. These intrusions of ophite are almost always associated with outcrops of the Upper Triassic or Keuper: brightly streaked marls, sometimes found together with gypsum and beds of rock salt, like the one exposed at Milafranga (Villefranche), Urketa (Urcuit), and Beskoitze (Brisconsin).

This sketch, in its very diversity, gives the reader an inkling of the mining wealth of the Basque subsoil; but also of the great number of geological faults, which lead to the discontinuous nature of the seams, comprising a serious obstacle to the possibilities of large-scale industrial mining. In fact, in the area of Baiona, metallurgy is now represented only

by the blast furnaces of the Bokale (Boucau). These, usually fueled by Bizkaian or North African ore and British coal, hardly need to draw on regional resources. Only the closely related export of mining posts from the Landes allows the freighters to return with any load. So what we have here is a type of industrial establishment highly representative of the liberal, free-trade economy of the nineteenth century.

In bygone days, the situation was completely different. Deposits—mainly of iron, but also of copper or even of silver-bearing lead—meant that the Basque Country was covered with a multitude of small metallurgical enterprises of which many material traces remain (abandoned galleries, slag heaps) or toponymic indications (*olha* “forge,” and its compounds: Olhabide, Olhagaray, Olhette, Ondarola, etc.). These iron works, situated on the common land of villages and providing a subsidiary livelihood for the peasants, were doubtless limited to local needs. Always built at the edge of water, near both the ore and the woods from which they took their fuel, the early forges were Bizkaian in type, analogous to those which Fr. Larramendi described so eloquently in the eighteenth century, in his *Corografía de Guipúzcoa* (Geography of Gipuzkoa).

The origin of most of these ironworks is to be found back in the mists of time. It is not absolutely certain that the significant ancient workings found in Baigorri and Ainhoa, for example, were due to the Romans. One fact is undeniable: in 1289, Edward I of England wrote: “we have authorized Brasco de Tardets, the bailiff of our land in Lapurdi, to establish in the aforesaid land blacksmiths and workers manufacturing iron, conceding to them in our name the right to take wood for their work from our forests and timberlands . . . in return for a definite and annual revenue agreed with them to our advantage” (Gascon Rolls II no. 1215). Other sovereigns also took an interest in the Basque subsoil. Henry II of France thought he could mine gold in Lapurdi. In 1555, Henry II of Navarre granted to Baigorri the privilege of a copper forge. But it was in the eighteenth century that—as state orders periodically stimulated production—two of our modest mining centers experienced a sort of apogee, albeit a rather provisional one. In Zuberoa, the forge of Lorraine (Larrau), which belonged to the Baron d’Uhart, transformed the ores of the rural district and the surrounding deposits of Hauze (Haux), Etxebarre (Etchebar), and Bostmendieta near Lakarri (Lacarry). Although it enjoyed a quite regular production of 1,200 hundredweight (of admittedly only modest repute), the business was already going downhill by around 1785.

In Lower Navarre, the forge of Etxauz (Echaux) belonged half to the viscount and half to the Baigorri Valley. This ancient enterprise—sometimes quite active in times of war—produced many cannons and cannonballs for the navy, both to equip the corsairs of Baiona and to arm the merchant vessels of the Real Compañía Guipuzcoana de Caracas (Royal Gipuzkoan Company of Caracas).

In this same region, another factory, of substantial size for the period, and not exactly a competitor but, rather, a complementary outfit (since it treated mainly copper), had been set up midway between the town of Baigorri and Aldude. In 1728 a Swiss man named M. Beugnières de la Tour, obtained from Louis XV the right to prospect in our region. His unfocused, tentative quest produced no decisive results until 1745, when, on the trace of ancient workings, the discovery of the seam known as the Three Kings, in the mountain of Astoescoria, made the business viable. From 30 tonnes/29.5 tons in 1747, annual copper production rose to 120 tonnes/118 tons in 1760. M. de la Tour was succeeded by his grandson, M. de Meuron. Around 1776, when production started to drop, the latter sold the enterprise off to a company that also acquired the noble house of Chateauneuf, granting a right of entry to the Estates of Lower Navarre. One can still see, near Banka (Banca)—a small town that owes its origin to this business—the still imposing ruins of “La Fonderie” (the Foundry), as it was known. One of the major difficulties confronting La Fonderie, as well as the forge at Etxauz, toward the end of their careers, was the potential lack of fuel, which cast a serious shadow over the future; this provoked rivalry and dark intrigues to obtain the use of the forest of Haira (Hayra), the last great reserve of wood in the valley. The revolution put an end to this competition by ruining both establishments. Attempts to reopen the works at Banka in 1823 and 1873 were largely unsuccessful. At various periods in the nineteenth century, the old deposits at Sara and Ainhoa were reopened, apparently without much profit. On the other hand, the siderite mine at Ustelegi (Ustelleguy; near Arrosa or Saint-Martin-d’Arrossa), set up in 1908, was producing 20,514 tonnes/20,190 tons of ore two years later. The 1914 war finally halted the activity of this enterprise, for all its encouraging results. Will new techniques soon be able to resuscitate all these abandoned seams? It is not out of the question.

Meanwhile, mining for ophite—which is excellent for macadamizing roads—has replaced the extraction of metals in Baigorri. There are many other quarries. The stone of Bidaxune (Bidache; grey limestone) still comes down the Aturri to Baiona on barges. Production of millstones

out of the hard and richly colored sandstones of the Arradoi, Bidarraï (Bidarray), and Sara has now practically ceased, but they are prized more than ever by architects. Our peasants still know how to build and operate the little ovens for calcining lime that are later found, extinguished, and overrun by brambles, in all the more deserted areas of the Basque countryside. Anthracite has been dug in Sara. There are several gypsum quarries, and plaster is manufactured at Sara and Urruña (Urrugne).

The factory at Ezpeleta (Espelette), which, in the nineteenth century, provided the porcelain paste for the great Bordeaux manufacturer Vieillard and David Johnston, has not survived; but the deposits of kaolin and feldspar discovered in 1834 near Luhuso are still among the best in France and have not ceased production.

However, the saltworks at Ugarre, at Aintzila (Aincille) near Donibane Garazi, has vanished. This had been an original small shareholding company run by the masters of the twenty-nine ancient houses of the town. Unfortunately, the latter were not always able to preserve their shares as well as did the people of Salies-de-Béarn. In Zuberoa, the salt source at Gamere-Zihiga (Camou-Cihigue) is as yet unworked. These days, rock salt is still extracted, if not at Milafranga, at least at Mugerre (Mouguerre), Urketa, and Beskoitze. A special canal system brings the water from this latter deposit to the thermal salt baths at Biarritz.

In addition, our thermal waters are rather few and far between. This is not for lack of several salutary springs that, from time immemorial, have drawn the Basques at certain times of the year (the night of Midsummer's Day in particular) and in accordance with certain traditional rites; but this is more of a matter for folklore specialists. Nonetheless, the sulfur springs of Kanbo (Cambo) were once the favorites of the inhabitants of Baiona, and Queen Marie-Anne of Neubourg (the heroine of *Ruy-Blas*, by now old and exiled) was not averse to taking the cure there. Nowadays, just the air of Kanbo is enough to cure consumptives; the thermal baths are inactive. The spring of Ahuski, up in the mountains (it can be reached on mule-back from Altzürükü [Aussurucq] or Mendibe [Mendive]) possesses diuretic virtues that were highly appreciated, it is said, by Marshall Harispe. This fountain is still just as fashionable, in spite of its rudimentary comforts—but only among authentic Basques.

Mountains and Rivers

There is not a hump in this “humpbacked” land, to use the words of a fine seventeenth-century observer, that does not have a name in Euskara. For

the Basque peasant, every corner of his mountains is as clearly labeled as are the streets of a town for the town dweller. To eyes less familiar with the region, these hills, dense and entangled, several of which are massive rather than clearly outlined, are not at first sight as distinctive as the neighboring depressions. It is, however, worth indicating the principal summits.

The highest point is the pyramid of the Pic d'Anie (2,504 m./8,215 feet), in Basque *Ahuñe-mendi* (or *Auñamendi* —ed.), “the mountain of goats.” It does not enjoy much of a reputation: in its caves, people say, storms are brewed. The other peak, whose more rounded silhouette is familiar to the inhabitants of Zuberoa, is Orhi (2,017 m./6617 feet): *Orhiko choria Orhin laket*, “the bird of Orhi enjoys living in Orhi,” they say to express their attachment to the country of their birth.

There is also Eskaleramendi (the Pic des Escaliers; 1,478 m./4849 feet) and Iguntze (Pic d'Igounce; 1,390 m./4,560 feet), the culminating points of thick banks of puddingstone generally covered with fine beech groves. Between Zuberoa and Lower Navarre, the high pointed cone of Behorlegi (Behorleguy) is already a mere 1,265 m./4,150 feet high. On the road to Orreaga (Roncesvalles/Roncevaux), the mountain of Orizone (Orisson) is just 1,063 m./3,488 feet; higher, at 1,443 m./4,734 feet and 1,570 m./5,151 feet, are the Astobizkar and the Ortzantzurieta, which loom over the probable site of Roland's legendary combat, and are no longer on French soil.

To the northwest, the land becomes lower: the mountains in Lapurdi, Artzamendi, Mondarrain, and Atxulegi (Atsulay) reach heights respectively of 923 m./3,028 feet, 750 m./2,461 feet, and 550 m./1,804 feet. The range rises to one last peak with Larrun (900 m./2,953 feet), surrounded by much lower hills, which set off its imposing profile all the more dramatically against the sky.

On the periphery, some other low mountainous massifs owe their individuality to their topographical situation more than to their altitude: the Jara (795 m./2,608 feet) and the Arradoi (Arradoy; 661 m./2,169 feet), divided only by the gorge of the Errobi, form a single secondary range separating Garazi and Baigorri from the Ortzaize valley; the Baigura (Baighoura; 865 m./2,838 feet) in turn isolates this small area from the neighboring depression that extends between Heleta (Hélette), Lekorne (Mendionde), and Luhuso; farther north, Urtsua (678 m./2,224 feet), the mountain of inexhaustible springs, forms a rather aloof bastion that seems to command the threshold of Lapurdi and Lower Navarre.



Strangely, the toponymy of the running waters of Eskual Herri is as poor as that of the mountains is rich. Most of our rivers have French and Gascon names (apart from the Biduze [Bidouze] and the Bidasoa, which perhaps contain the root *bide*, “path”). Nive, Nivelles, Joyeuse, Saison—although some of these names are quite ancient—can obviously not claim to be Basque words. The original names, almost fallen into disuse, were in any case not particularly expressive: the Saison was called Uhaitz-Handi, “Great Torrent” (today, Uhaitzandi —ed.); the Nivelles was Urdachuri, “water that comes from Urdax” (today, Urdazuri —ed.); the Joyeuse was Aran, “valley” (today, Behotegi —ed.); and the Nive was Errobi, a term whose etymology remains uncertain.

All these water courses have one thing in common: they are barely navigable. Their relatively steep slopes, their rocky beds, and their very variable flow subject to sudden floods are all factors that made them fit only for floating wood, and that in winter. Nonetheless, little boats and barges can sail up the Bidasoa as far as Biriātu (Biriātu; 9 km/5.5 miles), the Urdazuri as far as Azkaine (Ascain; 7 km/4 miles), the Behotegi as far as Bastida (12 km/7.5 miles), and the Biduze as far as Came (18 km/11 miles). On the Errobi, the route (these days limited by the dam at the flourmill of Arkia [Arquie] by Uztaritze [Ustaritz]) used to extend as far as Kanbo (22 km/13.5 miles); for a long time the bargemen of the riverside parishes were grouped in a confraternity under the aegis of one of them who was given the proud title of “head of the river.”

However, however restricted these possibilities of water transport may seem today, they were nonetheless widely used in bygone centuries. Baiona in particular, straddling the Aturri of the Landes and the Basque Errobi, was an important center of river navigation. Old street names—Rue Port-de-Castets and Port-de-Suzée, Quai Galuperie—still evoke the perpendicular basins at the Errobi, crowded with small, mainly flat-bottomed boats (*galupes*, *tilloles*, and *couralins*)—a whole picturesque local assembly. Around 1850, these water coaches were still arriving at the markets of Baiona, coming from Akamarre (Came) or Peyrehorade, or even Dax, their steerages promiscuously thronged with merchandise, cattle, and travelers. A few years ago, there remained, of all this hubbub along the vast currents of the Aturri, merely the traffic of mine posts; they were assembled into enormous rafts that floated downriver from Tartas to Baiona in four stages.

Another resource of Basque rivers—and one that used to be quite significant—was fishing. But the activity of this industry turned out to

be incompatible with the development of navigation. Starting with the era of English domination, it was a source of frequent conflicts between Basques and Baioneses. In 1582, Henry III ordered the demolition of all the lobster pots, fisheries, and locks that, to a greater or lesser degree, obstructed the bed of the Errobi. Between Baiona and Itsasu (Itxassou), the surveyors found no fewer than eight lobster pots, all belonging to noble families. Only two were destroyed. These traps captured huge numbers of salmon and even sturgeons swimming upstream to spawn. These days, the sturgeons have disappeared; the migration of salmon is seriously threatened by industrial dams and water pollution; in the upper valleys, in spite of a large degree of poaching, you can still find trout—a wonderful natural resource. The quality of the waters at Bidarraï, Baigorri, and Urepele (Urepele) has in recent years led to the creation of prosperous fish farms, veritable trout-breeding centers.

Did our rivers also used to carry those treasures that, despite being lifeless, are no less desirable? So it might be believed, if we remember one of the reasons for which, in 1556, Henry II agreed to maintain the activities of the mint in Baiona:

Also because, near the mountains, along the streams of our Basque Country, only three or four leagues distant from our aforesaid city of Baiona, there is found gold dust that the aforementioned inhabitants of this region gather and amass with great care and labor, especially since it is the main good they possess, and unless the Mint is open in the said city, it is of no use to them, or else they are obliged to take it to be smelted in the Mint of Iruñea-Pamplona . . .

Finally, the Basque watercourses used to constitute a well-used source of energy. The mills were not all subject to feudal constraints; several of them belonged to the communities that had had them built, thus contesting their noble houses' right of communal property. One can still read, over the door of the old mill at Ibarron:

HAU DA ERROTA SENPERECO HERRIAC ERAGUINARACIA

1652.

“This is the mill that the town of Senpere [Saint-Pée-sur-Nivelle] had constructed.”

Many other mills are decorated with pungent sayings in Basque. The mill at Azkonegi (Asconeguy) near Maule (Mauléon) proclaims:

HOURIC GAVE BIHIRIC ELLIRO EHO HOURDENIAN
IRIN HOBERIC EZIN IÇATEN AHAL MUNDIAN.

“Without water, we could not grind the grain;
when there is water, this is the best flour in the world.”

A highly appropriate passage from Saint Matthew is engraved on the lintel of the mill at Azkaine:

NOLA NEURTCEN BAITUÇU
HALA NEURTUCO ÇARE ÇU

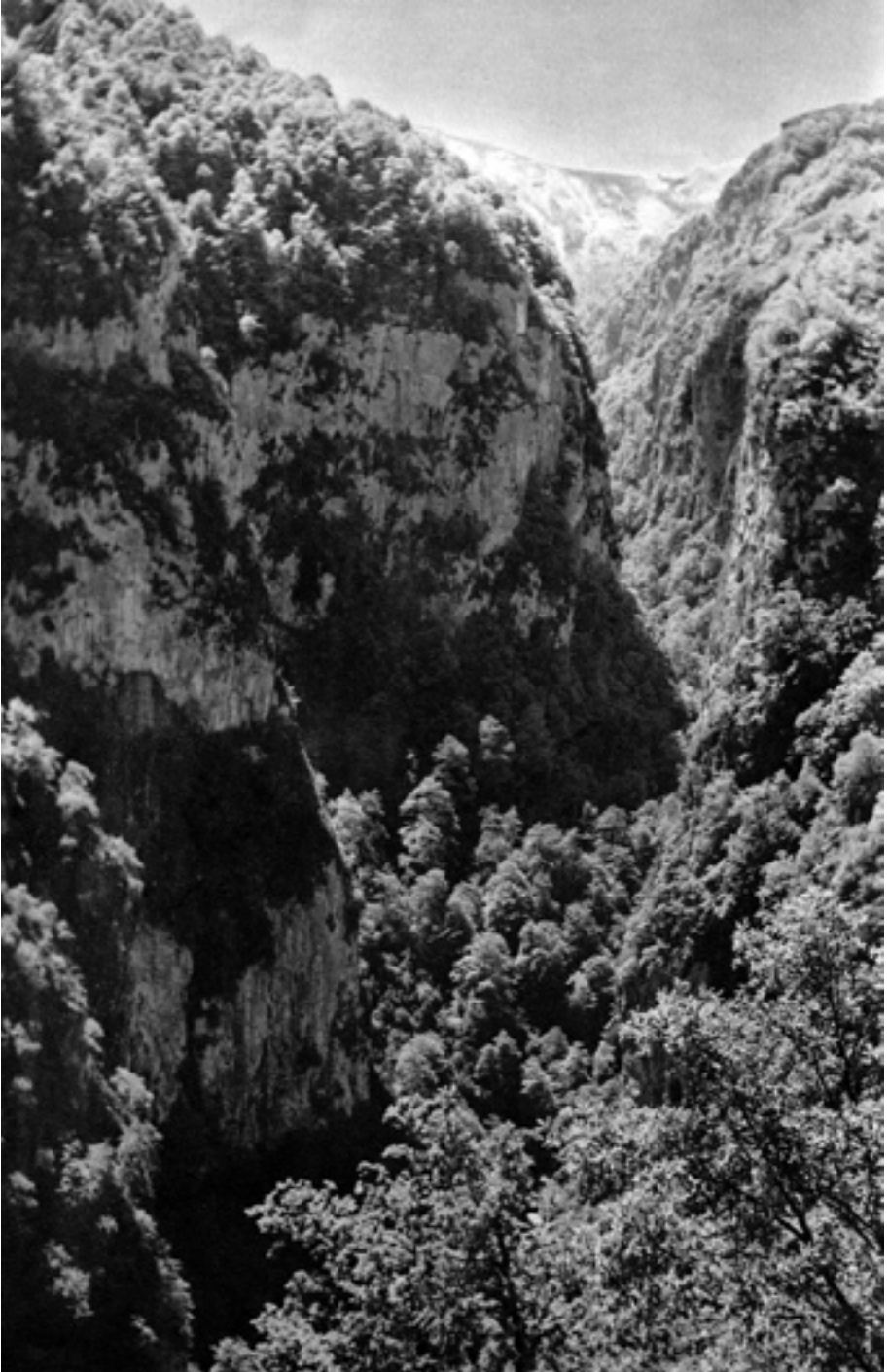
“For with the same measure that you use,
so shall you be measured again.”

On the estuaries of the Bidasoa, the Urdazuri, and the Aturri, other quite unusual mills used to operate with the help of the ebb and flow of the waters. The last of these tidal mills, at Billitorte between Donibane Lohizune and Azkaine, was still in existence sixty years ago.

These days, several small hydroelectric establishments are found along the watercourses of the Basque Country. Two big power stations, at Ligi-Atherei (Licq-Atherey) and Banka, distribute power and light to the whole Basque region.

The Uhaitzandi is the only one of our rivers to show, in its upper reaches, the traces left by the presence of a small quaternary glacier. Also characteristic of its early course are the extensive karstic phenomena, in other words the dissolving action of subterranean waters that have carved real canyons into the limestone rocks. These canyons are splendid natural curiosities. The Ibarrezker, site of the Abbey of Santa Grazi (Sainte-Engrâce), also contains the famous gorges of Kakueta. Near Larraine, the crevice of Holtzarte plunges down, in places just 3 m./10 feet wide, between vertical walls that reach 200 to 300 m./650 to 980 feet in height. Near Ligi-Atherei, the two higher branches of the Uhaitzandi come together. Lower down, at Atharratze, the river receives a tributary descending from the Ibarresküin. Then the current flows uneventfully along—albeit at times subject to terrible floods that ravage the valley—for 74 km/46 miles in a basin of 51,227 hectares, until it loses itself in the Gave d’Oloron. The usual discharge of the Uhaitzandi is 12 cubic m./420 cubic feet, and its lower watermark is 5 cubic m./175 cubic feet.

The less energetic Biduze springs from the Arbailak massif, crosses the woodland valleys of the Oztibarre (Ostabarret) and Amikuze, and is



joined at Donapaleu by a small tributary; it then leaves the Basque territory long before it reaches the Aturri. It winds for about 80 km/50 miles through a region of 67,500 hectares.

The Lihurri (Lihoury), swelled by the Arberoa (Arberour, today known as Arbéroue in French), joins the Biduze at Bidaxune in Gascon territory. The Behotegi, springing on the edges of Lapurdi and Lower Navarre, falls farther west directly into the Aturri, as does the tiny Ardanabia (Ardanavy).

The Errobi is bigger, even though it does not stretch for more than 75 km/47 miles in a basin of some one hundred thousand hectares. Its average flow of 10 cubic m./350 cubic feet sometimes falls to 2 or 3 cubic m./70 to 100 or more cubic feet. Three torrents of equal volume, partly from Spain—the Beherobia (the Nive de Beherobie), the Arnegi (Nive de Arnéguy), and the Lauribar (Laurhibar)—join near Donibane Garazi to form this watercourse. On leaving Garazi, the Errobi foams along for 25 km/15.5 miles through a mountain corridor that rarely widens. At Ortzaize, it receives the Aldude (Nive des Aldudes), almost as abundant as itself. After the narrow defile of the Pas de Roland, near Itsasu, the river again cuts its way—but this time more broadly—through lower cliffs in the last foothills of the primary massif. Free to pursue its course after Kanbo, it saunters in unpredictable meanders through rich meadows of alluvium to Baiona.

Along its route, four or five successive terraces of rolled pebbles have been erected, the highest of which is said to have risen over 100 m./330 feet above its current level, which gives some idea of the powerful erosion that has been active since the quaternary. The Errobi then flowed directly into the sea at a headland that definitely extended farther than the shore we know today.

Three very lively streams, of which the two main ones come from the heights near the Port de Maya, join at Dantxarinea to form the Urdazuri, which, in its French part, is hardly 25 km/15.5 miles long for a basin of 21,652 hectares. At Cherchebruix, it receives a copious tributary from Sara. Between Azkaine and Donibane Lohizune, its wide valley is filled with recent influxes that are still easily flooded by the ebb tide, hence the Basque name of this latter town: Donibane Lohitzun (Lohizune in modern Basque —ed), “Saint-John-of-the-Marshes,” built on a strip of sand advancing across the estuary.

Worth mention, too, is the Uhabia, which reaches the ocean on the beach of Bidarte (Bidart) and the Untzin, which, draining the waters of

the small valley of Urruña, runs into the bay of Donibane Lohizune near Sokoia (Socóa).

The Bidasoa hardly concerns us; it is merely a short frontier. The watershed passes at an equal distance between the two shores, but this was not always the case. The inhabitants of Gipuzkoa claimed that the river belonged to them, from one side to the other. The kings of Spain supported this claim, as was only right, and did not miss any opportunity of endorsing it afresh. Thus Henry IV of Castile crossed the river and landed on the bank of Lapurdi to meet with Louis XI. The self-interested efforts of the house of Urtubie, supported by the kings of France, did finally, however, ensure that the river was shared equally. In 1530, the exchange of the children of François I in return for the ransom he offered was carried out exactly in the middle of the riverbed. Encouraged by this precedent, Charles IX in 1565, and Louis XIV in 1660, used Konpantzia (the Ile des Faisans) for international meetings. This implicit agreement did not prevent innumerable local quarrels, relating especially to fishing rights, that poisoned relations between river dwellers for centuries.

The Aturri, too, is merely a limit, but from this river the whole life of Baiona springs, and so we need to dwell on it. A great part of the history of this city is nothing but the eventful narrative of the caprices of a vagabond estuary. Man's epic struggle against nature, and sordid quarrels driven by rival interests, are inextricably interwoven in the story.

At an indeterminate date—1310 at the earliest—the Aturri, which then flowed into the Gulf of Capbreton, was suddenly blocked by sand during a storm. The river, swollen by this obstacle, shifted 16 km/10 miles northward and eventually ran into the sea at Port d'Albret (now Vieux-Boucau), which took on added importance, to the detriment of Capbreton and Baiona. This new, gradually sloping riverbed was difficult to navigate, so ships now preferred to unload in the estuary itself, to the great despair of the Baioneses, who were gradually ruined.

Following a survey carried out in 1491, an unsuccessful attempt was made to bring the river mouth back to Capbreton. Under the reign of Charles IX, the great engineer Louis de Foix boasted that he would reopen a much closer place for the river to run out, at the place called Trossoat. This is the present Boucau (also known as Bokale in Basque—ed.). He had the current dammed just where it turned north. In spite of huge expense, at the end of six years of unmethodical labor, the enterprise seemed close to failure. On October 28, 1578, a terrible flood came along just at the right time: the Aturri carved itself a new channel that it

has never since abandoned. The former bed gradually silted up. In spite of the efforts of Capbreton to maintain it, it disappeared completely in the eighteenth century; the pond at Hossegor is a vestige of it.

In addition, as at the mouth of all the rivers of the Basque Coast, a “bar” of sand tends to keep reforming in front of the Boucau-Neuf. Costly work is still necessary to preserve the (never very easy) access to the port of Baiona.

Thus its annual traffic, which in 1913 reached 1 million tonnes or about 985,000 tons, has since then remained well below that figure. In 1939, it rose no higher than 633,000 tonnes/623,000 tons. After the total paralysis of the last war, recovery, initially very slow (less than 500,000 tonnes/492,000 tons in 1954), has been accelerating. For the year 1958, the overall statistics of the entries and exits comes to 711,000 tonnes/700,000 tons. The prospects opened by the export of sulfur from Lacq and the birth of a great industrial complex around the gas deposits of Béarn allow us to envisage a brilliant destiny for the port of the Aturri estuary—one that would have been absolutely impossible to foresee not so long ago.

Climate — Flora and Fauna — Ways of Life — Pastoral Life — Agricultural Life — Fishing

Climate

Unlike the Basque lands of the Iberian Peninsula, split between Mediterranean and Atlantic climates, the whole French Basque Country is subject to Atlantic influence alone, albeit imperceptibly modified from west to east by altitude and distance from the coast. The simplest means of briefly describing its essential atmospheric characteristics will be to describe the marine climate of Lapurdi (Labourd), and delineate its gradual change into the more continental zones by means of a few clear markers.

In Biarritz, the lowest average temperature of the year is reached in January, at 7.9 degrees Celsius; the highest in August, at 20.7. In spring, the chill lingers for a long time; in autumn, it is the mild temperatures that persist. In any case, between these extremes, the gap between the figures does not exceed 12.8 degrees, which is close to the climate of Brittany, whereas the relatively high annual average (13.9 degrees), shared equally between the seasons, seems closer to the climate of Portugal.

Let us illustrate these figures by a few more concrete and nuanced facts: The frosts in Lapurdi and Lower Navarre rarely appear before the start of December and cease toward the end of March. In the central depressions of Ortaize (Ossès) and Donibane Garazi (Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port), they are sometimes prolonged into April, due to the damp in the hollows. In Basabürüa (Upper Zuberoa), the highest, most inland region, they start at the beginning of November and stop only at the end of April.

The same applies to the snow: it is almost absent in Lapurdi where, on the coast, it does not even fall every year, and appears around Hazparne (Hasparren) only between the middle of January and the end of

February. In any case, it is not very heavy there, and does not stick. In Amikuze (the Pays de Mixe), it can snow from January 1 onward; in Zuberoa, from December 1; and in Lorraine (Larrau) and Santa Grazi (Sainte-Engrâce), a month earlier. In these latter villages, the snowfall can reach 1 m. /3 feet in depth and may remain on the ground for three to four weeks. Later falls occur in May.

The progress of the heat follows a similar time lag. Here it is the dates of the harvest that are important: from July 1 in Lapurdi; from July 16 to 31 between Hazparne and Donibane Garazi; and from August 1 to 15 between Arnegi (Arnéguy) and Atharratze (Tardets); and from August 16 to 31 in Lorraine and Santa Grazi, between 600 and 700 m./1,970 feet and 2,300 feet altitude.

We will now describe some characteristics that are less subject to seasonal variations and more uniformly distributed across the whole region.

The Basque sky—and this is not the least of its beauties—is rarely free of clouds. There are no fewer than 260 cloudy days to 100 completely sunny days. Also, it rains a lot, everywhere, all year long. . . . Nonetheless, autumn and winter appear relatively drier than spring and summer. In Hendaia (Hendaye) there is maximum rainfall: 1,793 mm per year, spread across some 140 days. As one goes inland, the frequency of rainy days tends to diminish, but as, conversely, the volume of rainfall increases, the total amount of precipitation is only slightly modified.

In the sky, subject to the contradictory impulses at play between the Atlantic and the continental mass of the high plateaus of Castile, the winds have a predominant role, and determine the rain and the sunshine. Often, in the evening of a torrid summer's day, a cool sea breeze—the *enbata*—suddenly arises, slamming the shutters and transforming the atmosphere from one moment to the next. The arid sky is covered with hazy clouds that spontaneously evaporate later in the night.

It is also quite common, during the transitional seasons between summer and winter conditions, and vice versa, to see different wind streams blowing at different heights in the midst of the brawling clouds. But, generally speaking, there is a reasonably regular pattern in the change of wind direction, and the wind rose seems to turn clockwise.

The north breeze, *ipharra* (today, *iparra* —ed.), sweeps across a limpid sky of icy greenish blue beneath the burning sky. It does not last long, and quickly turns east. It is then “the wind of the sun,” *iduzki-haizea* (today, *eguzki haizea* —ed.) as the Basques call it, rising every morning at

around ten o'clock and dropping only at dusk, creating the paradoxical sensation of an evening that is milder than the day; it creates an atmosphere that is both precise and very hazy, in which the outlines of the countryside remain clear but the details are blurred. The horizon will suddenly seem to draw strangely closer at the breath of the southeast, *hegochuria* (today, *hegozuria* —ed.), “the white south wind,” which, against a burning blue sky, frays the shimmering silken clouds. In the autumn, this wind can sometimes last for a whole fortnight—the most sumptuous period of the year—ripening the corncocks and sustaining the soaring flight of the ringdoves as they hasten toward the passes. Unfortunately, it is succeeded by *haize-hegoa* (today, *hego haizea* —ed.), the pure south wind, capricious (like a woman’s thoughts, as the Basque proverb assures us), brutal, blowing in sudden gusts that eddy along the ground. From then on, the contrasts in the light become tragically more intense; the barometric depression increases; the mild temperatures persist, but cirrus clouds similar to great grey sharks with silver bellies pile up to the west. *Hegoak hegala urean du*, the peasants say: “the south wind has a wing in the water.” Soon, the rainy west wind, swollen with the first showers, then *haize belza* (today, *haize beltza* —ed.), “the black wind” of the northwest, blowing in sharp, drenching squalls, will carry into the very heart of Eskual Herri the swells of a never-ending storm. . . . And yet, one evening, what unexpected calm seems to break out again? As the sky grows pale, the flocks of clouds disperse, heading off southwards—fantastical archipelagoes that cling like cotton wool to the slate-gray peaks of the mountain. Tomorrow morning, the north wind will bring back the sun. The cycle is complete.

Flora and Fauna

The nature of the soil and subsoil, the relief and orientation of the valleys, the climate—all the characteristics mentioned above find their living expression in the spontaneous vegetation and the fauna proper to the region. We will here be limiting ourselves to the essential species, those which impose their physiognomy on the natural landscape. And first and foremost, the humble surface covering—on the homespun cloth of the hills as well as on the steeper slopes—is a dense coat of ferns, streaked by dark-green masses of prickly gorse. The extent of such uncultivated spaces may come as a surprise, but we need to acknowledge the important role played by these two wild plants in the rural economy. Basque peasants use them as litter for their cattle and manure for their fields. Gorse (*othea*;

today *otea* —ed.) is cut in every season, but, so as not to hinder the new growth of fern (*iratzea*), it is preferable not to gather it when it is still green. So it is mainly in autumn that golden swaths of fern, scythed and piled on the *lera*—a primitive wooden sled—can be seen coming down the mountainside. From this “*soustrage*,” bristling rust-colored ricks are built around the farms.

Although a Lapurdi village—Ezpeleta (Espelette)—draws its name from boxwood (*ezpela*), trees of the latter, so common in Upper Navarre, are rather rare except on the limestone terrain of the canyons of Basabürüa (Upper Zuberoa), especially in the ravine of Ehüjarre (Uhadjarré) near Santa Grazi. Among the trees, the fir (*izaia*, today *izeia* —ed.) is found together with the beech only on the very high points of Navarre and Zuberoa, where it prefers to grow on sunny slopes. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, people tried to turn these trees into masts for ships, but the rocky beds of the Basque rivers did not make it easy to float such gigantic trunks.

The beech (*phagoa*, from the Latin *fagus*; today *pagoa* —ed.) flourishes on the flanks of shady ravines in the higher zone where the clouds condense. It is the predominant presence in Zuberoa and in the great forests of the mountains of Lower Navarre: Irati (Iraty), Haira (Hayra), and Oztibarre (Ostabarret). Mingled with the oak, it forces the latter back onto the worst terrains. In the lower valley of the Uhaitzandi (Saison), the beech extends down as far as 150 m./492 feet, but it disappears almost completely to the west of Donapaleu (Saint-Palais) and Ortzaize.

From then on, we are in the domain of the oak, the Basque tree par excellence, the tree in whose shade the local assemblies were held in bygone times. There are two species, which often live next to each other: the pedunculate oak (*haritza*), tall and sturdy, which flourishes on damp, moist soil, the “*barthes*” of the Biduze (Bidouze), the Behotegi (Joyeuse) and the Errobi (Nive); and the Pyrenean oak (*ametza*), more stunted, with its knotted, fissured trunk, which can also live comfortably on the clayey slopes of the lowlands. The longstanding reputation of Baiona (Bayonne) hams is attributed to their acorns, which the Basque pigs, allowed considerable liberty, feed on.

The chestnut tree (*gaztaina*), which has become much rarer in Lapurdi, is still found in relative abundance on the siliceous terrain of the valleys of the Errobi in Baigorri (Baïgorry) and Arnegi, up to an altitude of about 500 m./1,640 feet. It has been questioned whether it is original to this land, since it does not bear a Basque name; the argument does

not seem decisive, since in that case it would need to be extended to the beech—which would be an unlikely conclusion to draw.

As for the plane tree, it is more definitely a foreigner, but this newcomer has completely acquired the right of residence on Basque soil, where it rapidly spreads. Shaped into an arbor, allowing dancing sun beams to filter through its dense foliage and pattern the cool shade of white facades, the plane tree, these days, is an essential feature on the face of our country.

Finally, the Basque coast possesses its own fine species of tamarisk, and the fir tree of Les Landes extends beyond the sandy enclave north of Biarritz, still stretching beyond Getaria (Guéthary) on the hills along the Atlantic.

The problem of deforestation is nothing new in Eskual Herri. Around 1672, Louis de Froidour, an eminent forester sent by Colbert on an official mission to inventory our resources in wood and regulate their usage, proceeded to undertake a magisterial inquiry—which was greeted with the most intense distrust on the part of the native populace. His reports bring out a situation that, albeit for different reasons, resembled today's in several respects.

The Basques do not seem to have paid much attention to the advice and regulations issued by Froidour, but texts such as the statutes of the Baigorri Valley in 1704, and of Senpere (known at the time as Saint-Pée d'Ibarron —ed.) in 1729, show that they tried by themselves to bring about an uneasy balance between the demands of pastoral life and the necessity of preserving their forest riches. Woods and pastureland, after all, are inseparable in our land and constitute the main proportion of communal goods, which are considerable in extent when compared with individual property. In any case, the question currently continues to occupy the great syndicates of Zuberoa, Amikuze, Garazi (Cize), and Baigorri, heirs of the huge communities of the ancien régime, as well as of simple villages, such as Ainhoa, that have managed to maintain a sizeable forest and keep it in good shape.

Now as then, this regrowth is hampered by sheep grazing, pigs foraging for acorns, the cutting of *soustrage*, and, last but not least, the fires that are frequently lit on the moors by shepherds seeking to fertilize their pastureland. Of course, no offshoots can stand up to this treatment.

As for the active causes behind the degradation of the forest, they have changed perceptibly. Previously, wood played a much greater role in

the construction of houses and ships. The beech trees of the Irati forest were highly prized in the making of the oars of galleys and the countless oars needed by Basque fishermen, so there was an important traffic of beech to the maritime arsenals of Baiona. Wood for heating, and charcoal, had not yet been partly replaced by coal. As we have seen, forges devoured immense quantities of fuel. In addition, tannin was derived from the bark of oak trees (there were several tanneries in Hazparne, and they gave rise to the current shoe industry in that locality).

The factory for tannin extracts, which was still in operation near Ortzaize at the start of the twentieth century, has fallen into ruin, and almost all the factors of devastation enumerated above have basically lessened or completely vanished. Nonetheless, it is also worth noting that the long period of anarchy in the forests after the French Revolution contributed greatly to the destruction of the great and easily accessible woods that had long been eaten away by common grazing land, as in Hazparne and Senpere (Saint-Pée-sur-Nivelle); all that is left are a few copses scattered across bare moors.

These days, more than excessive tree-felling, it is serious epiphytic diseases in particular that pose a constant threat. Chestnut trees were the first to be attacked, around the middle of the nineteenth century, by a cryptogam that lodges in the roots in the soil and causes a blackish discharge. The “ink”—the common name for this scourge—spreads by making its way up watercourses; in particular, it affects the trees in the damp hollows, and they soon die. The little circular enclosures built out of dry stone by the peasants as a provisional place to store their chestnut harvests still exist in places that have become as empty as deserts.

The—no less fatal—disease that attacks the oak is called oidium, a white mold that invades the leaves. The Pyrenean oak is the most seriously afflicted; the pedunculate resists somewhat better. But, often weakened by the tadpole-shaped outline that gives such a characteristic figure to Basque oaks, they are both becoming rarer, even though the infection has in recent years appeared less virulent.

Fortunately, attempts at reforestation with red oaks from America and chestnuts from Japan—both of them resistant to contagion—have moved from the stage of individual initiative to that of collective organization. But this has nothing to do—of course—with the spontaneous vegetation.

The natural fauna of the Eskual Herri is quite varied, but not particularly dense. One finds little in the way of game, apart from that which

is passing through. This might be the result of the ancient exemptions of the “Païs,” which extended to all (apart from the outcast) the right to hunt and fish. Hunting associations are these days attempting to make up for this lack. The task of restocking is laborious, since Basques have remained inclined to poaching. Bones and Paleolithic engravings in Izturitze (Isturits) are evidence for the fact that, apart from the big species that have been extinct in these parts since the age of the cavemen, the bear, the horse, the fox, the hare, and even the trout and the salmon existed in our land several thousand years ago.

Basque poachers still catch this last fish with the fishgig (*sardia*, today *sardea*, a fish spear having two or more barbed prongs —ed.) just as their remote ancestors did with harpoons of stone or bone. They also use an ingenious trap, called an *arkoina*, which has been used for nearly as long.

Snakes (*sugeak*) are not rare. Species of garter snake, sometimes reaching a considerable length—probably due to exceptional longevity—have perhaps inspired certain Basque mythological legends.

In the eighteenth century, the bear (*hartza*) and the wolf (*otsoa*) had not completely vanished from the depths of the forests. They are never mentioned these days, but the boar (*basurdea*), which is probably no less ancient, although it is often hunted, continues to roam at liberty right up to the edge of cultivated land. In the middle of the night, you sometimes hear in the maize fields a strange hubbub: this is the peasants trying to scare the badger (*azkonmaroa*, today *azkonarra* —ed.) that threatens their harvests. No less feared is the kite (*mirua*), forever in search of chicks and a familiar sight in the Basque skies. The other great birds of prey, the eagle (*arranoa*), the vulture (*saia*), and the sparrow hawk (*belatcha*, today *belatza* —ed.) rarely stray far from their mountains.

Although the ringdove (*ursoa*, today *usoa* means “dove” and *usapala* means “ringdove” —ed.) merely crosses over the ports of the Basque Pyrenees twice a year, it holds too considerable a place in Basque life not to be mentioned here. When autumn comes, it is the favorite prey of our hunters. Equipped with birdcalls, they shoot it with rifles from their place of ambush, a hut of ferns perched like a nest between the branches of some great oak. Higher up, where the sky route narrows between the rugged tops of the mountains, huge bird-catching nets called “*pantières*” are stretched out across a pass, ready to bring down a great mass of quivering feathers in a trice.





Startled from afar by the cries of lookouts perched here and there in the trees or on turrets of dry stone, the ringdoves almost always head inevitably in the desired direction. As they approach the pass, imitation sparrow hawks—sorts of wooden, axe-hewn palettes that spin like boomerangs—increase their confusion. The whole flight suddenly dives down to the ground without noticing the treacherous net that is silently released and drops over them. A few gunshots pursue the birds that have escaped and fly swiftly away.

The numbers caught can rise to thousands in these great tree-top traps, in Osquich, Naphal, Behorleguy, Aldude, Sara (Sare), and Etxalar (Etchalar). At Sara the annual average of birds caught is four hundred dozens (they are always reckoned in dozens). The record for a single day, established in 1912 or 1913, is said to be 137 dozens.

In the final analysis, the animal most typical of the Basque fauna is still probably the *pottoka*, the hardy pony that rears itself, is three-quarters wild, sleeps out under the open sky, and reproduces itself freely in the common land of Lapurdi. These ponies are small, rustic horses, very hairy, with big heads and short, powerful necks, bent hocks, and paunchy bellies—indeed, everything about the *pottoka* seems to indicate that they are the practically unmodified descendants of those horses of the Quaternary age (*equus celticus*) that lived in herds, pursued by Aurignacian hunters. Many prehistoric works of art—some of them found on our own soil—support this impression. Thus the Basque Country turns out to be, yet again, the classic land of all survivals.

Ways of Life

Unlike natural flora and fauna, which are completely defined by soil and climate, human adaptation is partly a reaction against the environment. Ways of life are a reflection of the constant effort to master nature while still obeying it: they set their imprint on the face of a region as much as they do on the souls of its inhabitants.

In Eskual Herri, the essential ways of life are of a pastoral, agricultural, and maritime kind. We have seen above how industries derived from the subsoil mainly constituted an extra resource or a seasonal livelihood for the Basques, and nothing more. One typical example is the job of tile maker, which in bygone centuries so many young men practiced not just in their own country, but in Spain, too, during the winter.

The little trades of yesterday or today—earthenware makers, weavers, sandal makers, chocolate makers—also leave the framework of tradi-

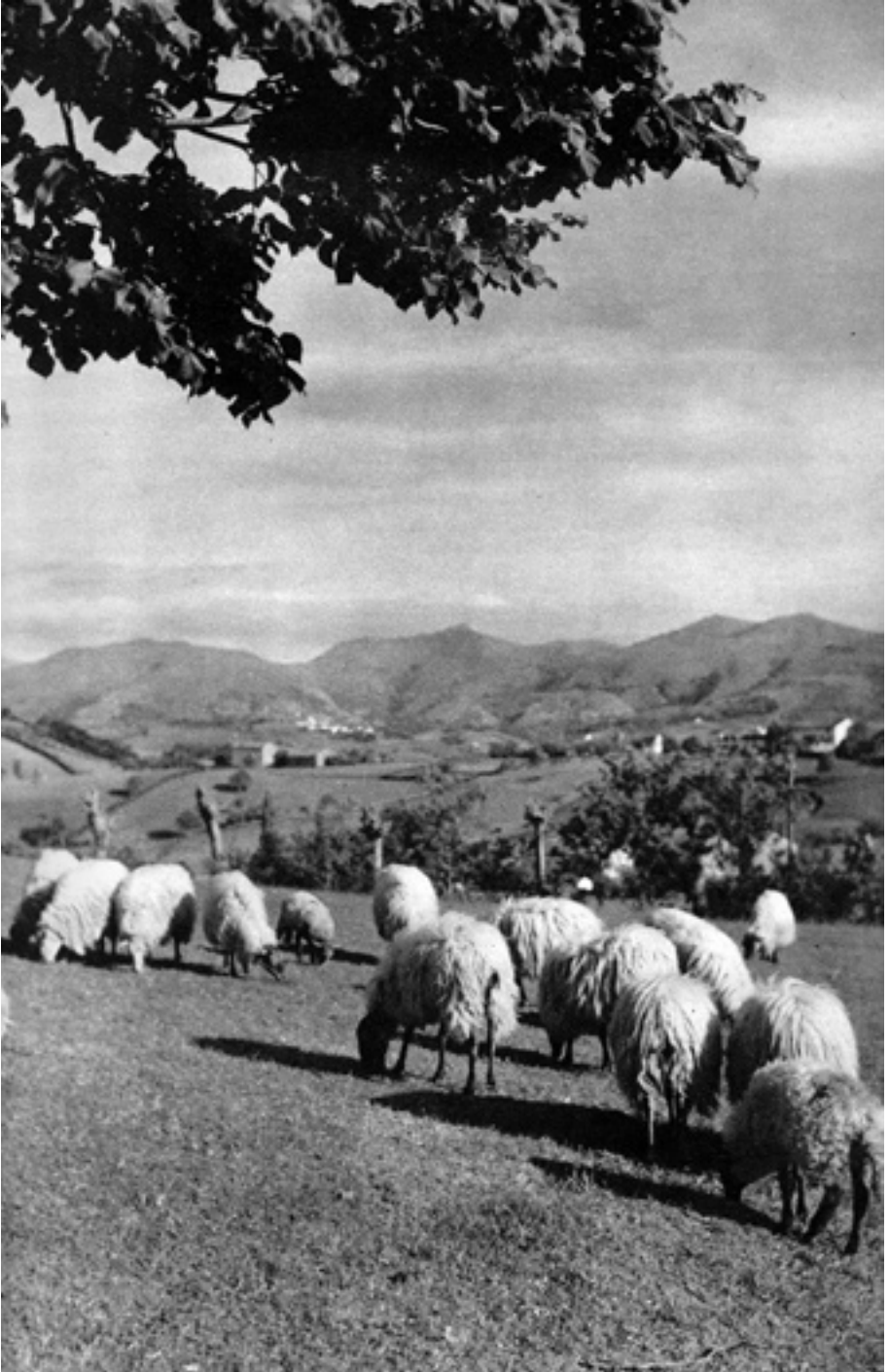


tional life intact, as do rural craft industries in all their forms. The same is more or less true of bigger industries of transformation (shoe and sandal factories around Hazparne and Maule [Mauléon]). These enterprises affect the ancestral ambiance less profoundly than might be feared.

The same cannot be said of the tourist industry, whose development on the Basque coast is causing serious structural modifications that are already making themselves visible: the abandoning of farm land, and the fragmentation of rural estates that are being turned into holiday residences, when they do not fall prey to property developers. Even in simple villages such as Azkaine (Ascain) or Kanbo (Cambo), such symptoms can be observed: nonetheless, the scourge has not yet spread much beyond the coastal areas. Only urban populations can live off commerce. Baiona at all times, Hendaia more recently, and Donibane Garazi to a much lesser degree, are centers of active exchanges with Spain, when economic and political circumstances will allow it. However, through its auxiliary activity of smuggling, commerce also has a far from negligible repercussion on the habits and customs of the whole of the region. Every Basque has the blood of an impenitent smuggler in his veins, and in this domain far-reaching and bold enterprises hold no fear for him. Contemporary upheavals (the Spanish Civil War, the German occupation, resistance, liberation, control of the exchange rate) have enabled heroic escapades to flourish as never before, as well as the most lucrative customs frauds.

Pastoral Life

Pastoral life, which has always counted for a great deal in the activity of the Basque peasants, has very ancient roots. The higher regions where aeneolithic traces (from the Copper Age to the Iron Age, in other words roughly from 2500 BC to 1000 BC) were discovered are the same as those where wide pasturelands are still found. Indeed, it has often been noted that the rudimentary shepherds' huts were built on the very ruins of megalithic constructions from which they probably barely differ. The word "rich," in Basque *aberats*—although possibly derived from the Latin *habere*—means "he who possesses an abundant flock." Several words with purely Basque roots (and thus prior to Indo-European influences) refer to domesticated animals, especially sheep-raising. The extensive communal land, called *herem* (today, *eremu* —ed.), and the customs of collective appropriation, free enjoyment, and free pasture that mainly continue to exist, are also evidence of the uninterrupted persistence of that primitive way of life.



The common land for transhumance belonged either to each village or, more often, to groups of parishes which shared their use out equally: this is the origin of the “Païs” and “Vallées.” These collectivities often had to defend themselves against the envy of neighbors less favored by nature, who did not hesitate to send their cattle to graze in territories that were difficult to keep under surveillance. This led to the custom of kidnapping—“*pignorer*” or “*carnaler*” (in Basque *bahitu*)—a number of the heads of cattle fraudulently brought in. They were given back to their owners only in exchange for a ransom: this was the *droit de carnal*. As one can easily imagine, such confiscations often led to violence. In 1078, Raymond-Guillaume, Vicomte de Soule (Zuberoa), signed a treaty with Centulle V, Vicomte de Béarn, to suppress these quarrels over grazing rights. Also, the shepherds themselves soon acknowledged that it was necessary to draw up—especially with their neighbors beyond the mountains—agreements to regulate peacefully every aspect of the reciprocal enjoyment of *herems*, in particular the use of grasslands and watercourses between sunrise and sunset. A good idea of the minuteness of these prescriptions can be gained from the fact that they go so far as to oblige the shepherds to walk ahead of their herds during the daytime, so that he cannot drive them at will toward the richest grazing grounds. In the evenings, on the contrary, they can place themselves wherever they want as they return to the fold.

From these “*faceries*”—veritable little treaties between towns or Vallées (which liked to describe themselves in their preambles as “Republics” or “Universities”)—one of the most ancient still in use is that which was signed in 1375 between the inhabitants of the Erronkari (Roncal, in Navarre —ed.) and of the Baretous (in Béarn —ed.). Since then, it has continued to be renewed every year, in exchange for a tribute of three white heifers solemnly handed over at La Pierre-Saint-Martin, an ancient border marker up in the mountains. The *facerie* between Garazi, Aezkoa (Aezcoa), and Zaraitzu (Salazar) dates back to 1445; there is a host of others in force all along the border, including those that govern fishing for salmon between the riverside dwellers of the Bidasoa. The French and Spanish governments have always respected the *faceries*, even in wartime, and their existence was endorsed by great European treaties such as the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht.

So as to create a shelter in the high mountains for their cattle (*borda*), a hut for themselves (*artzain-chola*), and a fold for their sheep, shepherds need to enclose a strip of common land. In Zuberoa, this is all called by

the Béarnais name of *cayolar*. Even in the eighteenth century, the limits of a *cayolar* were marked out by hurling an axe as far as possible in the direction of the four points of the compass. For a long time, it was forbidden to cover the *cayolars* other than by cut branches or roofing stones—tile being considered a sign of property. *Cayolars* are often grouped together; they correspond to special privileges over certain of the richest grazing areas, rights that are enjoyed in common by those who enjoy these areas at any time. The unit of the flock that serves as a basis for these pastoral associations, the *tchotch* (today, *txotx* —ed.), comprises a minimum number of forty-five milk ewes. The aim is the manufacture of cheeses. The number of *cayolars* in Zuberoa was 107 in 1506, but only 83 by around 1860.

In Lapurdi, pasturelands are at a less elevated altitude and thus not very far from dwelling places, and there are no *cayolars*. The *borda* (*borde*), where animals can take shelter by themselves if the weather turns bad, is built halfway up. The *artzain-chola*, where the shepherd does not need to stay more than about a month every spring to milk his ewes, is built separately, generally closer to the mountain summits.

Transhumance used to be a considerable undertaking. In winter, the herds of the mountain valleys would go down to seek food near the coast of Lapurdi, or even in Les Landes, as far as the outskirts of Bordeaux. New supplies of food diminished the size of this exodus. Summer transhumance still takes place: it often happens in two periods, with stays at different levels. In Baigorri, in the eighteenth century, the obligation even extended to the milk cows and the mares to go up to Aldude (Aldudes) from June 1 to September 8, “so as by this means to maintain the pasture of the aforesaid common lands for the return of the cattle when winter draws in.” In the sixteenth century, the flocks from the Amikuze region also made their way toward Aldude, which was quite a significant journey.

Special paths, called *altchubide*, were used for transhumance. The custom of Zuberoa specifies that the *altchubide* must be fourteen cubits wide, whereas the path for sheaves needed only thirteen cubits and the royal path only nine cubits. The name of Aldude, in Spanish Los Alduides, seems to come from *altubide*, “path through the heights.”

Originally, all sorts of cattle took part in these pastoral migrations. This is still the case for cattle in Lower Navarre and Zuberoa, but in Lapurdi, only sheep are usually sent up into the mountains.

Goats, understandably not welcome in towns and cities, have finally completely disappeared.

The decline in oaks and thus acorns has greatly restricted the roaming of pigs. On the other hand, the overall number of sheep involved in transhumance has not changed in a century. More precisely, it has increased in the mountain valleys while decreasing in the lowlands. So, way of life tends to vary with altitude in the regions of the Eskual Herri. The number of ewes is forever increasing to the detriment of the number of sheep. This is the result of the numerous dairies established in the region by the Compagnie de Roquefort since the start of the twentieth century and especially from 1910 onward. The production of milk and lambs has significantly overtaken that of wool and adult animals. There are two breeds of ewe: The *manech* (today, *manexa ttippia* or *sasardia* —ed.), which are bred to the west of a line passing through Bastida (Labastide-Clairence), Donapaleu, and Donibane Garazi, are not worried by the damp and are very good milk producers, but their coarse fleeces can be used only to make mattresses. To the east, the breed called “Basque”—which the Basques themselves call *ardichuri* (today, *ardi zuria* —ed.), “white ewe”—is less robust but taller; its wool is finer and more highly prized.

Agricultural Life

Agricultural life has long remained fairly basic in the Basque Country. Without exaggerating the value of the fact (for Euskara is prone to borrow words for which it has no equivalent itself), it is worth pointing out that everything that refers to fruit trees and vegetables bears names of Latin origin; this allows one to suppose that many of them were more or less unknown before the Romanization and Christianization of the country. In the twelfth century, the *Pilgrim’s Guide to Compostella* noted that the region was “poor in wine, bread, and foodstuffs of every kind, but in return one can find apples, cider, and milk.” This seems to be an accurate picture. The apple tree (*sagarra*) grew naturally in the woods, but it would seem that Basques had grafted it and planted it in large numbers early on. It is even claimed that Norman and Breton apple trees sprang from seedlings from Bizkaia. According to all the travelers’ tales, cider (*sagarnoa*, or *sagardoa* —ed.) was our national drink. In 1609, the magistrate De Lancre wrote of Basque women: “They eat only apples, and drink only apple juice, which is the reason why they are so prone to taking a bite of that apple of transgression which made our first father

disobey God's commandment and overstep his prohibition." In every village, one can still find a *dolarea* (today, *tolarea*—ed.) house, whose name indicates the old communal cider press. In fact, if the huge orchards of yesteryear can still be found in Gipuzkoa, they have all but vanished from the French Basque Country.

The vine (*mahatsa*) later experienced a similar fate. Around the sixteenth century, it still grew abundantly around Baiona. Since the Middle Ages, the local wine was the object of a significant trade, especially with Flanders and England; this would later decline when faced with competition from neighboring regions—Chalosse and Béarn—which tend to produce a better quality of wine. These days, one would search in vain for the old vineyards of Baiona. Quite recently almost all the good rural houses prided themselves on drinking the wine, often a little tart, of their own grape harvest. After phylloxera, they have almost entirely given up this custom, except in Lower Navarre. At the foot of the Jara (Jarra), on the vineyards between Baigorri and Donibane Garazi, one vintage of repute remains: Irulegi (Iroulégu).

Wheat (*ogia*, or *garia*—ed.) gradually replaced barley, oats, and rye, but reports of the *intendants* in the ancien régime show that the area was still far from producing enough for its own consumption of cereals, apart from maize. The later had gradually replaced millet (which had been highly cultivated in the Middle Ages) so effectively that it even took over its Basque name: *artho* (today, *arto*—ed.). Maize was imported from the Americas to Spain in the sixteenth century. Its introduction is even attributed to a certain Gonzalo de Percaztegui, from Hernani, in Gipuzkoa. Favored by a climate that suits it extremely well, the growing of maize has become one of the most characteristic features of our rural economy. It continues to develop, at the expense of the production of wheat, even though it is convenient to alternate the two, since they are sown at different seasons. Every part of the maize plant can be used: the leaves and seeds are food for animals and people, the stalks (which at first nobody knew how to use) act as litter, and, once they have rotted, as manure. Other possible uses (paper, industrial alcohol) can be envisaged, perhaps in a not-too-distant future.

On the other hand, one plant that is no longer cultivated at all is flax. Less than a century ago, Basque women still knew how to handle the distaff and every village had its weavers and *duranguiers* (the latter worked the wool). They were particularly numerous in Hazparne and Ainhoa. Large-scale textile industry killed off this local production.

In spite of the gradual spread of cultivation, it is striking to see that most of the land cleared consists of hay meadows, or produce clover or radish—the favored food of horned cattle. So the essential aim of Basque agriculture remains the production of meat and milk. This is not just a question of outlets, but perhaps also of ancestral habits. Basically, what the Basque peasant prizes before all else is breeding. He hands over almost completely to the womenfolk activities such as gardening, bee-keeping, and the care of poultry and even pigs. The cultivation of fruit trees is quite neglected (the cherries of Itsasu [Itxassou] are the exception that proves the rule). However, everything that concerns the improvement of cattle is of the greatest interest to him: this is a man's work, *gizon lan*. In addition, the region possesses its own breed, the so-called Urt breed: these are red-haired animals, of medium size, strongly built, and very well-adapted to the cartage and plowing tasks required of them in a hilly area. Since the spread of trucks for transport, fewer and fewer oxen are raised, since cows produce milk and calves are sold when they are two months old.

The livestock on every farm almost always includes a few Breton milk cows as well. The breed has become acclimatized here, thanks to a bishop of Baiona, Ferron de la Ferronays, who, when the terrible epizootic disease of 1774–76 broke out, and in spite of intense opposition from the administration, brought these cows down from the region that was his own homeland. These days, cattle are still being imported from Brittany.

In the eighteenth century, the attempts made by the *Intendants* to improve the breed of indigenous horses proved a failure; on the eve of the French Revolution, the inhabitants of Zuberoa unanimously and clamorously demanded in their list of grievances, the *Cahiers de Doléances*, the suppression of the state-run stud farms. Conversely, in our own time the breeding of thoroughbreds, especially of Anglo-Arab horses, has to some extent spread in the Amikuze area, around Donapaleu.

In short, Basque agriculture has developed slowly, neither intensively nor extensively, with small and medium properties being more common than large ones. It is not very advanced, but neither is it backward; it is varied enough to enable the peasant to live off his land, and it appears to have managed to derive the maximum benefit from the soil.

The preponderance of rural ways of life in Eskual Herri has resulted in a multiplicity of fairs and markets. The latter are an attraction that Basque peasants are very fond of, even when they do not have much to sell or buy.



Certain of these institutions go back a very long way. Baiona had its fair established in 1237 by the English king Henry III. The weekly market seems to date from 1483. Sébastien Moreau, who came to Lapurdi in 1524, relates: “I know of hardly any land where girls go to so much trouble as they do here, and they do not fail to go even a good six or seven leagues to the aforesaid Baiona on a weekday to buy wheat at *the market held on Thursdays* and carry it on their heads.” So here is one custom that has not changed for at least four centuries, since we still continue to go to Baiona on Thursdays.

The oldest and most famous market in the region seems to have been that of Garrüze (Garris) in Lower Navarre. So much so that even today, the hustle and bustle of the Garrüze fair has remained a proverbial term of comparison. And yet a deep silence fell on this fallen village a very long time ago. It was the market and the fair granted to Donapaleu by Letters Patent of John of Aragon that gradually supplanted Garrüze almost completely.

In the eighteenth century in particular, there was considerable rivalry between the parishes of the Basque Country, almost all of whom were seeking to obtain permission to hold a market and quarreling over the vacant days. Not all of them have been preserved—far from it. After all, sellers, buyers, or merely curious onlookers are not prone to changing their habits. Why were major localities such as Uztaritze (Ustaritz) and Baigorri never able to have markets that drew more than a few people? Nobody knows. However, in the nineteenth century, Senpere succeeded in dethroning Sara, which had once been a flourishing center of commerce.

Certain annual fairs are specialized: Baiona in ham, Heleta (Hélette) in horses, Ezpeleta in *pottoka*, and Irisarri (Irissarry) in sheep.

Fairs and markets, both in days long gone and even more recently, did not always end peaceably—the pleasure would not have been complete without some disorder. Dr. Jaureguiberry relates these final words of a piquant dialogue between a peasant of Zuberoa returning home from Atharratze and his old father who had stayed at home:

“*Izan deia phanpaka?*” —“Was there a fight with the *makhila* [the traditional Basque walking stick, also “*makila*” —ed.].?”

“*Ez, aita, ez!*” —“No, father, no!”

The old man shook his head.

“*Pheuh! ordian merkhatu tcharra!*” —“Can’t have been much of a market, then!”

Fishing

Fishing affects only a coastal population whose density was, admittedly, much greater in bygone days than that of the rest of the region. In any case, those who lived off the sea were recruited from a much larger fringe area than is true today of Lapurdi; in some inland villages such as Azkaine and Sara, many younger sons of rural houses were happy to set off for Newfoundland—so much so that, in the seventeenth century, the seasonal emigration of Zuberoans would come to give a hand in the summer labors of Lapurdi in the fields. On the other hand, French Basque fishermen have always constituted a somewhat mixed race. Apart from the Gascons, of whom very ancient traces can be found as far as the ports of the Cantabrian coast, outcasts and gypsies (the *Cascarots* of Donibane Lohizune [Saint-Jean-de-Luz]) formed a significant source of manpower in coastal areas. Closer to our own region, following initially temporary migrations, many Bretons have in turn joined our fishermen, who thus comprise an ethnic type that is less and less distinct.

Be that as it may, maritime activity on our coast has gone through three major successive stages: whaling, and fishing for cod and sardines.

In the Middle Ages, whales haunted the Bay of Biscay during the winter, after the September equinox. They belonged to a variety of the free, black, short-headed species—the *Balaena biscayensis*, as it is often called. This species lives in herds or pods, hence its common name, “Sardinian whale,” drawn from the Basque *Sardako balea* (*sarda* meaning “school” as in “school of fish” —ed.).

In those long distant times, watchmen would keep a close eye on the waves from an *atalaye* (today, *talaia* —ed.)—a sort of watchtower-cum-chimney, as can still be found in Getaria and Biarritz. They would signal the presence of cetaceans by sending up smoke. Simple rowing boats would emerge from every point of the coast, bearing harpooners competing to see who could converge on their prey the soonest. When the whale was being cut up, the number of harpoons and the marks they had left were the basis on which the carcass was shared out. The whales were caught so often that the royal power ensured that it drew substantial levies from their capture—levies that, from 1199, and especially during the period of English domination, were the object of frequent transactions. In 1260, the chapter of the Cathedral of Baiona obtained a portion, which it managed to keep for a long time. In 1498, as fishing became more difficult, the canons agreed that they would from now on take only a twentieth, but they kept the tongue for themselves—a choice morsel!



Again, in 1787, a notarized deed of Biarritz referred to this ancient right—but by now it was merely an empty clause.

In fact, as they were increasingly hunted, whales became less common. In Biarritz, the last one was caught in 1686, but this was of little account since, from the fifteenth century and perhaps even earlier, Basque fishers did not hesitate to hunt them, first off the coasts of Scotland, then Iceland, Newfoundland, and Spitzbergen. As a result, it has been claimed that they discovered America before Columbus. In the Arctic seas, they encountered the Dutch and the English—and the latter cunningly engaged the onboard services of Basque harpooners who initiated them into the secrets of their trade. At the start of the seventeenth century, these pupils became merciless rivals, barring from their coasts the flotillas from Donibane Lohizune and Baiona. The blow was momentarily softened thanks to the invention of Captain Sopite, of Donibane Lohizune, who found a means of melting blubber right on board the ships. Three barrels of “grease” produced one barrel of “oil,” easy to transport and preserve. This was a huge step forward. In this way, a single boat of that period could bring back, on average, the remains of seven cetaceans.

In the meantime, cod fishing had also been developing. In 1512, it was referred to in Baiona as a current business. Many place names in the fishing banks of Newfoundland recall establishments that lasted a good while. Basque tombs have been found in the church of Placentia. The greatest number of fittings-out came in the seventeenth century. No fewer than between forty and eighty ships—whalers or cod-fishing boats—measuring between one hundred and three hundred tons—left Baiona and Donibane Lohizune each year: these were the only two ports able to fit out such a fleet. In 1635, 4,500 sailors were registered in Lapurdi. The wars at the end of the reign of Louis XIV enabled the English, who were still hostile to our fishermen, to deal a heavy blow to this prosperity. The signing of the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 accelerated this decline, which, with its ups and downs, continued throughout the eighteenth century. Baiona itself fitted out only a few cod-fishing boats in the nineteenth century. These days, in the islands of Saint-Pierre and Miquelon, slender reminders of a great past, an enterprise with Basque attachments still maintains fisheries that provide France with cod, but its boats, which no longer set sail from our shores, recruit very few of their crews from the Basque Country.

If open-sea fishing is dead, coastal fishing never ceased and is still alive and thriving. Already around 1750, the salted sardine industry had become so important that the Bretons (who, until then, had cornered the





market) started to get worried. From the French Revolution to our own day, the port of Donibane Lohizune—the only one that counts for this type of fishing—was, however, still lethargic; its activity hardly extended beyond providing for local needs. From 1900, new factors completely transformed this situation. It was first and foremost the use of steam—and more recently of fuel oil—which considerably extended the number of sailing days as well as the radius of activity of the boats. The use of the net called a *bolinche* greatly increased the return, at the very time when the establishment of great canning factories was opening up huge markets. Before World War II, Donibane Lohizune and Ziburu (Ciboure) together, with some sixty motor boats, had become the principal sardine port in France. These days, the basin swarms more than ever before with blue and green hulls, but a profound change seems in the air. Could this be the dawn of a fourth stage for Basque fishing?

The fact is that the sardines tend to desert the coasts of the Gulf of Gascony a little more each winter. Of course, such years of slack seasons have been experienced before; however, the crisis appears to be worryingly prolonged this time. On the other hand, the campaign for tuna, which for a long time remained brief and only moderately rewarding, is now unexpectedly taking off. From the start of summer to the very end of autumn, almost miraculous drafts of fishes are now caught. This is due essentially to the abandoning of the rustic artificial bait comprising the dry straw envelope of a corncob. This coarse lure has been replaced by the bait of living fry, kept in fish tanks on board the vessels. When the tuna boats draw alongside wharf in front of the old residence of the ship owner Lohobiague, it is a wonderful sight to see the heavy steel-colored ingots that muscular arms vigorously hurl onto the cement of the sunny quayside.

Hendaia and Capbreton are following the expansion of Donibane Lohizune, albeit from a considerable way behind. Baiona, a commercial port, is restricted more to river fishing: shad and elver. Biarritz, Bidarte (Bidart), and Getaria, which have no protected anchorage, soon abandoned fishing.

Population — Roads — Dwellings

Population

Apart from the urban agglomeration of Baiona (Bayonne)-Angelu (Anglet)-Biarritz, with its 65,000 inhabitants of very diverse origin, the French Basque Country, for a surface area close to 275,000 hectares, contains some 112,000 inhabitants: 50,000 in Lapurdi (Labourd), 40,000 in Lower Navarre, and 22,000 in Zuberoa (Soule). These figures have remained roughly the same since 1718, the date of the first approximate census that we know of. So a very generous birthrate has, for two centuries, been entirely neutralized by a no less significant degree of emigration. We will return to this later.

Apart from the coastal region where fishing, trade, and tourism have modified the usual lie of the land, there is no important town to be found. Maule (Mauléon) and Hazparne (Hasparren), somewhat industrialized centers, have between four and five thousand inhabitants, but Donibane Garazi (Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port), Donapaleu (Saint-Palais), and Atharratze (Tardets) have fewer than two thousand each. On the other hand, huge, purely rural towns exceed this figure quiet significantly: Senpere (Saint-Pée-sur-Nivelle), Uztaritze (Ustaritz), Baigorri (Baïgorry), and above all Urruña (Urrugne; over three thousand). Today's villages, which are often the product of combining several old parishes, are much fewer in number than these. Even so, the very tiny communities—those with fewer than five hundred inhabitants—are more significant than the others. In Lower Navarre, thirty-nine out of seventy-two, and in Zuberoa twenty-one out of thirty-eight, that is, more than half fall into this category. Lapurdi, where there are only four villages with fewer than five hundred inhabitants out of a total of thirty-five, has always been less fragmented, but this is just a statistical appearance. In fact, both in Lapurdi

and in the rest of the region, what is striking about most Basque villages is the unimportance of the central core and, conversely, the great number of houses that are either isolated or half gathered in distant, quasi-independent districts that are often as big as the town itself. “*La place*”—the square—as it is called, is the agglomeration next to the main pelota court and the city hall: it does not invariably coincide with the district built around the church and the cemetery—at Macaye, Itxassou, and Baigorri they are about half a mile away. Thus, one of the typical characteristics of the landscape of Eskual Herri is the semi-scattered population. The evolution of ways of life can to some extent explain how this dispersal came about.

When, around the middle of the sixth century, the Vascones occupied this corner of the northern slopes of the Pyrenees (which was then probably barely populated), their way of life was already just as much agricultural as pastoral. It seems that, without any great obstacles to overcome, the founders of primitive dwellings were able to seize as much cultivable land, all in one block, as they felt able to clear. The undulating relief did not really favor these first possessors getting close to one another. In a region grooved by streams, where the living water springs up everywhere, the imperious need to group a population around water sources was simply not felt. So there is no need at all to invoke the independent character of the Basques to explain the scattered nature of their dwellings. Simple reasons of practical opportunity (fertile soil, more favorable exposure) were enough to determine, very freely, the separated sites of those “ancient houses”—farms of between five and twenty hectares—that long formed the main social structure of the region’s parishes.

So long as this region remained poor and its population scattered, this first apportioning of the land barely changed. Feudal organization—which in any case was quite superficial—changed things little: with a few exceptions, houses of noble repute seem not to have possessed estates that were significantly more extensive than the others. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the—still unclear—causes of a prosperity attested by the dates of reconstruction of the houses led to an undeniable population increase. Quarrels then sprang up between the masters of the “ancient houses” and those of the “newcomer” houses. The latter wanted to contribute to shared responsibilities so as to have, in return, the right to use, like everyone else, the woods, fern patches, grazing land, mines, mills, and so on.

Where did these “newcomers” come from? Probably from the *labaki* (meaning “plowed field” —ed.). This was the name given to the clear-

ings, a few acres in size, that every inhabitant had the right to make on the common ground and to enclose temporarily (for four years, according to the Custom of Zuberoa). Several texts show that, in spite of rulings that were enforceable only with difficulty between the neighbors in one and the same parish, it was not unusual to see the households of younger sons and daughters of ancient houses take advantage of the right of *labaki* to make clearings and enclosures, which a tacit prescription then made definitive. In this way, it seems, the small property of less than five hectares was formed, generally situated in more distant and hilly ground, on less fertile soil. This tendency increased during the eighteenth century, but in particular after 1789, when the villagers sold off, or shared out, by common agreement, all or part of the common land. A house that possessed on its lot a small farm to shelter its sheep was often tempted to transform it into a dwelling occupied by a sharecropper. This still happens today. Thus, most estates have their corresponding smaller farms that change hands more easily, but preserve a name that recalls their origin: in tandem with *Ihartzebeherea*, ancient house, we find *Ihartzebereko-borda* (*borda* meaning “shepherd’s hut”—ed.), and so on.

As well as the dispersion whose phases we have just outlined, the inverse phenomenon also happened: within the nebula to which a Basque village may be compared, there appear denser zones of dwellings, the districts. Here, it is the influence of paths of communication that has turned out to have the greatest significance: the houses have attempted to grow closer together, in a more or less haphazard fashion, at a roadside and near a crossroads.

Finally, how—among several equivalent districts—did one of them get to be selected as head of the village? Very different circumstances may have played a part here. The type of feudal township huddled at the foot of a powerful chateau is common elsewhere but rather rare here: still, Maule, Baigorri, and Ezpeleta (Espelette) are quite good examples. At Urruña, Senpere, and Sara (Sare), the proximity of the manors of Urtubie, Saint-Pée, and Lahet certainly constituted a force of attraction, too. More frequently, it appears that it was the building of a church that underscored the preeminence of a particular district. Many local legends turn on the theme of the construction of a sanctuary started at another site in the town: the materials miraculously moved each night to indicate the present site, chosen by God himself. We should probably see this as a distant reflection of the conflicts that in old times arose between rival districts on this issue. On the other hand,

churches—more numerous than is usually believed—are the traces of very ancient pious foundations, priories, and hospices for pilgrims, around which enough dependencies came along to form the nucleus of a village: Bidarraï (Bidarray), Irisarri (Irissarry), and Santa Grazi (Sainte-Engrâce) are clear examples of this type. There are many others that are less immediately obvious: Bastida (Labastide-Clairence) and Izura (Ostabat) are a case—here exceptional, though very widespread in Gascony—of towns created all of a piece to a preconceived plan. Baiona and Donibane Garazi were almost from the start fortified towns built on a key position. But whether it was a strategic point, a feudal estate, or a monastic establishment, one common characteristic inevitably reappears: the topographical value of the site chosen, its favorable situation on ancient regional paths of communication. This is so true that often, districts that are far from the center, but placed at a road traffic intersection, developed in turn to such an extent that they broke off from the town on which they had depended. This is true of Ciboure (in Basque Zubiburu, head of a bridge, today Ziburu —ed.), which became independent of Urruña in 1574. And of Luhuso (Louhossoa)—a district of Makea and Lekorne (Mendionde), at the meeting of several small valleys linking Lapurdi and Lower Navarre—which obtained permission to be raised to the status of a free town around the end of the seventeenth century. And much more recently, the parish of Arrosa (Saint-Martin-d’Arrossa), a district of Ortzaize (Ossès) near a highway and railroad junction, obtained its civil autonomy in a law dated only as far back as 1923. So, in conclusion, we can say that any human agglomeration, whatever may be its age and its past, brings us back, before all else, to a crossing of roads.

Roads

“In the beginning was the road . . .” wrote Joseph Bédier. Nowhere is this axiom verified more than in the Basque Country. The preconceived idea that the *eskualdun* were fiercely isolated is proving less and less sustainable. History and prehistory together agree that this area, with its gentle mountains, and its valleys rising to passes that are accessible at every season, has never constituted a barrier, but, on the contrary, a passage of choice for human migrations, military invasions, commercial exchanges, and spiritual influences. Rospide, Arrospide (from *arotz-bide*, “path of strangers”)—this hamlet, which has become quite a widespread family

name, is still witness today of the traditional vocation imposed on our country by geography.

In general terms, the roads in our region lead to the “ports” (a word that is, throughout the Pyrenees, synonymous with “pass”); via the ports, smugglers continue to establish close, if barely legal, links between the Basque peoples of France and Spain. There is the Izaba Pass (Port d’Isaba), the least passable of all, that goes through Santa Grazi and thus joins Zuberoa to the Erronkaribar (Roncal Valley). There is Larraun Pass (Port de Larrau) that leads to Otsagabia (Ochagavia). There are the ports of Ibañeta, Berdaritz, and Izpegi (Ispéguy) that are already more accessible, at 1,057 m./3,468 feet, 702 m./2,303 feet, and 672 m./2,205 feet, and that link our little (Lower) Navarre of Ultra-Puertos (“beyond the passes” —ed.) to the adjoining valleys of the ancient kingdom, the Aezkoa (Aezcoa) and the Baztan; the ports of Amaiur (Maya; 602 m./1,975 feet), of Belate (Velate; 867 m./2,844 feet), where the road from Baiona to Iruñea-Pamplona climbs up, after crossing the border at the Dantxarinea (Dancharinea) bridge; and the ports of Lizarrieta (Lizarrietta; 507 m./1,663 feet) and Ibardin (315 m./1,033 feet), which link Sara and Azkaine (Ascain) with Etxalar (Echalar) and Bera (Vera), two of the Bortziriak (Cinco Villas or Five Towns) that already, in the time of Pliny the Elder (in the first century), bore the same Celtic name of Pimpe-dunni. Finally, right at the end of the mountain range, the wide gap at Irun, barred by the Bidasoa is crossed by the road and rail lines joining Paris and Madrid.

In the eighteenth century, apart from the three rather rudimentary highways that led from Baiona to Irun, Urdazubi (Urdax), and Orreaga (Roncesvalles/Roncevaux), there seems to have been practically no road that was as yet suitable for vehicles. The modern roads of the Basque Country all date from the nineteenth century, and unless you diverged from their routes you would never really get to know the intimate structure of the country. In fact, the ancient roads—which, on the peaks, often run alongside ancient transhumance paths, marked here and there by dolmens, tumuli, and cromlechs dating from the Bronze or Iron Ages—were suitable only for pedestrians, horse-riders, and, at best, ox-carts. So their trace carefully avoided following the hollows of valleys, so prone to flooding, as well as passing by the clayey lowlands that easily became transformed into quagmires. Also, considerations of military prudence occasionally, in times of trouble, contributed to the laying out

of primitive paths of communication on crests less exposed to enemy ambushes.

So the old roads, heading if possible over the hilltops, were not afraid to tackle really steep slopes if this meant the shortest route, and while they sometimes tarried in zigzags, this was simply so as to link together as many isolated houses as possible. The road from Donibane Lohizune (Saint-Jean-de-Luz) to Senpere cuts straight through the fern patches, while the new road takes the long route, following the river via Azkaine. Similarly, instead of going from Baiona to Donibane Garazi by the defiles of the Errobi (Nive) as is now the case, people would pass at a distance via the moors of Hazparne, finally reaching Irisarri and Apat-Ospitale (Aphat-Ospital) where the Knights of Malta had founded commanderies. First restored by Napoleon for strategic reasons, this road is now the departmental road 26, but many others have not had the same good fortune. They are merely rustic paths, though it is fascinating to discover their traces, with the help of archaeological or toponymic vestiges, or even folklore traditions. Thus, between Maule and Atharratze, *errege bidea*, the royal road climbed over a hillock, now a little removed, called Zenhagia, “the place where you make the sign of the cross.” And indeed, from up there, you can see simultaneously, on their respective mountains, the four greatly venerated chapels of Saint Mary Magdalene, Saint Barbe, Saint Gregory, and Saint Anthony. Their incumbents, according to legend, traveled together and separated here to go and live in the individual hermitages dedicated to them.

The cross of Galcetaburu, near Ainhize-Monjolose (Ainhice-Mongelos) between Donapaleu and Donibane Garazi, represents, as its name indicates, the highest point through which the medieval route, heir of a Roman road, passed from the valley of the Biduze (Bidouze) to that of the Errobi.

The humped fords and bridges, the fortified houses posted at the places most propitious for collecting tolls, and the religious hospices created to protect pilgrims, are all clear evidence of the most ancient routes.

Passage via the coast was long feared because of the wide muddy estuaries of the Aturri (Adour), the Urdazuri (Nivelle), and the Bidasoa. While the construction of a first wooden bridge at Baiona goes back to 1125, there is no mention of the one at Donibane Lohizune before 1476, and it was on a simple ferry that the Premonstratensians of Suberno—a priory founded in 1137—transported travelers from Hendaia (Hendaye)

to Irun. Higher up, where the Bidasoa narrows, Behobia (Béhobie) was for long merely a ford. To avoid those crossings—which usually required payment—the pilgrims (for in the Middle Ages, people traveled along our roads mainly to go to Santiago de Compostela) went through Ahetze, Ibarra (the main town in Senpere at that period) and its hump-backed bridge that leads across a wild ravine to Sara, where Ospitale Zaharra (an old hospital that still exists) was ready to welcome them. Others preferred to take the left turning at Ahetze, across the hillsides, to reach the chapel Saint-Jacques de Serres (rebuilt in the eighteenth century), crossing the ford at Dorria (a large square tower now transformed into a holiday home) and, via Olheta (Olhette) and Ibarra, reaching Bera in Navarre.

One could also follow the pilgrims' footsteps by passing along the route marked successively by the powerful medieval bridge and Romanesque church of Bidarra, the district of Bastida and the severe palace of Urdo at the foot of the sierra of Iparla, and finally the bridge at Baigorri—a single span garlanded with ivy—from which it was possible to reach Orreaga via Aldude (Aldudes).

It is worth mentioning by the way, in connection with these bridges and several others in the region, that none of them was built by the Romans, although this is often stated, against all probability. The bridge at Bidarra, built in a more sophisticated way, could just possibly go back to the fourteenth century; the others often bear the date of their reconstruction in the seventeenth and eighteenth century.

In fact the Romans, whose main interest was in their possessions in Aquitania and Iberia, seem to have been content to link them by a single significant road, the one from Bordeaux to Astorga that, as we are informed by the Antonine itinerary (second century AD), crossed the Basque Country via *Carasa* (perhaps Garris?), *Imus Pyreneus* (Donibane Garazi), and *Summus Pyreneus* (Garazi or the Ports de Cize). From 1150 onward in particular, a period at which they started to be more secure and reliable, most of the pilgrims who, in ever-increasing flocks, made their way to the presumed tomb of Saint James that had been miraculously discovered in Galicia in the ninth century, took more or less the same route as the Roman road. Of the four French routes leading to Santiago de Compostela, the three most noteworthy, those coming from Saint-Martin-de-Tours, from Sainte-Madeleine-de-Vézelay, and from Notre-Dame du Puy, in fact converged on Izura, a sort of *bastide* with its streets laid out in a rectangular grid, a veritable hub of medieval tourism.



The chateau at Latsaga (Laxague), a kind of fortified caravanserai that can still be seen close to Izura, was probably used as a shelter for pious travelers (who were relieved of some of their hard cash for the privilege). Before it and after it, a whole string of priories and churches—Haranbeltz (Harambels), Utziate (Utziat), Apat, Santa Eulalia (Sainte-Eulalie) on the edge of the ford between Donibane Garazi and Uharte Garazi (Uhart-Cize), Eiheralarre (Saint-Michel) at the foot of mount Orizone (Orisson)—guided them to the Real Casa de Roncesvalles (the Royal House of Orreaga —ed.), one of the four great hospices of Christianity. The whole route was thronged by memories—some of them quite real, others perfectly apocryphal—of the disaster that befell Charlemagne's army in 778. Here, around undeniable topographical reminiscences (Val-Carlos, the *Crux Caroli* of Garazi), local traditions, exalted by the Cluniac monks propagating the cult of Saint James, sowed the seeds of the noblest of French epic legends: the *Chanson de Roland* (Song of Roland).

Anyone who wishes to find the traces of this grandiose past today, to follow the French knights as they take part in the reconquest of Spain from the Moors or to understand the piquant tales of Aymeric Picaud or Domenico Laffi, pilgrims of the twelfth and seventeenth centuries, respectively, must here, too, diverge from the excessively modern road that rises in bends from Arnegi (Arnéguy). It has been in service since only 1881. The ancient route—at least the main one, since other paths were apparently also followed—climbs up over the ridges via Pignon Gaztelua (Château-Pignon), Leitzarateka (Leiçar-Atheca), and the Lepeder pass between the Astobizkar (Astobizcar) and the Ortzanzurieta (Orzanzurieta), before reaching the ruins of what is known as the Chapel of Charlemagne at Saint-Sauveur de Ibañeta. But how many shades, less illustrious but far from negligible, might still be evoked there! Princesses and sometimes queens of Spain passed this way: Elisabeth de Valois, betrothed to Philip II, in 1560, Marie-Anne of Neubourg in 1738, and Louise-Elisabeth de France, daughter of Louis XV and future Duchess of Parma, in the following year. Armies, too: in 1512 that of the Duke of Alba, invading Navarre, and under the French Empire the artillery of Marshal Soult. Along this road, whose most famous places belong to the neighboring country, the history of the Basque Country started with, and has continued to be inextricable from, the history of France.

Dwellings

Now that we have seen how human activity gradually shaped the face of the Eskual Herri across the ages, it is at last time to turn our attention to the most enduring expression of this collective labor, the stable characteristic that binds past and present generations intimately together: their dwelling places.

Later we shall see how important was the *etche* in the family and social organization of the Basques; here we will merely examine the house in itself, in its relations with its surroundings and traditional ways of life.

The latter, in fact, have not always enjoyed such an absolute dominion as that which has sometimes, exaggeratedly, been attributed to them. So we can note that the French Basque coast, in spite of an intense seafaring life, does not possess any clearly defined type of fisherman's houses. The old lower-class dwellings of Ziburu and Donibane Lohizune do not differ at all from the other semi-urban houses of Lapurdi, such as those that can be seen in Uztaritze, Senpere, or Ainhoa—and these town houses are themselves differentiated from rural houses only by the proportion of the facades, generally narrower and sometimes one or two stories higher.

In quite different urban houses, such as the ancient dwellings of Baiona, the influence of particular historical circumstances appears highly likely. When we consider these tall dwelling-places, entirely built as tightly packed, half-timbered constructions crossed by lattice patterns, there is nothing to compare them with—in spite of their gently sloping roofs—except the houses of ancient Anglo-Norman towns. Medieval Baiona, an English city for three centuries, thus conserves a few traces of imported architecture.

How, too, can we fail to remember, when faced with the somewhat austere style of the houses in grayish-brown or crimson cut stone of Donibane Garazi, that the Merindad de Ultra Puertos (transmontane county—ed.) was part of Spanish Navarre until 1530? Yet again, history alone—the history of feudal struggles in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries—can explain these many fortified houses and *infançon* houses (*dorre* or *jauregui*; today *jauregi*—ed.) that can be found here and there with their heavy ogival doors, their narrow mullioned casement windows, and their loopholes for shooting with crossbow or arquebus. The relentless addition of fixtures and fittings aimed at exclusively agricultural use have often really spoiled them, so it is on the other side of the



frontier that certain better-preserved specimens can be seen. Nonetheless, to give just one example, the little manor of Ibarla, near Sara, can still provide us with quite a lifelike image of the bellicose atmosphere of those troubled times.

Finally, it would be inappropriate to challenge the action of the historical factor, given that there is, even in the rural house, a correspondence—approximate, but definite—between the spread of the three main types of architecture and the political limits of the three French Basque regions.

These reservations aside, it is indisputable that most Basque houses reveal first and foremost a perfect adaptation to pastoral and agricultural life that was, and is, the substantial basis of the area.

Before describing the main variants of rural houses, we must not forget that almost all of them have been rebuilt since the end of the sixteenth century. The region was ruined by the aftershocks of the wars of religion but very soon recovered under the reign of Henry IV. The feverish spate of building that then took place can be best judged from a report drawn up by the seneschal's office in Baiona and registered at the paymaster's office of Bordeaux on May 25, 1608; it states that in Lapurdi, 3,500 "large, medium and other houses" had been built over the past thirty years. On a house in Haranbeltz and a mill in Azkaine that, in their present state, do not go back beyond the eighteenth century, there are inscriptions according to which one was founded in 984, the other "in the year of the reign of Philip the Fair 1306." Did the primitive houses, doubtless built in a more rough-and-ready manner, and probably also smaller in size, differ much from those that replaced them? Were they, as has been claimed, thatched? Nothing suggests that this was so. It is more probable that rough slabs of schistose stone, which still sometimes roof small annexes or the huts of shepherds in the woods, would have preceded the use of tiles in our region. In addition, the roofing is one of the least permanent elements of dwelling; its superficial modifications did not affect the fundamental data of the plan. And this plan seems to have remained almost unchanged, and this is precisely what to our eyes distinguishes the Basque *etche* (today *etxe* —ed.) from the houses in the Landes or Béarn.

The authentic Basque house—whose layout can be found in Lapurdi as much as in the two Navarres, Bizkaia (Vizcaya), and Gipuzkoa (Guipúzcoa)—is essentially a massive affair. It forms just a single block and brings together its inhabitants, their cattle, and their harvests under



the two gently sloping sides of a single roof of Roman tiles. The ridge of this wide roof, which can always be extended farther should the need arise, always remains rigorously perpendicular to the facade. Sometimes a small section is cut out to give better protection to the back of the house from gusts of wind from the west: this section is called *miru buztan*, “the kite’s tail.” The facade dominates both in terms of the architectural care lavished on it as well as of the way it is as sheltered and sunny as possible and rises at one end of the building, in the shade of the gable that is usually set in a southeast direction. So the plan is, without exception, in the figure of a deep rectangle. The ground floor is often quite elevated, either so as to facilitate the threshing of wheat with a flail, or to allow high carts laden with hay to pass: access to it is gained through a wide double gate (*athe*, today *ate* —ed.). This gives onto the *ezkaratz*, a sort of wide vestibule of hard earth, where the agricultural utensils are kept, and from where the flight of stairs rises. All the rest is—except in very small dwellings—exclusively used by animals. If sometimes a kitchen has been removed from the surface area of the *ezkaratz*, this is usually quite a recent modification. On the other hand, the upper story is reserved just for the inhabitants; apart from the huge kitchen (*sukaldea*) with its hearth, its monumental stone sink, and sometimes a curious stove for vegetable cooking, it generally includes a large reception room (*salha*, today *sala* —ed.) with one or two alcoves, and a few bedrooms (*gambara* or *gela*). Under the eaves are the loft (*bihitegi*) in which the harvests are dried, and the hayloft (*seilharu*) looming over the cowshed. There are often small adjoining roofs, with just one side, lower but parallel to the main roof, sheltering a bake house (*labe*) or a pigsty.

On this traditional plan—which of course can undergo many modifications adapted to particular needs or uneven ground—a slow development has occurred with regard to the materials used. The houses of Lapurdi and of Lower Navarre—linked by intermediary types—represent distinct moments of this progressive transformation, of which the main stages can still be discerned.

As far back as we go, the ground floor of the Basque house seems always to have been built of stone. The same does not apply to the upper part. Originally—and this archaic type can still be seen in Gipuzkoa around Ataun—lodgings and lofts comprised nothing more than one immense framework dressed with large axe-hewn planks and nailed side by side going upward. Subsequently, brick replaced wood as a filling material, which led to an increase in the number of vertical frame walls

and the gradual suppression of the long, slanting crossbeams. Finally, later on, as the use of stone developed, the Lapurdian house preserved merely one sample of the original light mode of construction, just on the facade that had been best preserved from the inclemency of the weather. Aesthetics as much as (if not more than) economics seems to have lain behind this partial continuation of the use of wood, regularly spaced out, painted in a bright color and set off by the use of the white roughcast that coats over the intervals.

This Lapurdi dwelling is characterized by the excellent way it can accommodate its inhabitants. Its architecture can be changed with remarkable ease to fit the most diverse conditions. Variety is far and away its greatest advantage: the facades can be narrow and tall, or low and broad. And indeed, successive enlargements have often been created by adding, either on one single side, or on both sides of the facade, lean-tos that are fused without any break to the slope of the roof, so extending the latter. In this case, the original side walls have become partition walls and, instead of concealing them, the tendency is to leave their extremities in hewn stone standing out from the dazzling whitewash of the facade. They thus take on a decorative function that is set off at every story by slight overhangs. As can be seen from the preceding description, the roof with unequal slopes (considered, quite wrongly, to be the essential feature of Lapurdi houses) is in fact merely a secondary modification, one that is actually quite common. The ingenuity of Lapurdi builders also finds expression in a number of details—sometimes asymmetrical—that stand out with great effect against the uniformity of the panels of wood that are always parallel: outer staircases in stone, *lorio*, a sort of pulled-back awning that sometimes comes before the *ezkaratz*, windows with wooden mullions, wide eaves with curved purlins, and so on. Around the dwelling, and completing its overall appearance, typical alignments of high, flat stones, stuck into the ground, fence off the arable lands.

In Lower Navarre, reconstructions seem to have been, in general, quite late, and thereby show a more advanced development. Stone has finally ended up replacing wood almost entirely. As a result of the abundance of the fine Triassic sandstones, the framing of all the openings tends to assume a remarkable breadth. More strictly architectural, the Navarrese style lends itself less to improvised adaptations; the unequal character of the slopes of the roof becomes relatively rare. On the facade, more or less as wide as it is high, there is a strong sense of symmetry on both sides of a striking central motif: a huge portal with nailed



casements, sometimes rectangular, but often curving into a full arch in Spanish style, often topped by a small mullion bay whose surrounds in hewn stone are combined with those of the door. Lapidary inscriptions, vigorously fashioned, and framed by very typical motifs, further enrich the ensemble, which is already richly decorative. There are no obvious overhangs or partition walls but, on the second story, the loft debouches onto a long wooden balcony that—prettified with a trellis—extends the length of the facade and is commonly supported by a sturdy protrusion of the two walls carrying the gutter. Here, the kitchen is always found on the ground floor, to right or left of the entry vestibule. Access is not direct as it is in Lapurdi: usually, a small enclosure surrounded by a low wall stretches in front of the house and half separates it from the road. While this Navarrese dwelling does not have as much picturesque imaginativeness to it, it still presents a welcoming face, and sometimes has more allure than that of a Lapurdi house.

In the valley of the Uhaitzandi (Saison), it is another elegance, sober but a little frigid, that dominates. Actually, dwellings in Zuberoa all belong to the Béarn type and their contrast with real Basque houses allows the latter to be more easily distinguished. In Zuberoa, the living space for people and at the very least the kitchen—the center of collective life—occupy a notable part of the ground floor. There is not always a story as such, but a huge loft extends under the raised gable of the steep Pyrenean roof. The walls, which make a better impression when they are bare, are made of rolled pebbles, laid out in stacked beds of mortar. The facade, wider than it is tall, usually rises over one of the large sides of the dwelling, but the important thing is that there is nothing compact about the plan. The different elements of agricultural work are divided out in one or several buildings, sometimes fused to the main building at right angles, sometimes completely independent and grouped around a rudimentary yard. In short: the home, the cowsheds, the barns, all (or almost all) have different roofs that were once covered in oak or chestnut clapboards and are now covered in slate.

Indeed, houses in Lapurdi, Lower Navarre, and Zuberoa turn out to be all the more different from one another the closer one draws to the mountains at the border. Conversely, their more characteristic features tend to diminish toward the edge of the region as they come into contact with Gascony and Béarn. In the area of Amikuze (Mixe), around Donapaleu, a sort of Navarrese crossroads that links the north of Lapurdi with Pettarra (Lower Zuberoa), all influences are mingled or

coexist, and several curious transitional houses appear: a Navarrese plan under a tall Béarnais coiffure of scalloped molded tiles, flanked by two very low wings with gently sloping covers in duct tiles.

Finally, there is the house of the “American,” the ex-emigrant who has returned to his native land; with its grey or green shutters, its cubic, unimaginative aspect, its four-sloped roof, and the oval and crescent skylights of its loft, it is spread out pretty much everywhere through the Basque countryside, and holds its place like an affluent housewife, adorned with geraniums.

One last question can be raised about the rural Basque house: from where does it derive its distant origins? Actually, it seems to distinguish itself equally from the two great types of dwelling that share most of the French territory and that, certain ethnographers claim, represent the Latin house and the Gallic house. A rather seductive hypothesis would tend rather to link the Basque house to the lake dwellings on stilts of the aeneolithic age. The evidence on which this opinion is based is still insufficient, in our opinion, for a definite affirmative answer to be given.

Be this as it may, the Basque house remains one of the works in which, in our view, the genius of the race has left its clearest mark.

Portraits of Basques — The Gipuzkoans — The Navarrese — The Béarnais — The Gascons — Inner Minorities — Basque Expansion

Portraits of Basques

While anthropologists are still somewhat uncertain about the exact physical build of the *eskualdun*, psychologists equally disagree about their moral personality. Literature, in fact, has tended to obscure rather than to illuminate the recesses of what is called the Basque soul. The Basques themselves have always been more preoccupied by saving this soul through pious practices than by gaining a better understanding of it through introspective analysis. Only in the twentieth century were any insightful studies by regional specialists published on “the average Basque” and other such similar titles.

Previously, it was only from outside, through the more or less judicious assessments of travelers, that the reactions of the Basque character became known to us. This library may be entertaining, but it should be used with caution. Past centuries saw preconceived ideas about the Basques, exaggerated and often contradictory, following on from one another. Three main phases can be distinguished.

In the Middle Ages, the dominant note was one of terror. Latin chronicles speak of the *inquieta Vascones*, whose incursions the Carolingians were ceaselessly forced to repel. *Chansons de geste* frequently count the *Bascli* among the hordes of Saracens, *Arabis*, and other dangerous infidels. Were these pagans not responsible for the decapitation of Saint Foy of Agen in the third century? Even in the fifteenth century, although they had become Christians, the savagery of the inhabitants of this region and their primitive lifestyle remained the main theme of every

story. Less than a hundred years later, there was a major change: now everyone was talking about the Basques' jovial good temper! The Venetian historian Navagero wrote in 1528: "The people of this region are very cheerful, completely the opposite of the Spanish whose every action is carried out with gravity. The men here are always laughing, joking, and dancing, the women as much as the men." The same thing was noted until the end of the ancien régime. It was then the fashion among the privileged to obtain for themselves the services of a Basque lackey. Their agility became proverbial; the saying "to run like a Basque" dates back to this time. From the nimbleness of their legs (and for no other reason), people deduced their merry personalities. Voltaire's famous words on "those people who live or rather leap around the foot of the Pyrenees and are called *Vasques* or *Vascones*" is the last expression of this prejudice.

The tone was about to be modified one more time. After Rousseau, a new ideology started to haunt people's minds. How could Romanticism have resisted the temptation to seek in the Pyrenees, and more particularly among the Basques, the virtuous man of nature: grave, imposing, noble, and magnanimous, preserved by miracle from the stains of civilization? Augustin Chaho, a brilliant but daring writer, native of Atharratze (Tardets), bears more than a little responsibility for this new psychological incarnation. The most curious thing is that there was indeed a Basque who really embodied what had initially been merely a literary fiction: Ganich of Makea (Macaye), a smuggler famed for his audacity, his probity, and his nobility of character, was, at the time of the first Carlist War, the living model of that ancient Basque who, it was thought, could be seen everywhere.

Contemporary novels have only too often generalized—sometimes turning it into the most insipid cliché—the concept of the dreamy, melancholy, idealistic Basque, the absolute slave of power and ancestral traditions. The best of these works, and the truest, whatever people have said, remains the one that appeared first: *Ramuntcho*. If we make allowances for the novelistic or, more precisely, poetic side of the work, Loti clearly saw several dominant features of the Basque soul: the alternating poles of proud gravity and naïve gaiety, dignity and restraint in social relations, fervent attachment to the past, and finally the power of a religious faith that overcomes the deep forces of a primitive and violent atavism, and so on.

But it is—as we shall see later—by studying the traditional culture that we can best grasp the nuances of the Basque character. Meanwhile, it is not without interest to compare and contrast the opinions of three

or four witnesses, chosen from different periods, from among those who were able to judge without too much haste and in situ the people of which they are speaking. They will give us an idea of the way that opinions about the Basques have evolved, and then of the way their customs and manners themselves have been transformed.

The *Codex of Compostella*, a famous Latin manuscript, the oldest edition of which dates back to around 1140, is a collective work composed by Cluniac monks. It contains, under the perhaps fictitious name of Aymeric Picaud, a very curious Guide for Pilgrims, a narrative that, in spite of its naivety, summarizes long experience and shows a noteworthy accuracy when it comes to all the points currently capable of being verified. In spite of its many exaggerations, we can thus grant a certain credit to its statements that are, alas, not very flattering. Here is a translation:

In this region there are bad toll masters, namely near Garazi [the Ports de Cize], in the town called Izura [Ostabat], in Donibane Garazi [Saint-Jean] and Eiheralarre [Saint-Michel-Pied-de-Port]; they frankly deserve to go to the devil. In fact, they come out to meet pilgrims with two or three cudgels to extort an unjust tribute by force, and if some traveler refuses to yield to their demands, they beat him up and pull the money off him, insulting him and searching his person, even inside his trousers. . . . The ferocity of their faces and likewise that of their barbarous tongue terrifies the hearts of all who see them. . . . It was on this mountain, before Christianity had spread widely across Spain, that the impious Navarrese and the Basques were in the habit not only of robbing the pilgrims going to Santiago, but of “straddling” them like donkeys and killing them. . . . They are a barbarous people different from all peoples, both by their customs and their race, full of wickedness, black in hue, ugly of face, debauched, perverse, treacherous, disloyal, corrupt, dishonest and false, impious and coarse, cruel and quarrelsome, devoid of any noble feeling, steeped in every vice and iniquity . . . and in any case enemies of our people of France. For just a penny the Navarrese or Basque will kill a French person if he can. And yet they are good fighters on the field of battle, but bad at attacking fortresses, regular in the payment of tithes, accustomed to making offerings for the altar.

We need go no further—the Latin of Aymeric Picaud uses words that are barely decent. Let us move on to a magistrate of Bordeaux who was a contemporary of Henry IV. The councilor Pierre de Lancre, although of Basque origin, was extremely frightened of his compatriots, whom he considered to be all fiends in human guise. In spite of this idiosyn-

cratic view, which sometimes leads his judgment astray, many things can be gleaned from the amazing narrative of his criminal investigation in Lapurdi (the País de Labourd) in 1609, since his credulity and his prejudice did not prevent him from being rather a good observer.

Their trade, their conversation and their faith is altogether maritime in nature; they treat all things, once they have set foot on land, just as when they are on the waves and sailing about; always in a hurry and rushing around, they are people who, for the smallest silly thing they set eyes on, run at you and set their daggers to your throat. . . . So lazy and bone-idle that this idleness leads them almost before they are old to some kind of intolerable begging—intolerable, I say, because (being neighbors of the Spaniard) they are marvelously imbued with his pride and arrogance. . . . They are light and mobile of person, both in body and mind, prompt and swift in all their actions, with one foot always in the air, and, as the saying goes, their heads close to their bonnets. . . . They prefer to go about by night, like owls; they love vigils and dances, both by day and by night; and their dances are not reposeful and grave, but loose and turbulent. . . . Whatever they say, they keep their faith; the striving for honor keeps them faithful, even when nothing else would incline them to do so; for they believe that theft is a vileness of soul, and the submission of an abject and downcast heart, showing that it is base and necessitous, even though they pay no consideration to the punishment that the laws decree for this crime. In this Parliament I never saw one who had stolen anything of importance; and, conversing in their region, I never saw anyone asking for alms, nor begging except from foreigners: in short, they are the freest nation there is.

It is clear that, though Pierre de Lancre is far from benevolent in his appraisal, he does agree that the Basques have their good qualities. His description is mainly valid for the maritime populations of the region, who are more turbulent in nature. On the other hand, Louis de Froidour, Grand Master of the Forest Service under Colbert, concentrated solely on the mountain dwellers of Zuberoa (Soule) in his account of circa 1673.

The inhabitants are also very sober . . . so long as they have enough to eat, whatever it may be, they are content. They are no more demanding when it comes to drink; when they run out of wine, cider and apple juice, they are happy to drink water and are just as content as if they had drunk the best wine in the world. But even during shortages . . . they always have cheese and a few fruits and a few bottles of wine or fine cider, in other words a cider unmixed with water, to be able to

give a collation to anyone passing by or stopping off at their home. I myself have experienced this generosity from several peasants. . . . They are extremely pious, I am told: still, their priests are prone to ribaldry, and if we are to believe the monks of Béarn and the Capuchins who have recently become established in Maule [Mauléon], there are many sorcerers and witches. . . . The women are more attractive here than in Béarn and apparently just as well-tempered. The people are all like Basques in temperament, hostile to novelty, jealous of their freedoms, and courageous. . . . They are all addicted to work and especially to the cultivation of the land and the feeding of cattle and as, furthermore, they are extremely concerned about their reputations, there are no beggars anywhere in Zuberoa and nobody there asks for alms.

In the nineteenth century, the specialist Julien Vinson, a fine scholar of the Basques in spite of a few outdated ideological *partis pris*, drew an overall sketch of the natives.

The Basque is naturally intelligent, proud, and very independent. . . . They are doubtless all imbued with prejudices; they maintain age-old superstitions that Catholicism has been unable to destroy; they cleave to even the least important of their customs; but they are at bottom very upright, even though their ignorance, their stubbornness, and the extreme vivacity of their imaginations, often lead them into making false judgments. They are mild and obliging, but irascible and formidable when angry; I do not believe that they are—as has been said—hateful and vindictive. They are ardent and enthusiastic; it takes little to seduce them and little to disenchant them. They are habitually serious, but easily persuaded to join in gambling and the pleasures of the table; then their gaiety becomes noisy and interminable. They offer hospitality in the broadest sense of the term, and make something of a cult of it.

In the view of our contemporary Dr. Jaureguiberry who, himself a Basque, has written the most penetrating analyses of his compatriots, the “average Basque” is certainly never sad—not so much a fatalist, more an Epicurean. Patient, phlegmatic, never in a hurry, unflappably serene when faced with the unforeseeable circumstances of life. Strong-willed to the point of often being obstinate. Sometimes prone to flying into a rage and little inclined to magnanimity toward his adversaries. Perfectly indifferent to politics, “he possesses a superior sense of freedom that has kept him as far removed from bondage as from anarchy. Better than anybody this man of unquenchable independence bears within himself,

discreet, but imperative, a sense for authority—for certain authorities.” And finally, the last characteristic and the one that strikes us as the most decisive: “Whatever may be his place in society, rich or poor, educated or ignorant, an authentic Basque is distinguished by the proud notion, innate within him, of his dignity as a man. The Frenchman will say “to act like a man of honor,” the Englishman “to act like a nobleman”; the Basque says (quite simply) “to act like a man”: “*gizonki*.”

We will leave the reader to extract the most constant elements from the foregoing assessments; it seems of interest now to take a slightly different angle.

Evidently, the temperament of a whole people is a relative thing. It might be thought that an attempt to provide a summary idea of the neighboring populations and the minorities who live within the region will enable us to bring out the real physiognomy of the Basques themselves. And it is this path that we will follow.

In the south, the inhabitants of the areas that prolong the French Basque Country (Navarre and the *provincias Vascongadas*: Gipuzkoa (Guipúzcoa), Bizkaia (Vizcaya), Araba (Álava) are of the same stock and the same language as the inhabitants of our regions. To the north and the east, Gascons of the Landes and Béarnais are Romanized Aquitanians, psychologically more differentiated. Let us say a few words about these groups.

The Gipuzkoans

The Gipuzkoans, whose province borders on our Lapurdi, speak a dialect that is quite close to Lapurdi’s. They have a close attachment to their old idiom. Gipuzkoa is the only one of the provinces where one can still find a number of people who can barely speak Spanish; even in a big city like Donostia-San Sebastian, it is not unusual to hear Basque being used in every social circle. It is the Gipuzkoans who perhaps come closest to the seductive cliché of the patriarchal Basque. Their height, their powerful muscles (this is the region of the *aizkolari* and the *palankari*, who compete to split tree trunks and throw javelins), and a certain *je ne sais quoi*, something more robust and more peaceable, distinguishes them from Lapurdians with whom they have certain affinities. Psychologically speaking, they seem to be characterized by a gentle nature, not at all warlike, with a frank joviality free of malice, a lively and impressionable imagination, and an enterprising spirit.

They thus seem to have changed rather considerably since the bloody feudal struggles between *Gamboinos* and *Oñacinos* and the unbridled banditry that—in the guise of political struggle—they practiced in the Middle Ages against the Navarrese. But these exploits were probably carried out more by turbulent minorities. Henry IV of Castile would not have suppressed them so easily in 1461 if he had not been sustained in that task by popular emotion. In fact, from that date onward, the main characteristic lay in the development of communal institutions, general participation in public functions, and the Gipuzkoans' attachment to their democratic freedoms. Once pacified, the aristocracy—of country stock as everywhere in the Basque Country—soon played, and continues to maintain with some *éclat*, a significant social role. Especially from the eighteenth century onward, marked by the creation of the Sociedad Económica Vascongada de los Amigos del País (Basque Economic Society of the Friends of the Country), the efforts of the great landowners to develop not only agriculture and industry, but also the sciences, literature, and the arts, turned this really tiny province into one of the most advanced in the peninsula. The commercial upper bourgeoisie was not left behind in intellectual terms, and the existence of a governing elite arising from the native soil is, it may be claimed, one of the great advantages enjoyed by the Spanish Basque provinces. Progress is here associated, in an unusual way, with a still archaic ambiance. The most traditional ways of life are found side by side with ultra-modern industrial expansion. You can see peasants digging with the *laya* (*laia* in standardized Basque, a double-pointed spade —ed.), a most primitive instrument, just feet away from large factories and housing projects. Unfortunately the latter attract many nonnative elements that increase the already high density of population and make the ethnic and economic balance of the Gipuzkoa difficult to maintain. The same can be said of Bizkaia, with which we have no direct contact.

The Navarrese

There is a striking contrast between the brilliant but somewhat precarious structure we find in the Gipuzkoa area and the stability enjoyed by neighboring Navarre, where the (less dense) population, as in Araba, has remained almost exclusively immersed in the land. When you cross over from Navarre, you seem to be going back centuries. Everything is changeless there. The region seems to have become rooted not in poverty and sloth, as in other parts of Spain, but in work and abundance, since the

soil, although arid in appearance, is fertile. So the inhabitants, despite their thoroughly simple tastes, are not inclined to sobriety; when the opportunity presents itself, they are inclined to long gargantuan repasts. The Navarrese—those of the mountains in particular—have more than mere affinities with the inhabitants of the Lower Navarre in France; they are one people, the most representative descendants, we believe, of the ancient Vascones. They are above all a realistic and practical people, little inclined to flights of fancy, not very talkative, quite withdrawn, but virile, rough and ready, sometimes violent and quarrelsome. In the civil wars of modern times, young Navarrese have continued to demonstrate the same tenacious heroism as did their ancestors at the time of the Reconquest of Spain from the Moors. More than any of their peers, the Navarrese remain attached to tradition; but—as we ought to make clear—to the historical and religious tradition of the ancient kingdom, in marked preference to their ethnic and linguistic origins. So Basque is continually losing ground in Navarre; the boundary of the ancestral tongue is always growing closer to the mountains and in some places, such as Erronkari (Roncal), reaching deep into their recesses. On this significant point, our Lower Navarrese are far more faithful to their past.

The Béarnais

The Béarnais are the most immediate neighbors of Zuberoans, and it is probably thanks to contact with them that the latter have become, as it were, the Athenians of the Basque Country. Indeed, subtlety of spirit, malice, nimble-mindedness, and diplomacy in social relations are the unquestioned monopoly of Béarnais. From whence can they get these particularities, which distinguish them sharply from the more all-of-a-piece character of the Basques? They definitely do not owe them to their way of life, which is more or less the same. The high valleys—Aspe and Ossau—whose toponymy, like that of Upper Aragon, preserves many traces of names akin to Basque, also show a great ethnographic analogy with Eskual Herri. But the lower-lying land is more fertile, and life there seems always to have been easier. The enduring presence of the waterways from Foix and Albret to Orthez and Pau also spread the ferment of a more refined civilization to Béarn from early times onward. This reinforced—even if it is innate—the discreet, prudent, and courteous nature attributed to this small populace, more Pyrenean than Gascon. Should we also say that one can find in them a certain skeptical temper, completely foreign to the Basques? This may well be particular to people who, converted to

Protestantism by force and hardly ever of their own free will, were later obliged to convert back to Catholicism. It comes as no surprise that these variations in belief have commonly left them feeling rather lukewarm in their convictions.

The Gascons

Aymeric Picaud, who is always to be relied on for a piquant detail or two, produced a portrait of the Gascons in the twelfth century that makes an amusing contrast with that of the Basques: "They are," he writes, "untrustworthy in speech, talkative, mocking, debauched, inclined to drunkenness, greedy, clad in poor and ragged clothes and short of money; and yet they are trained for fighting and remarkable for their hospitality to the poor. Sitting around the fire, they are in the habit of eating without a table and all drinking out of the same cup . . ."

The Gascons who live in the regions adjacent to the Basque Country are the Landais—the *Lanusquets* as they call themselves—from between Chalosse and Marensin. A neighboring variety that is of even more interest to us are the *Charnegous*, a constitutive element that still forms a major part of the population of Baiona (Bayonne); they could also be found in bygone days in Angelu (Anglet) and Biarritz, when the indigenous base had been less submerged by immigrants.

From Marot to Pesquidoux, the type of the Gascon—small, brown-skinned, agile and strong, intrepid and ambitious, cunning and boastful—has inspired such a huge literature that it is difficult to find anything to add. So we will limit ourselves just to the Baioneses who, in the words of the German naturalist Fischer in 1801, was reputed to be "the Gascon of Gascons." Let us be fairer than that and say merely that, in comparison with the Basque who is always taciturn, the person of Baiona loves the sound of his own voice, and fond of facile and ever-flowing eloquence. But is this not in itself merely a side of his expansive nature—the nature of a man who enjoys living in the forum as much as in his own home?

Like all southerners, the Baiones Gascon thrives in noisy activity, in spectacular sporting successes, in politics, in opera music, and in good food. This does not prevent him from taking an interest in the arts and the speculations of the mind, becoming an active businessman, and being the driving force behind the boldest ventures. Léon Bonnat (1833–1922), painter and collector, the economist Frédéric Bastiat (1801–1850), the financier Jacques Laffitte (1767–1844), Cardinal Lavigerie (1825–1892) symbolize these superior aspects of the *genius loci*. And finally, did not

Ferdinand de Lesseps come from very ancient Baiones stock? His name says it all.

Inner Minorities

The Basques are not the only inhabitants of their region. Other individuals, long subjected to a state of exception and more or less assimilated in relatively recent years, continue to live among them, albeit in small numbers.

The most ancient are called *agotak*, a Basque name for those pariahs who used to be found throughout our Southwest under the synonyms of *cagots*, *capots*, *gaffots*, *gabetz*, not to mention the sobriquets of *chrestias*, *gésitains*, *essaurillés*, and so on, all names suggesting outsiders. They were already being mentioned in thirteenth-century texts. One of the most important pieces, concerning those of our region, is the request addressed in 1514 by the *cagots* or outcasts of Navarre to Pope Leo X to be relieved of the insulting restrictions imposed on them in their religious practices. Many signatories of this petition are indicated as being natives of localities in Lower Navarre. They obtained theoretical satisfaction, but in practice their condition remained all but unchanged until the nineteenth century.

The *cagots* were not serfs. Under the protection and jurisdiction of the Church, they enjoyed complete freedom, within the (admittedly very narrow) limits of an existence that excluded them totally from the community. Thus they were exempt from *taille* and all *corvées* and taxes, but in counterpart, no rights of neighborhood were granted them. Toward the end of the sixteenth century, rulings of the Parlement of Bordeaux and the Estates of Lower Navarre, passed at the request of the Basque populace, renewed and ratified the legislation that relentlessly separated out the *cagots* from the rest of the inhabitants: they were forced to wear a distinctive mark on their clothes, in the shape of a truss; they were forbidden to walk barefooted, to bear arms, to frequent public places, to mingle with the faithful in churches and to kiss the cross as they did; finally, and most importantly, they were prohibited to marry or have intimate relations outside their caste—and infringement of this rule sometimes led to the death penalty.

Even though they could possess land (since nothing stopped them from acquiring it), the *cagots* could not indulge in agriculture or rearing, since they were not allowed to sell any produce of these activities. Nonetheless, it appears that they were granted the right to be fishermen

by trade. Their main resource, however, was the craft industry. For a long time they were almost entirely, both by obligation and privilege, woodcutters, carpenters, and joiners. Later on, they also became masons and weavers. From them, too, were recruited most tambourin players and fiddlers. Basque popular arts and folklore often owe a considerable amount to the *cagots*.

The particular features of the state of the *cagots* can be explained by the now indisputable fact that they were originally merely attenuated lepers. The terrible malady of leprosy, spread to Western Europe especially by the Saracen and Visigoth invasions at the start of the Middle Ages, was checked only several centuries later by the continued application of severe prophylactic measures. Next to the lazar houses where, under the aegis of the Hospitalers of Saint Lazarus, the most severely affected individuals were isolated, there grew up hamlets where all those who presented even ambiguous signs of hereditary leprosy lived as if in families. Until the end of the sixteenth century, doctors—including the most famous, such as Ambroise Paré—did not change their minds about the leprosy of the *cagots*. Later on, as the symptoms continued to become less evident, a time came when the scholars, who could no longer understand why the *cagots* had been proscribed, started to build up baroque hypotheses on the ancestry of the *cagots*, considered to be a race apart. The most widespread of these opinions—which superficial writers sometimes continue to spread—is wrongly based on the sound of their name, so that the *cagots* are seen as the remainders of the Goths, who were believers in the Arian heresy. Neither their family names, nor their forenames (similar to those of other Basques), nor their ethnic type (which cannot be determined with precision), corroborate this assertion. On the contrary: in some of the physical blemishes that folk tradition attributes to them (the absence of an earlobe seems to be the least well-founded)—blemishes that have continued to appear among certain of their descendants until the present day—modern medicine recognizes the undeniable traces of Saint Lazarus's evil, leprosy.

As the *cagots* gradually ceased to look any different from normal human beings, they became less inclined to tolerate their shackles. In 1684, they won their case; but until the end of the eighteenth century, a whole series of conflicts arose between them and the populace, which—in spite of the interventions of a royal power enlightened by thoroughgoing medical research—continued to victimize them as much as in the past.

Only recently have these iniquitous prejudices finally faded away; the Basques no longer distinguish the *cagots* from the rest, but the region

conserves easily recognizable traces of their ancient presence. Many churches still possess the small side door with the stoup that was reserved to them. In Lower Navarre, hamlets such as Maddalena (La Madeleine), Harrieta, and Portaleburu around Donibane Garazi (Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port), Xubitoa (Chubitoa) near Anhauze (Anhau), and Mitxelenea (Michelenea) in Baigorri (Baïgorry) still have some of the wretched hovels in which they festered, with just a tiny vegetable garden.

It is curious to note that several of these *cagot* districts are these days inhabited by Gypsies. This is easy to explain by the local history of this other minority, much less worthy of interest. The Gypsies of the Basque Country are identical with all those who—driven from India, it is said, by the persecutions of Tamerlane—appeared in Europe during the fifteenth century. Included in the expulsion of the Mudéjars and Jews of Spain after 1570, many of them invaded the French Basque Country, where the closeness of the frontier made it easier to practice the semi-legal trades from which they commonly made their living. Their pernicious influence was doubtless far from negligible in the spread of witchcraft that infested the region at about the same time. The Basques sometimes felt a shame-faced attraction toward them, but viewed these undesirables, so different from them, with great hatred and contempt. More than once, they mercilessly hunted them down. After all, the Estates of Lower Navarre offered a reward of forty-five livres (the French currency until the adoption of the franc in 1795 —ed.) to anyone who captured one of these vagabonds. And it was permitted to shoot at runaways.

Nonetheless, in Amikuze (Mixe), Garazi (Cize), and Arberoa (Arbéroue), as on the coast of Lapurdi, their tenacity gradually succeeded in wearing down any resistance. They were eventually tolerated, though their misdemeanors were still feared. By 1788, their number had apparently increased to nearly six hundred. Nevertheless, moved by the complaints that were periodically made about them, the authorities frequently decreed that they be expelled—though their orders never completely succeeded. The most radical of these round-ups came in 1802, but the measure that was meant to seal it—deportation to the colonies—never came off. Most of them returned home. Furthermore, these prescriptions affected only the Gypsies who had no roof over their heads. Now—and this is rarely met with elsewhere—many of them had become relatively sedentary, thanks to unions with the *cagots*. This was a natural and inevitable alliance between two groups of people both excluded from the community. The newcomers were endowed with a vigorous racial atavism, and they rapidly absorbed the degenerates who agreed to

take them in. So their physical type imposed itself to the exclusion of the rest; it is preserved mainly around Donapaleu (Saint-Palais), Mehaine (Méharin), Izpura (Ispoure), and Aintzila (Aincille). The Gypsies of these localities, indeed, seem relatively settled in character. They are basket makers, boilermakers, or colliers, but they prefer to be traders in horse or cattle, where their cunning can bring them more substantial profits. Basque folklore often waxes ironical at their exploits. Of their ancient Romany tongue they have preserved only a restricted vocabulary that they mix with French or Basque, when they do not wish others to understand them.

The *Cascarots*, the coastal population of Ziburu (Ciboure) and Donibane Garazi, are also the product of interbreeding between *cagots* and Gypsies, but healthier conditions of existence have turned them into quite a fine race, robust and teeming with vitality. Long ago, the agile Cascarots, a basket perched on their heads, would run barefoot as far as Baiona to sell their fish, and came back just as swiftly. Today, they have almost completely been assimilated, and their ethnic character is no longer that apparent. Their very name of *kachkarot* has a somewhat obscure meaning in Basque, since it is also the name that Lapurdians and Lower Navarrese give to the troupes of Basque dancers who go around asking for money at carnival time; no satisfactory explanation of this detail has yet been given.

Basque Expansion

One quite frequently hears people claiming that the Basques as a people are distinguished by a complete absence of exceptional individuals. Such a claim forgets that—if we combine the Basques of France with those of Spain—there are fewer than a million souls to choose from. Given this fact, it is, on the contrary, surprising to discover the preponderant and often leading role played by the Basque elite, in every period and every field, among our neighbors in the Iberian Peninsula as well as in Latin America.

Even if we restrict ourselves to the hundred thousand or so French Basques, it would be unfair not to remember that they have given birth to a great prelate such as Bertrand d'Echaux (1556–1641) who, in his time, was active both in politics and religion; to a soldier from Baigorri who became Marshall Harispe (1768–1855); to a corsair from Biarritz, Dalbarade (1743–1819) who was, during the Revolution, minister for the French Navy; to Rear-Admiral Dornaldeguy, of Urruña (Urrugne; 1763–

1865); and to Admiral Jaureguiberry (1815–1887), born in Baiona but whose family was originally from Azkaine (Ascain). In the field of the sciences, we can name the following: Renau d'Elissagaray, from Armendaritze (Armendarits; 1652–1719), the illustrious engineer of the armies of land and sea under Louis XIV; Antoine d'Abbadie d'Arrast (1810–1897), an explorer of genius, and his younger brother Arnaud who, had France only supported him more effectively, might have won for her the protectorate of Ethiopia; Father Armand David, of Ezpeleta (Espelette; 1826–1900), the eminent naturalist; and so on. But almost everyone has forgotten the Navarrese doctor Juan de Huarte, of Donibane Garazi, in spite of the commemorative plaque in his hometown: his book *Examen de Ingenios*, translated several times in the seventeenth century, set out the first principles of career guidance. And who knows that tungsten, a rare metal from which the filaments of our electric bulbs are made, was isolated around 1783 by Elhuyar, born in Logroño, but son of French Basques, and professor of physics at the College of Bergara (Vergara)?

However, the Basques have displayed their talents most vigorously in the spiritual realm. While the Gipuzkoan Saint Ignatius of Loyola (Loyola; 1491–1556) was creating the Society of Jesus, his friend and disciple, the Navarrese Jesuit Saint Francis Xavier, from Jatsu (Jaxu; 1506–1552) was opening the way to the overseas missions. A little later, Duvergier de Hauranne, Abbé de Saint-Cyran (1581–1643), a Baiones of Basque stock, inspired Jansenism. In this way, we can state without exaggeration that the two main currents of religious thought that, over and above Catholicism, shook the whole of Europe for such a long time, sprang from Eskual Herri. This is quite a significant fact.

If we study the biographies of these various representative personalities, we find that they found their main field of activity and their renown outside of their native region. Since they did not make a career for themselves outside of their province, someone like Jacques de Bela (1586–1667), or Arnauld d'Oihenart (1592–1667), both from Zuberoa, are known today only as scholars; yet they were major thinkers, among those brilliant universal men of the Renaissance. Their example underlines the need that the Basques have always felt of leaving home so as to make a path for themselves through the world. And this leads us to an examination of the more general phenomenon of Basque expansion.

From time immemorial, a high birthrate together with the inadequate resources of the region, and also with a system of succession that subordinated the individual to the family, meant that a great number of Basques had to become expatriates if the demographic balance of the

Basque Country was to be preserved. In the Middle Ages and under the ancien régime, the profession of soldier or taking a naval commission acted as sufficient outlet for enterprising but impoverished younger sons. Already, however, some of them were heading off to try their luck beyond the seas, “in the Indies,” as they said in those days when referring to the Americas, whence the name *Indianoak* given to those who had enriched themselves in this way.

Still, it was only in the nineteenth century that the exodus swelled to an abnormal degree. The blame can partly be laid at the feet of the Spanish colonies in Latin America: they had gained independence and now urgently needed a bigger labor force. Hence the ravages of the active propaganda embarked upon throughout the Basque Country by emigration agencies and navigation companies—sometimes quite unscrupulous—that made big profits from picking up commissions and transporting workers. These calculating campaigns would probably not have borne so much fruit if the disastrous consequences of the law of succession of 17 Ventôse Year II, laying down the equal sharing of rural property, had not ended up ruining a great number of Basque peasants, who had thereby fallen prey to the touts. Be that as it may, the figures speak for themselves: in sixty years, from 1832 to 1891, the 112,000 Basques of France sent a contingent of 80,000 persons into emigration—an annual average of 1,330 individuals. And it is even accepted that the real total—if those who set sail secretly are taken into account—was greatly superior. Fortunately, during the same period, the excess number of births over deaths represented 88,151 units: thanks to this, the population as a whole did not shrink, in spite of this serious hemorrhage. From 1897 to the end of 1921, Zuberoa and Lower Navarre, the main centers of emigration, apparently provided the New World with 19,416 of their children. One may regret the fact that successive French governments, instead of limiting themselves to controlling emigration, did not direct it to certain of our colonies where the Basques would have been able to work wonders, just as much as they did elsewhere. From another point of view, one may deplore the way that our emigrants headed, alternately, to countries that were so very different: to Argentina and Uruguay to begin with; later, to Chile, Mexico, and California; eventually to Canada and Venezuela. Thus dispersed among populations that were superior in numbers, they missed out on an opportunity to rebuild a new Basque Country: the idea of creating such a country was not a mere fantasy—witness the French Canadians who so successfully increased their numbers, organized themselves, and preserved their language.

If the earliest emigrants experienced many disappointments, the promises that had been made to them were not entirely illusory—otherwise, the flow would soon have dried up, whereas in fact it simply became more regular. These days, we do not see the mass departures, heading off into the wild blue yonder, of those heroic periods, but as each family possesses, more or less, relatives on the other side of the Atlantic, it often happens that young people—a few hundred of them every year—set off on board ship to find a job that has been secured for them in advance in the Americas. Obviously, these latecomers have less and less chance of making the—sometimes fabulous—fortunes that were still being made not so long ago, but they can still, before they grow old, and if they work hard, bring home enough for a comfortable life. Indeed, no Basque leaves home without some hope of returning; only total failure, or a success beyond his wildest dreams, will keep him on the other side of the ocean for good. In most cases, it is to his native village that he returns to start a family or simply to enjoy the profit of his labors.

It is remarkable to see the extent to which transplantation brings out in Basques or their immediate descendants latent qualities that would probably never have developed in their traditional framework.

Once he has crossed the seas, this modest tender of the land, this shepherd content with his lot, often becomes an enterprising tradesman, a creator of large-scale businesses, or even a first-rate politician. In comparison with other races of emigrants who remain confined to a subaltern social rank, the Basques, in spite of their relatively restricted number, have long since assumed a major place in the governing elite of the whole of Latin America. Military men, senior civil servants, heads of government—their names can be found everywhere. Coming originally from Donibane Garazi, from Sara (Sare), and from Dantxarinea (Dancharinea), Juan Campisteguy, president of Uruguay, Irigoyen, president of Argentina, and Norberto Quirno, vice president of Argentina, are examples, taken from a host of others equally striking, of the credit and authority enjoyed by the Basques in that part of the New World.

The emigrants who have definitively settled in their adopted countries still often preserve, quite touchingly, the cult of their homeland. They form close-knit associations to maintain traditions, publish Euskara newspapers, found schools, and in particular perform noble and useful communal services—such as the *Eskual-Etchea* (Basque center—ed.) created in 1904 by a Zuberoan, Martin Errecaborde, from Zalgize (Sauguis)—to give aid to new arrivals, and to care for aged or unfortunate uprooted persons. Basque solidarity is not an empty phrase;

it can, as the need arises, demonstrate its activity even across the Atlantic: the Luro Foundation in Izpura, the Agricultural Institute established by Lesca in the Château de Garro near Lekorne (Mendionde), gifts to the Little Seminary in Uztaritze (Ustaritz) and to the Basque Museum in Baiona, and so many other similar benefits are owed by the French Basque Country to its “Americans.”

We can mention, for the sake of curiosity, the splendid gift (albeit one that remained a fantasy) made by Léon Urthuburu, former vice consul of France in Guayaquil, Ecuador, who in 1860 bequeathed to his home village of Barkoxe (Barcus) an entire island, that of Floriana in the Galapagos archipelago! The small Zuberoan community endeavored for a long time—but alas without success—to gain possession of this inheritance, which was to remain a mirage.

In the family context, the generosity of émigrés on whom fortune has smiled finds a more modest, but no less useful way of expressing itself. It is often these émigrés who, by their labor, have managed to save the ancestral home from debt or to buy it back. This is a tradition that dates back centuries—witness the moving inscription below, on an old dwelling in Ainhoa:

THIS HOUSE CALLED GORRITIA WAS
BOUGHT BACK BY MARIE OF GORRITI MOTHER OF LATE JEAN
DOLHAGARAY WITH THE SUMS SENT BY HIM
FROM THE INDIES WHICH HOUSE CANNOT NOW BE SOLD
OR MORTGAGED. DONE IN THE YEAR 1662

The Origin of the Basques: Different Theories — Prehistory — Is There a Basque Race? — From Cavemen to the Vascones — The Sources of Euskara — An Overall View

The Origin of the Basques: Different Theories

Like the squaring of the circle, the origin of the Basques is a riddle that started to preoccupy human curiosity very early on. Aymeric Picaud tells us that, in the twelfth century, they were commonly considered to be Scots transported into Spain by Julius Caesar! We should not smile too much at such a simplistic explanation: equally, if not more, extravagant propositions have been circulating since then, and even these days are sometimes repeated in the writings of intrepid amateurs.

What exactly is the problem? Basically, it resides in a linguistic anomaly: at the edge of a Western Europe that belongs exclusively to the domain of Indo-European languages, and later surrounded on all sides by Romance dialects derived from Latin, Euskara, whose basic structure cannot be linked to any of the neighboring idioms, presents itself as a sort of perfectly isolated island, a surviving vestige of vanished tongues.

Geological upheavals, the differentiation of the human race, prehistoric and historic migrations—all the closely related problems that might help to solve this primordial riddle have in fact merely made it more complicated. The same goes for every piece of scientific research. Truth is never simple. Under any provisional approximation, we always end up discovering a richer and more complex reality, knowledge of which becomes the fiefdom of specialists alone. These days, we can say that the Basque problem has gained in depth what it has lost in breadth.

Close critical examination has ruined most of the theories put forward, quite mistakenly, by people who are often ingenious and cultivated, but not sufficiently up to date with rigorous methods of investigation, which alone can bear fruit.

The history of theories is now of purely historical interest, even though it is often entertaining. We have previously suggested that it be divided into three great periods based on the three stages of human evolution according to Auguste Comte: the theological, metaphysical, and positive eras. This is an agreeable and convenient theory, though, chronologically speaking, it cannot be taken too literally, since in the field of Basque studies we also find, with a few rare precursors, a host of those whose attitudes are mired in the past.

For the Bascophiles of the theological age, the problem, so to speak, did not actually raise itself. If we ignore the small personal divergences, they accepted as a certain tradition that the Basques were descended from Tubal, son of Japhet and grandson of Noah, the patriarch who had come from Armenia to people the Iberian Peninsula exactly one hundred and thirty-one years after the Flood. It ensued that Euskara was the primitive language of humanity, placed by the Creator himself on the lips of our first parents. Under the influence of Celtic enthusiasts who claimed the same glorious ancestry for Lower Breton, these baroque ideas enjoyed an extraordinary vogue in the eighteenth century. Perocheguy, from Ainhoa, Dominique Lahetjuzan, from Sara (Sare), and Iharce de Bidassouet, from Hazparne (Hasparren), are the most amazing Basque representatives of that glittering array of autodidacts who claimed a priori: "Basque is the original language: the divinity of Genesis proves as much, as vice versa the originality of Basque proves the divinity of Genesis." So it was essentially just a matter of verifying, thanks to Euskara, the authentic meaning of all the names in the Bible, and in addition those of mythology, of geography, of ancient and modern history. On this view, it would be possible to find traces scattered among all languages of the authentic remains of the earliest ages, transmitted by human beings in their wanderings ever since the events of the Tower of Babel. Thus, Eve came from *ez-ba*, "no-yes," since "It was natural that Adam in the midst of his joy should give his wife a name that would perpetuate the memory both of his deprivation and of his possession." The kings of France were of Basque stock, since Bourbon comes from *buru-on*, "good head." Their residence of Versailles was definitely originally populated by boiler-makers: *bertz-guileak*. Indeed, according to certain authors, all Basque words, even their roots, not to mention each of the letters that composed

them, were felt to possess a hermetic meaning that was the key to Revelation! If we ignore the element of pure imagination at work here, it is easy to see that at the basis of all these pseudo-etymologies lay an error that was widespread in that period: on the one hand, all these writers were unaware that linguistic phenomena are almost unconscious, and certainly instinctive in character, and that a word is not a logical definition, but merely the sensible sign of the object or idea it represents. On the other hand, they established as an axiom that Euskara was a language that had been created all at once, perfect, absolutely rational, and above all immutable—assertions that are impossible to maintain these days.

The same prejudices, more or less, were to be found among a few freethinkers who presaged—albeit from afar—the next age, in that they tried to show that the Basques (wrongly named Cantabrians) were directly descended from various peoples of antiquity: Hebrews, Egyptians, Etruscans, Phoenicians, Celts, or Iberians from the Caucasus, and so on. We sometimes see these old ideas raising their heads here and there, draped in new but tawdry rags and often not much better than these drapings. A more original and seductive theory, which has become fashionable recently, would make the Basques the last remnants of the inhabitants of Atlantis, that sixth part of the world whose brilliant civilization, destroyed by a cataclysm, was described by Plato. However, geologists unanimously state that Atlantis must have sunk beneath the waters of the sea during the Tertiary Period, whereas—at least so far—the most ancient and hesitant traces of humanity on our globe do not appear any earlier than the Quaternary. This objection is far from negligible.

With Wilhelm von Humboldt and his book *Investigations into the Early Inhabitants of Spain with the Aid of the Basque Language* (1821),* the metaphysical age began. From henceforth, real scholars would be arguing with each other in passionate controversies for or against the traditional Iberian theory, to which the great Prussian philologist had given a completely new lease of life. The supporters of the Iberians—Louis Lucien-Bonaparte, Luchaire, Campion, and above all Schuchardt—replaced Humboldt's rather inadequate arguments by new and much more conclusive ideas. Conversely, Bladé, Julien Vinson, and Van Eys went so far as to reject the term "Iberian" in any but a geographical sense, and

* Selections of this work are translated as "Revision of the Research on the Primitive Inhabitants of Spain through the Basque Language," in Juan Madariaga Orbea, ed., *Anthology of Apologists and Detractors of the Basque Language* (Reno: Center for Basque Studies, 2006), 495–503.

claimed that the Basques had never inhabited a territory that extended much beyond what it is nowadays. In any case, both groups felt the need to go back further in time and link Euskara to other linguistic groups. These attempts were pursued in the most varied directions—Finno-Ugric languages, Berber, Native American and Japanese languages, Eskimo dialects, and so on—but were often based on resemblances in vocabulary, and all turned out to be equally disappointing. The affinities they pointed to were purely external and could usually be explained—when they were not simply fortuitous—by a similar degree of evolution.

At least these endeavors have had the advantage of bringing out the need, while there is still time, to deepen our knowledge of the Basques themselves. So, around 1890, the current positive age began, characterized by a relative abandonment of polemic. Vast syntheses, acknowledged as too sketchy, were provisionally shelved. Researchers are now specialized in the exploration of restricted areas but—thanks to congresses, reviews, museums, libraries, and centers of regional studies set up in both France and Spain—increasingly able to collaborate and to keep *au fait* with general developments. Together with history and linguistics, the development of new sciences (anthropology, prehistory, ethnography) has started to enrich the Basque question with unexpected insights that are not always easy to reconcile. In any case, the contradictions may just be apparent, since—as has finally been realized—the race and the language of a people are not necessarily linked. Let us now try to give a brief idea of the results obtained by different lines of investigation, before summing up the overall view that can provisionally be deduced from them.

Prehistory

Investigation into prehistory is a science that is barely a hundred years old. In order to produce results, it needs to employ a minute technique that has only relatively recently been perfected. This explains why most of the discoveries made in our region in the last century were gathered without adequate details about their origins, and are of somewhat limited value.

In prehistoric archeology, serious inductions can be built only on objects that are situated as rigorously as possible in space and time. So it is not enough just to indicate the exact place of their provenance; as they are extracted, their position needs to be precisely noted, as does the level of the layer from which they are taken, since the greater or lesser depth indicates to a large extent their relative age. This is the principle behind

the enduring and complex methods put into practice by the Basques since 1912, first by Passemard, then by the Comte de Saint-Périer, either in the shelter of Olha, or in the cave of Izturitze (Isturits), which remain the two richest deposits that have hitherto been explored in the French Basque Country.

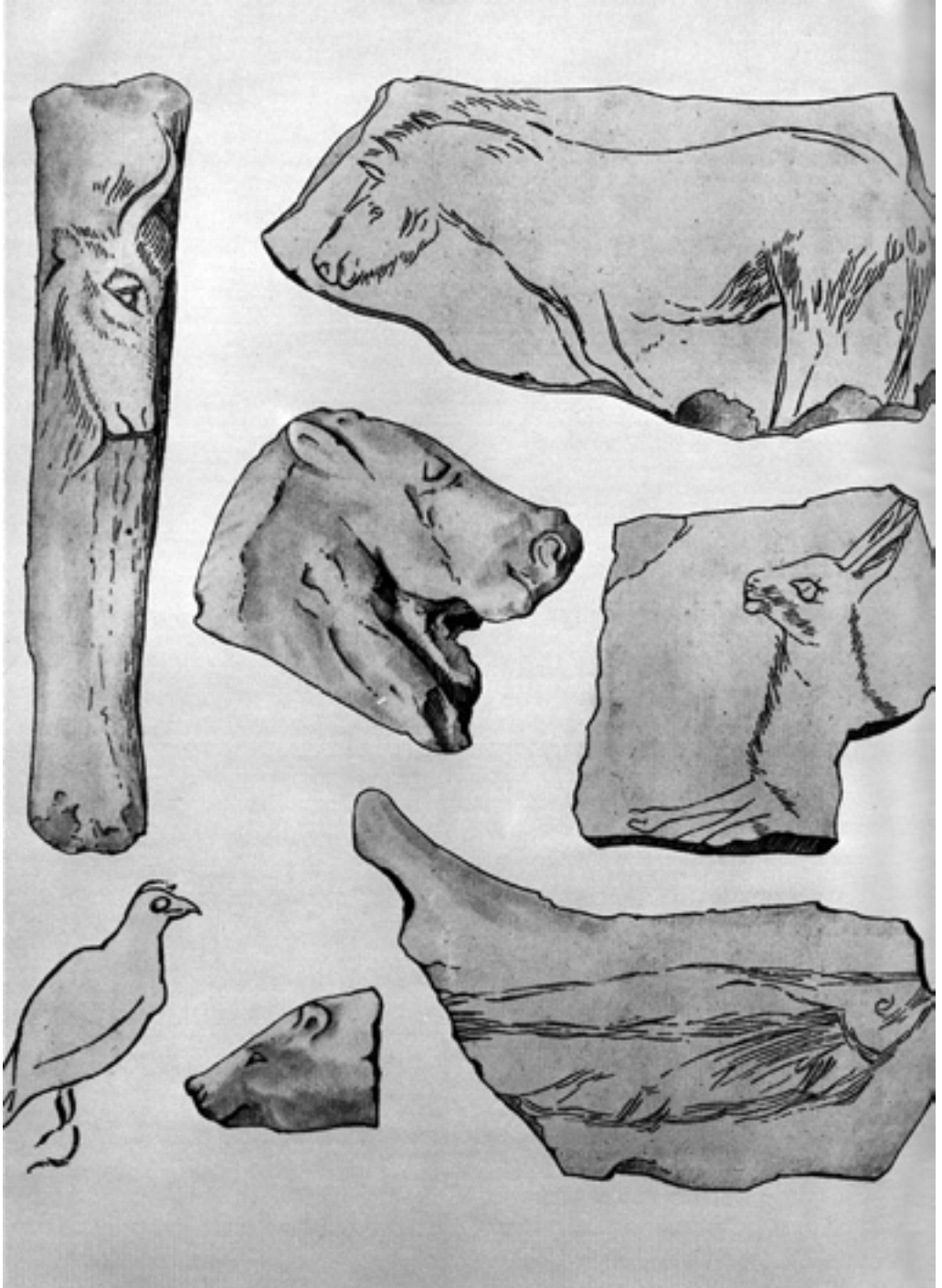
Our region has provided few indisputable remains from the Lower Paleolithic—the first rudimentary stages of the age of carved stone. Admittedly, it has been claimed that in neighboring Chalosse traces of a very primitive pre-Abbevillian industry, characterized by flint stones coarsely hewn into trihedral shapes, can be found, but there are still some doubts about this.

In the Middle Paleolithic, Mousterian industry was largely represented at the base of the shelter under the rocks at Olha, near Kanbo (Cambo) on one of the ancient terraces of alluviums of the Errobi (Nive). Izturitze also shows Mousterian layers at a great depth, broken by a thick level at which hundreds of bear skeletons lie entangled. These bears had managed to drive the men out and occupy the lair for centuries.

However, in this last deposit, it is mainly the Upper Paleolithic, with its three great stages—the Aurignacian, the Solutrean, and the Magdalenian—that we find represented in exceptional breadth and continuity.

On the sides of a hill that acts as a limit to Izturitze and Donamartiri (Saint-Martin d'Arbéroue), the famous prehistoric cave stretches out beneath the territory of both towns. Some thirteen meters (forty-three feet) below there is another cave, that of Otsozelaia (Oxocelhaya), discovered in 1929 and famous for its curious draperies of stalagmites, but that does not seem to have served as a habitat. Even farther down, the little river Arberoa (Arbéroue) crosses at its base the limestone hillside in a third subterranean passage that it has bored out in the same way as it had created the previous ones.

The humans who had chosen this site in which to live survived for millennia mainly from fishing and hunting. Extinct animal species such as the mammoth, or those which, like the reindeer, now haunt the polar regions alone, coexisted in our part of the world with most representatives of our current fauna. In Izturitze, one can not only find the countless bones of those dismembered beasts of prey, as well as the weapons—arrowheads, assegai, and harpoons made of flint, or of reindeer antlers or bone—that were used to kill them. A great number of works of art inspired by the veneration of animals have also been discovered there. The dimensions and techniques vary considerably: engravings,



bas reliefs, and even real sculptures in the round. Only painting is missing. Engravings whose outlines have been cut into sections of bone are particularly common; their most frequent theme is the horse's head, as this was the favorite prey of the hunters. The salmon is also reproduced quite frequently. Representations of human beings are always of inferior craftsmanship and are extremely rare. On the other hand, the realism of the depictions of animals—especially from the Magdalenian—bears witness to an extraordinary power of observation. Outlines of arrows drawn onto certain of these images give us a glimpse of the practices of bewitchment that partly motivated the creation of all these works of art. Primitive man thought that he could already master the environment by magical means: he had a complex mentality. In addition, even purely decorative art was not unknown to him; this can be deduced from the rods of bone (whose exact use is still unknown) that are adorned with great care by the most varied carvings: diamonds, chevrons, circles, spirals, and so on.

Toward the end of the Paleolithic, profound modifications in the climate, which had an effect on the fauna, altered the conditions for life. Izturitze stopped being inhabited until the age of copper: a curtain of stalagmites, which needed centuries of total abandonment to be formed, sealed the deposit, which thus remained wonderfully intact.

While we have dwelled somewhat on this stage, which is the one hitherto most completely explored, it would be a great mistake to imagine that it is unique. Even without the well-known cave at Sara, a remarkable prehistoric habitat, we can presume without risk of error that the limestone subsoil of Eskual Herri, which is very favorable to the formation of caves, conceals other deposits that may be just as significant. Several of them, indeed, have been recognized, in recent years by the Abbé J. M. de Barandiaran and some of his pupils from the Basque Research Institute Ikuska. Particularly worth mentioning are the first wall paintings in the region, discovered and studied by G. Laplace-Jauretche at Etxeberriko karbia (Etcheberriko-kabia) and Xaxixiloaga (Sasiziloaga) in the forest region of the Arbailak (Arbailles), in Zuberoa (Soule); these date back to the Aurignacian or Upper Magdalenian, and constitute a valuable stage that was still missing from between the decorated Cantabrian caves and those of the Périgord.

Something of a pall of darkness extends across the following period, known as the Mesolithic, as well as across the Neolithic, the age of polished stone. There have been few traces of these found in the French

Basque Country up until now, apart from a few discoveries made in the lignite of the beach at Mouligna, near Biarritz.

The Aeneolithic, the Copper Age followed by the Bronze Age, witnessed the development of new modes of life, as evidenced by the presence, in zones that are still today the center of shepherding activities, of several megalithic monuments: tumuli and dolmens. Many of the latter have been scientifically explored in Northern Spain; in our region, they have up until now been located and cataloged, rather than being properly excavated.

In the Iron Age (whose term brings us almost up to the historic period) belong cremation burials, surrounded by cromlechs, circular enclosures of standing stones. There is a well-known group of seventeen on Okabe (the Pic d'Occabé), in Irati (Iraty), and others have been indicated in Lapurdi (Labourd), especially on the Hartzamendi and Larrun. The Basque peasants, who call them *baratz* (enclosures), know by tradition that they are tombs; "English soldiers," they suppose, when they do not attribute them to the Moors or the Gentiles, or even to the mythical creatures known as *lamina* (or *lamia* —ed.).

It is perhaps to the same epoch, known as the Hallstatt period, that certain artificial hillocks and entrenched enclosures should be assigned. They are commonly called "Caesar's camps" or "Roman camps," such as the one situated between Kanbo and Itsasu (Itxassou) and another that rises right in the village of Donazahhare (Saint-Jean-le-Vieux).

From the brief inventory we have just drawn up, it appears that in spite of the milestones already established, there are still many gaps in our overall knowledge of the primitive population of the French Basque Country. Admittedly, many details of the portrait can be completed if we take into account, especially for the Aeneolithic, of the fruitful research being carried out on the other side of the frontier. Finally, it is clear that the Basque question itself constitutes but one part of the more general problem of human migrations and the intermingling of primitive cultures in the Iberian Peninsula and the Southwest of France. So it is only on the basis of all the data obtained on the various points of this extended territory that we can—as Bosch-Gimpera has been the first to show—try to imagine in outline the way in which the Basque people came into being.

However, before we sketch out this overall view, we believe it necessary to examine the evidence that anthropology can provide.

Is There a Basque Race?

Anthropology initially aroused great hopes for an understanding of the Basques, then endured a period when little progress was made. Over the last few years, it seems to have led to some important factual conclusions.

To be sure, if we confine ourselves just to physique, the evident existence of a Basque type has long since been recognized, with certain individuals appearing to combine the different elements of it to the maximum degree. But the assessment of this type does not always agree—far from it—with the objective data of scientific anthropology, uniquely based on statistical averages. However, it is not impossible that certain Basques, of an exceptionally characteristic gait, represent examples of these almost absolute throwbacks to the primitive type: Mendel's laws of heredity have rigorously demonstrated the momentary possibility of such a type, even among intermixed populations. Curiously, a Zuberoan proverb expresses the same observation in a picturesque form: "*Ehun urthetarik uhaitza bere bidialat eta chahal muthur beltza behi muthur beltz bat izan lekhialat.*" ("Every hundred years the river returns to its bed and a black-muzzled calf appears where there was a black-muzzled cow.")

Be that as it may, the secondary characteristics of the Basques are not all that distinctive. They are neither exclusively tall nor small: their height tends simply to be greater than the average. There are almost as many blonds as brunettes among them, and as many people with straight hair as curly hair, but twice as many with rather frizzy chestnut brown hair. Their eyes are of various colors, but tend to be on the dark side, though not excessively so. More precisely, they have clear complexions, neither olive nor swarthy. They are pure white people. The great majority of aquiline noses confirm that they have nothing in common with black or Asiatic peoples.

Basically, the value of all these external signs is very relative. Only numbers can be usefully compared. So anthropologists attach much more importance to the figures that measure the relations between the dimensions of the different parts of the body and particularly the skull.

In this field, in the middle of the last century Broca carried out the first investigations on skulls from Zarautz and Donibane Lohizune (Saint-Jean-de-Luz), coastal localities of very mixed populations. These investigations carry hardly any weight because they are based on inadequate and poorly chosen data. The measurements subsequently carried out by Dr. Collignon on a great number of conscripts brought before

the board of examiners remain perfectly valid, but only for the French Basque Country. Translated into current terms, they can be summed up in the following way: An elongated thorax in the shape of a truncated cone, with very broad shoulders. A narrow pelvis and relatively spindly limbs. A very curved backbone, which gives a particular grace to the gait. A triangular facial appearance, due to a very marked shrinking of the face toward the chin, in contrast to an exceptional swelling of the cranium at the level of the temples. It is this last detail—the most decisive—that makes it difficult, following its degree of accentuation, to classify the Basques among the brachycephalic, with short and wide craniums, or among the dolichocephalic, with long and narrow craniums. According to Aranzadi, whose more recent investigations have been based on a much wider sample taken from all the peninsular Basque regions, the Basques as a whole are, in fact, mesocephalic, in other words have oval craniums. In any case, the cephalic index is generally higher among us French Basques than on the other side of the border.

As for the way these patterns are spread out geographically, it appears—and this is well worth noting—that the type described above coincides very closely with the linguistic frontiers of the French Basque Country, although it overflows somewhat in the direction of Béarn. Within this domain, it is Lower Navarre that seems to possess the highest proportion of Frankish types (over 50 percent). The same seems to be the case in the high valleys of Spanish Navarre. There would be nothing surprising about this, since this is also the part of the region that has the fewest direct contacts with the neighboring areas.

How should we interpret the preceding facts? Nobody these days seems to wish to maintain the overly peremptory conclusions that claimed to assimilate the Basques to the North African white races. On the other hand, the hypothesis of a Basque race already coming into being, in the Pyrenees themselves, during the Ice Age, is increasingly attracting the attention of researchers.

After studying the skeletons found in burial sites of the Copper Age, Aranzadi had already decided that “the human type that inhabited the Basque territory during the aeneolithic period, in other words two thousand years before our era, belonged to the Basque race.” But ever since then, significantly more ancient osteological data have appeared, thanks to the excavations carried out in 1936 by Barandiaran in the cave of Urtiaga near Itziar in Gipuzkoa (Guipúzcoa). Skulls, one of which belongs to the Azilian level and the other of which may date back even earlier to the end of the Magdalenian, show kinship with the type of Cro-Magnon



man, yet already present certain striking similarities to those of present-day Basques. If other finds confirm it, we could thus see in the Basque people the product of an *in situ* evolution of the ancient race known as Cro-Magnon man.

Furthermore, these days, the biological analysis of blood groups has contributed significantly to investigations into morphological anthropology. The four main properties that differentiate blood types are, as everyone knows, invariable and hereditary. In the current state of research, it has been found that the agglutinative substances B and AB, the proportion of which is very high in Asiatic peoples, are almost nonexistent among the Basques. Conversely, around 40 percent of Basques belong to group A and almost 60 percent to group O, which is the group of universal donors, a unique case in Europe. On the other hand, the Rhesus factor, which has been studied more recently, and is constant in the blood of people of color, and common in white people, is missing in 30 to 40 percent of the Basques.

These exceptional percentages have led Professor Henri V. Vallois, a great expert in this field, to revise his previous opinions. He now agrees that the Basques have “a very special position . . . from the anthropological point of view; they really form a race. They are, perhaps, the last vestiges of a prehistoric population of Europe driven into this frontier region by the bearers of Indo-European languages.”

From Cavemen to the Vascones

Although human beings lived in the Basque Country from the earliest times for which we have formal proof of their existence, in other words some forty thousand years ago, the first significant differentiation appears only at the start of the Upper Paleolithic.

During that period, the well-defined domain of what is known as the “Capsian” civilization extended over a large part of Spain and in North Africa. On the other hand, Izturitze and the other prehistoric sites of the Basque Country were then at the heart of a broad zone, called the “Franco-Cantabrian” zone (extending from the Périgord to Asturias and stretching along the Pyrenees as far as the Ariège), characterized by the continuous development, in three successive phases, of the Aurignacian, Solutrean, and Magdalenian cultures. At most fourteen thousand years ago, and at least seven thousand years ago, the apogee of this civilization of carved stone was reached in the Magdalenian. From Eyzies to the cave at Altamira, near Santander, passing via our own region, one same form

of art, with its simple and powerful realism, expressed itself in real masterpieces of an identical inspiration.

The end of the Ice Age saw the cultural community of these “Franco-Cantabrian” populations breaking up. The climate again became very damp, the flora was transformed, and the fauna became less varied. Before new ways of life could slowly develop, a long period of material and moral decay developed among populations of hunters. Art disappeared. Many caves became uninhabitable for a long time. Vegetating in obscurity, not straying far, the backward descendants of the Magdalenians seem to have lingered in the rudimentary industries of cut stone (Azilian and Asturian) and to have had little inkling of the civilization of polished stone until the latter was coming to an end.

Toward the start of the Copper Age (some two thousand years before Christ), great human migrations—mainly, but perhaps not exclusively, Indo-European—who had come from the East in successive waves during the Neolithic age, started to penetrate into the permanent basin of the ancient populations of the Pyrenees. This zone then became the center on which converged very diverse beliefs and techniques; foreign influences that were all the more active in that, with pastoral life and the extended transhumance of herds, human contacts became broader and deeper. This led to the growth of a new common culture with distinct features, encompassing the whole mountain range and beyond, into the basins of the Garonne and the Ebro. This culture, known as “Pyrenean,” borrowed the use of megalithic burials from its neighbors in the West, and from the civilization known as that “of Almería” (perhaps brought to the south of Spain by peoples originally from Asia Minor) certain forms of pottery as well as the precocious use of metals. It was probably at this time, as we shall see later on, that the language conventionally known as “old western Pyrenean” was formed—the indisputable predecessor of Euskara.

For two millennia, this Pyrenean ethnic group would continue to evolve in its own way. Relatively protected by the mountains, which served as passage ways for all invaders but kept none of them in any enduring way, it was to receive in succession the more or less pronounced imprints of human migrations of the proto-historic period: Ligurians, Celts, and Iberians.

The Celts, whose arrival is dated to around the Iron Age, from 1000 BC onward, and whose traces can still be found in the toponymy of many places in Spain, seem not to have lingered in any number on the terri-

tory of the present-day Basque Country. Whatever people have said, it remains doubtful whether Kanbo was a Celtic name.

The Iberians played a belated but probably more important role. They do not seem to have appeared before the sixth century BC. They came, it is believed, from North Africa, and seem to have settled in the province of Almería, from where they gradually conquered the greater part of the Peninsula, and indeed of Aquitaine. It is quite possible that Iberian civilization played its part—albeit a much lesser part than was once believed—in the development of Basque culture. It is no less probable that the more pronounced Iberianization of certain regions may have contributed—long before the Romans and following an analogous process—to shrinking the domain of the western Pyrenean ethnic group.

Nevertheless, if we study the evidence provided by ancient authors, notably Strabo, in more detail, as Julio Caro Baroja has done, it is obvious that at the time of the Roman conquest (toward the end of the first millennium BC) the peoples of Aquitaine and the north of the Iberian peninsula continued to present quite a homogenous cultural and social appearance, which clearly set them apart from that of the Iberians or Celtiberians of the rest of Spain.

The civilizing influence of the Latins would strike a new blow at this unity. At the two extremes of the mountain chain, Romanization seems to have taken great strides forward. Confederations of small tribes, known under the names of Consoranni, Convenae, Bigerriones, Benearnenses, and Tarbelli, then started to foreshadow the areas in which the Romance language was spoken, areas that we now call Couserans, Comminges, Bigorre, Béarn, and Chalosse.

A few tribes alone, grouped into quite a restricted central core, but probably of a more vigorous ethnic character, would present the partial colonization of the new conquerors with a remarkable barrier. In the regions corresponding to the zone of the Pyrenees adjoining the upper basin of the Ebro, texts written around the first century of the Christian era indicate the presence of Vascones and their now historic physiognomy. The identification of the Vascones with the Basques is now no longer in doubt: the root *wasc*, which was pronounced *ouask*, is the same as the root *eusk*.

Apart from the Vascones in the narrow sense of the word, it is probable that small, scattered tribes very close to them by blood and language also lived in the dense woods and high pasture lands that now correspond

to Bizkaia (Vizcaya), Araba (Álava), Gipuzkoa, and the French Basque Country. We will return to them in our next chapter.

The Sources of Euskara

It is no easier to attribute a single source to a language than it is to a river; too many tributaries can stake a claim on the title. The same has been true of Basque ever since the simplistic explanation that traced everything back to the Iberians was abandoned.

In fact, we know the Iberian language or languages only through epigraphic inscriptions in mysterious characters engraved on coins or on archaeological remains. If, in the last few years, clear progress in deciphering the alphabet seems to have been made, the meaning of the words remains uncertain, in the absence of sufficient bilingual texts. Iberian is still almost as enigmatic as Etruscan. At all events, the physiognomy of the words generally seems only distantly akin to Euskara. For example, Iberian words appear as often as not to end in a vowel, whereas what seems to be the most archaic layer of Basque vocabulary is characterized by the frequency of a final consonant, especially *z* or *tz*.

Many of these primitive Basque words designating natural objects (elements, animals, parts of the body) or common actions are monosyllables: *lur* “earth,” *ur* “water,” *ortz* “cloud,” *hartz* “wolf” (this is an apparent error, in Basque *hartz* is “bear” and *otso* is “wolf” —ed.), *hortz* “tooth,” *oin* “foot,” *bil* “to gather,” *zain* “to keep,” *gan* “to go,” *har*, “to take,” and so on. There is nothing to say, absolutely, that this part of the vocabulary, compatible with the needs of a rudimentary civilization, may not go back to the Neolithic, or even the last Magdalenian.

One curious detail that may reinforce this idea is the fact that most of the Basque names for sharp instruments, such as *haizkor* (today, *aizkora* —ed.) “axe,” *haitzur* (today, *aitzur* —ed.) “pickaxe,” *haichtur* (today, *aizturak* —ed.) “scissors,” and *aiztto* (today, *aizto* —ed.) “knife,” are all derived from the word *aiz* or *haitz*, meaning both “rock” and “flint.”

Nonetheless, “old western Pyrenean” seems mainly to have come into being under the influence of the newcomers who built the megaliths and promoted, on a vast scale, a type of pastoral rather than nomadic life. For, if we compare on a map of the Pyrenees the area in which the transhumance of cattle is still practiced with the area in which Basque or Vascoïd toponyms are found, we cannot fail to be struck by the way they coincide. This cannot be the result of coincidence.

Now linguists have discovered quite remarkable correspondences between the phonetic systems, the roots, and even certain grammatical suffixes, between Basque and certain surviving languages of the Caucasus. For some of the most eminent specialists, such as Professors René Lafon and Karl Bouda, there seems to have been a common Basque-Caucasian stock, the Basque branch of which might have originated in Asiatic emigrants who arrived in the Pyrenees around the end of the Neolithic age. We should point out that this theory, currently in great favor, is not yet unanimously accepted.

Be this as it may, the following layer of Basque vocabulary must have resulted from the contacts and exchanges that would have definitely taken place between the Pyreneans and their Iberian and Celtiberian neighbors during the Iron Age. People have often imagined traces of Iberian in the proper names and the names of local divinities revealed by funerary Gallo-Roman inscriptions from the Pyrenees. Nonetheless, these names, such as: Andere, Nescato, Gizon, Aherbelst, Harspus, Baigorrix, Leherren, Herauscorritsehe, which have a very Basque-like sound to them, may just as well belong to the ancient Pyrenean language.

As for the massive influence of Latin, then the Romance languages, we will have an opportunity to return to them. One last important detail still needs to be emphasized here: it was in the course of the five centuries of the *pax romana* that Euskara seems to have completed the evolution that gave it more or less its current shape, while the very domain of the language was progressively circumscribed into a noticeably less extensive zone.

An Overall View

If we try to sum up the preceding pages in a single glance, we find that the *eskualdun* people today can be seen as the final outcome of the human races and cultures that successively occupied the Pyrenean region from the last Ice Age onward. Foreign elements have often modified them, and have to some extent altered their ways of thinking and behaving; yet such foreign elements have not managed to submerge completely the primitive basis of what can with justice be called the oldest people in Europe.

The Basque language, too, could contain a significant residue of the unknown languages of those distant ages that defy our imagination, but its basic structure is deemed to be less ancient than the race. Introduced into the Pyrenees perhaps some four thousand years ago, and, of course, having considerably evolved since then, it seems to be akin to the group

of what are known as Japhetic languages that were, it is believed, spoken all round the Mediterranean world before the arrival of the Indo-Europeans.

Thus, it is no exaggeration to say that before the dawn of historic time, the ancestors of the Basques already appear to have possessed that extraordinary mixture of passive resistance and paradoxical powers of assimilation that would enable their descendants to remain under the domination of the most diverse groups. Their territory shrank, and there are no more than a few hundreds of thousands of them, and yet they are still here. It is in this capacity for survival that, in the final analysis, the whole Basque mystery and miracle resides.

Part 2

History

The Basques in History — The Roman Domination — Visigoths and Vascones — Franks, Arabs, and Normans

The Basques in History

It has sometimes been claimed that the Basques had no history. This comes down to saying that they must have been subjected to the history of others. Straddled across the natural, but imprecisely demarcated frontier, which does not so much separate two great nations as establish a link between the civilizations of north and south, the Eskual Herri was predestined to act as a passage way for invasions, as a battleground for rival influences, as a theater for great negotiations and diplomatic solemnities, the list continues. Our annals are rich in deeds of this kind, which have inevitably had an effect on the life of the region and the spiritual development of its inhabitants.

But it is worthy of note that, as soon as they make their first known contact with other peoples, the Basques display distinctive characteristics that they doubtless owe to their most distant ancestors. First, independence, which can reach an accommodation with all powers so long as they are distant and abstain from any too direct interference. Second, an invincible mistrust of all change, combined with a singular ability to adapt, which allows them to avoid succumbing to a new environment, to absorb gradually just what they need to endure, and to maintain what is useful from the past.

Time has little respect for what is done without it: thanks to their particular nature, the Basques have managed to borrow a great deal from Latin civilization without yielding to Romanization, and kept away from the Visigoths. They watched the Arabs pass by, fought the Franks

fiercely, put up with the Anglo-Saxons (i.e., English) quite easily, are still keeping the Castilians at arms' length, and have shown little haste, and indeed little desire, to allow themselves to be won over by Christianity and France. That is probably just the reason why, after an evolution of two millennia, they are such fervent Christians and excellent French men and women today.

The Roman Domination

It does not seem proven—contrary to an unbroken legendary tradition that was long accepted by most scholars—that the inhabitants of our region put up much of a fight against the Roman conquest. The Cantabrians, who rose up in the time of Sertorius and were harshly punished by the legions in the course of a bloody war, were not, as was believed until recently, Basque but a Celtiberian people who occupied a territory in the Province of Santander known later on as the “Asturias of Santillana,” as well as part of the Old Castile by the Ebro. It seems highly unlikely that their immediate neighbors, the Caristes and Vardules, who at that time populated Bizkaia (Vizcaya) and Gipuzkoa (Guipúzcoa), took any serious part in this struggle. As for the Vascones properly speaking, they seem at that date to have been completely subjected—at least nominally—to Rome, since it was in the course of those same campaigns against Sertorius that Pompey gave his name to Iruñea-Pamplona. Apparently, at that period the Vascones, apart from a territory corresponding to present-day Navarre, also extended over a part of Upper Aragon around Jaca, and, on the other hand, reached the Atlantic at Oiassa. This place name, often mentioned by the Ancients, is not just identifiable with Oiartzun (Oyarzun), but needs to be taken in a broader sense, including the area around the natural port of Pasaia (Pasajes) in Gipuzkoa. Toward the north, the limit of the Vascon tribes is unknown to us, but it is quite likely that the mountains of Zuberoa (Soule) and Lower Navarre—which have remained quite wild and half-deserted—were already more or less inhabited by clearly Basque populations.

Conversely, the whole of the lowlands, and particularly Lapurdi (Labourd), was indisputably part of the domain of the *Tarbelli*, an Aquitanian people of Celtiberian formation, whose main town was none other than Dax (*Aquae Tarbellicae*).

Be this as it may, it does not seem that the conquest of Aquitania by Crassus, Caesar's lieutenant, in 56 BC, and its definitive organization into a Roman province by Augustus, between 16 and 13 BC, led to any real

occupation of the present-day French Basque Country. Colonization was actually pursued on the fertile plains and hillsides, in Béarn, the Landes, and, on the other hand, in the south of Navarre as well as in Álava. Here and there, several remains of villas have been exhumed: mosaics, statues, and funerary cippi. All of these finds indicate that the native populations had been subjected to long-lasting settlement and advanced Romanization. Between those two hearths of Latin civilization, the woody, mountainous zone, which—as in prehistory—remained a mere passageway, was left singularly poor in archeological traces. On the sole road that crossed it, there were two staging posts that could hardly have been more than military posts: Carasa (sometimes identified with Garris) and Imus Pyreneus (Donibane Garazi [Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port]); at the confluence of the Errobi (Nive) and the Aturri (Adour), the *oppidum* of Lapurdum; and probably Hazparne (Hasparren) and Atharratze (Tardets) as well. These were—as far as we can tell—the only strategic, administrative, and commercial points where the Romans established themselves permanently. And even here, they left few traces.

The only substantial discoveries of any note were those of Roman (and sometimes Celtiberian) coins found at various points in our region. The most celebrated of these finds, by the number and diversity of the types discovered, are the treasure of Barkoxe (Barcus; ill-advisedly destroyed by a maker of *makhilas!*) and the treasure of Lamarkenka, between Beskoitze (Briscous) and Hazparne. Nonetheless, instruments of exchange are, by the very nature, essentially vagabond, and their presence in the soil does not allow us to infer anything more than the (already obvious) existence of trading relations.

Epigraphic monuments are more instructive and convincing, but here there are only two inscriptions; one of them is admittedly extremely important.

The inscription built into the chapel of the Madeleine of Aranhe, on a height overlooking Atharratze, is easy to classify among so many other Romano-Iberian inscriptions in the Pyrenees: it is a votive dedication to a local pre-Christian divinity, whose name, *Herauscorritsehe*, has a striking Basque appearance.

Discovered in 1665 in the high altar of the church of Hazparne, the second inscription tells us that a man called Verus, a *flamen*, *quaestor*, and *magister pagi*, gives thanks to the genius loci for having obtained in Rome the separation of the “Nine Peoples” from the Gauls. However, a doubt hovers over the meaning of the verb *sejungere* that runs across

two lines and can also be read as “unite” as well as “separate.” But this latter version, grammatically the most correct, also appears to be the most plausible. In fact, it corresponds historically to a split, at around the end of the second century, between the Iberian part and the Celtic part of Aquitaine, a split that would gradually widen. *Novempopulanie* was a completely distinct province from the last years of the third century onward, and finally included not nine but twelve *civitates* subdivided into *pagi* and *vici*. This local organization would survive for a long time after the end of the Empire. The Basque name of the region of Mixe, Amikuze, comes perhaps from the word *vicus*.

Under Roman domination, the Tarbelli of Lapurdi—with some Vascones already intermingling with them, perhaps—seem to have led quite prosperous lives. Their hams and their lobsters were famous throughout the rest of Aquitaine; agriculture was starting to spread. Although it is believed that the religious, economic, and administrative center of the *pagus* was originally in Hazparne, the port of Lapurdum (whence derives the very name of Lapurdi) was not long in assuming real significance. Under Emperor Honorius (384–423), it was the garrison of a cohort of a thousand or so men. Probably in order to protect it from the incursions of Vascon pillagers, in around 275 the nascent town had been enclosed within a strong polygonal wall, over 1,100 meters (3610 feet) round and with three gates; one of these was situated at the present crossroads of the Cinq-Cantons. Archeologists have found some of the foundations of this first fortification, recognizable from the particular way they have been built. To the southwest, the wall followed more or less the present-day limits of the conurbation of Baiona (Bayonne) between the Château-Vieux and the Tour de Sault, but on the opposite side, it did not extend beyond the line of the rue de la Salie and the rue Orbe. The name of this last road has sometimes been taken as a memory of the ancient outline of the town. This etymology appears dubious; it still proved opportune to revive this old name.

Before the centuries of anarchy that were to lay waste to the southwest of Gaul, it seems that the growth of Baiona allowed it to be elevated to the rank of *civitas*. Was it also, from this time, also the seat of a bishopric created by the dismembering of the sprawling diocese of Dax? There are good reasons to believe so, but no decisive proof. In any case, the spread of Christianity could at that time hardly extend much beyond Lapurdum. Hard facts on the beginnings of evangelization in Aquitaine are few and far between, and belong more to legend than to history. One thing is certain: the Pyreneans, attached as they always would be to their

traditional customs and beliefs, allowed themselves to be conquered only belatedly and with difficulty. Under the impact of the grave vicissitudes that we will shortly be summarizing, it is even highly likely that the bishopric of Lapurdum—if it actually existed—disappeared completely, perhaps for half a millennium; it would be formally attested only in the eleventh century.

Visigoths and Vascones

A first invasion of Vandals, Alans, and Suevi took place, it is thought, in the whole of Gaul in 406. The Visigoths appeared in their turn in Aquitaine in 412, then again in 419, and ravaged the land. The Empire was breaking up on every side. So, people came to an agreement with the invader: a Visigoth king soon governed Novempopulanie with the title *foederatus*, considering himself to be a representative of Roman power. In appearance, nothing seemed to have changed; Latin, the official language, and Roman law remained in force. However, the slender link of allegiance to the Empire continued to weaken and finally broke with King Euric (466–485), who extended his personal authority over a great part of Gaul, and the whole of the Iberian Peninsula with the exception of Portugal. As far as our region is concerned, this whole period is still obscure. It is known only that in 507, at the battle of Vouillé, Clovis destroyed the kingdom of Alaric, but he seems to have satisfied himself with conquering merely the fertile plains of Novempopulanie. However long it lasted, the dominance of the Visigoths in the western Pyrenees seems in any case to have remained more fiction than fact. On the other hand, on the other side of the mountains, Visigoth kingdoms were to survive for a long time to come, with indirect but profound repercussions on the Basque Country.

In fact, the Vascones of the southern side of the Pyrenees who, around 150, were still (according to Ptolemy) occupying the territory we have mentioned above, later extended their domain at the expense of the Vardules, Caristes, and Autrigons. These ill-defined peoples, whose names were still being mentioned in 451, then vanished completely from the catalog of tribes, and from 580 they were designated merely by the generic name (still in use today) of *Vascongados*, that is “the Vasconized.”

We do not know whether this expansion, whose deeper causes escape us, was peaceful and progressive, or sudden and bellicose. One certain fact revealed by toponymy is that the Vascones did not spread only over Gipuzkoa, Bizkaia, and Araba, but also farther south in what is

now called Rioja. Here, their progress was brought up short by the Visigoths who drove them back into what are their current southern limits. It is to this continuous pressure, exerted mainly in the reigns of Leovigilde and Recaredo (586–601) that are attributed the new movements of the Vascones northward—migrations that intensified from around 580. Probably, rather than a warlike invasion, this was initially a series of massive exoduses that, on the northern slopes of the western Pyrenees, were definitively superimposed on a scattered populace that was partly of the same stock and the same language. But the Vascones did not stay there; in spite of the opposition of the Frankish kings who endeavored without much success to hold them back, they eventually dominated all the Romanized populations of the southwest of Gaul. The name of the Tarbelli then vanished for good, that of Novempopulanie gave way to a new geographical expression: Vasconia, which makes its appearance in what is known as the chronicle of Frédégaire (c. 650).

Subsequently, a very clear distinction was established between those of the Vascones permanently established within the limits of the present territory limited by the Aturri, and the adventurers—inevitably less numerous—who had made themselves masters of the plains as far as the Garonne. The former, forming close-knit groups and still in direct contact with the tribes from which they had sprung, were the only ones to preserve their original customs and the use of Euskara. After the year 1000, they were called *Basculi*. The others, a minority active in the mass of Aquitanians who spoke a Romance language, were soon dissolved into them, losing their distinctive characters. Even their name changed, to *Gascons*. The name Guasconia is used by the Cosmograph of Ravenna in the seventh century, in contrast with the rest of the Basque Country, which now had the overall shape it still presents today.

Franks, Arabs, and Normans

Within the weak framework of the Frankish kingdoms, the formation of the duchies known as Aquitaine, Vasconia, or Gascony—constellations with arbitrary and shifting outlines—the way they were dismembered and put together again successively at the whim of dynastic partitions comprises an extremely confused history. It is the very image of an epoch of dissolution and decadence in which, on the ruins of Roman organization and the disasters that soon befell it in the wake of new and terrible invaders, the hazy outline of a new order was to come into being.

Sejungere Gallos, to separate from the Gauls—this was the everlasting aspiration, triumphantly expressed long ago by the inscription at Hazparne, and it seems to have awoken as a watchword more tenacious than ever during the long period in which the old underlying Iberian characteristics of the Aquitanians were revived by the wild energy of the Vascones. In the course of the repeated attempts to impose their suzerainty permanently on the ill-defined territories southwest of Gaul, Merovingians and Carolingians realized that the heart of this opposition (an opposition that was now not passive, but resolutely active) lay in the mountains that served as a final refuge for the pagan Vascones. Hence, over the centuries, many punitive expeditions were essayed, with very relative success, to try and subjugate those insultingly independent vassals.

In 581 and 587, the first of these military enterprises set afoot by Chilperic I and Guntram failed lamentably. Theudebert II and Theuderic II, however, succeeded in imposing tribute and a duke on the Vascones in 602, but this submission did not last long.

In 635, Dagobert sent a powerful army against them, which finally broke them, though not before he had suffered a bloody partial defeat in an ambush laid for him at one end of the Subola Valley. The name of Zuberoa here makes its first appearance. Shortly afterward, the Vascon chiefs went to swear a (perfectly provisional) fidelity to Dagobert in his palace at Clichy.

In 778, during a campaign against the Moors, Charlemagne razed the walls of Iruñea-Pamplona as he moved through the area. The Vascones took prompt vengeance. On August 15 of the same year, caught by a surprise attack on their return through Garazi (the Ports de Cize), the rearguard of the Frankish army suffered a serious defeat. Several important figures were slain in the disaster: the seneschal Eggihard, the Count Palatine Anselm, Roland, the prefect of the March of Brittany, and others. This episode had an unprecedented echo; the memory of it endured long enough to inspire, three centuries later, a prodigious flowering of legends, of a luxuriance quite out of proportion to the event itself. In it, the Basques appear, quite misleadingly, as Saracens. Despite a host of other anachronisms, the local topography of the *Chanson de Roland* is in some respects quite accurate. The old epic poet and several of his imitators had certainly gained a precise knowledge of the places involved, and were able to turn them into a grandiose setting. Nonetheless, most historians agree that the real site of the defeat was on the Roman road,

on the wooded sides of the Astobizkar, rather than on the open plain of Orreaga (Roncesvalles/Roncevaux) where, following the rules of chivalry, most of the legendary epic victoriously unfolds.

Louis the Debonair, crowned king of Aquitaine in 781, within the lifetime of his father, was no more fortunate in his relations with the Vascones, even though, according to one chronicle, he affected to wear their national costume on occasion. After him, his successors enjoyed but an increasingly shadowy authority over a region in which the fragmentation of power was made worse by the barbarian invasions.

These had begun much earlier with an incursion of Arabs: the knights of Abd-el-Rahman, crossing the Pyrenees at Orreaga in 732, had swept like a hurricane across the southwest of Gaul; but as everyone knows, their rapid progress was stemmed by Charles Martel near Poitiers. They were forced to retreat and—apart from the damage they had caused—their brief passage left no traces in the Basque Country, whose traditional culture displays—whatever has been claimed—not the least Moorish influence. Far more serious were the tribulations inflicted on our land by the Normans. Under the reign of Charles the Bald, in 844, a fleet of their small ships sailed up the estuary of the Aturri, and seized Lapurdum where these pirates dug in and fortified their lair. The town (mentioned as a *civitas* as early as 587, in the treaty of Andelot) now acted as an operational base for the raids they periodically carried out throughout Aquitaine, and which left it in a state of ruin for a long time after. The Lapurdi area, lying as it did along the coast, suffered greatly from the prolonged presence of these undesirables, but it is unlikely that the Normans ventured very often into the rugged mountainous interior, preferring to pillage the fertile regions of the Béarn plains. They are known to have sacked and depopulated Lescar and Oloron.

In 982, the Normans who, ever since the start of the tenth century, had been slowing down their destructive activities, were defeated by the son of William Sancho, Duke of Gascony. They never came back, but the necessity that had been felt, for nearly a century, to resist their continual attacks on all sides, had been enough to accelerate the crumbling of authority and transform profoundly the whole organization of society.

It was the Normans who, at the gates of Baiona—where a fountain perpetuates the tradition of the martyr—are said to have beheaded Saint Leo. This missionary bishop from the diocese of Rouen had come to perform his apostolic duties among the Basques. We can presume that, from this period onward, Christianity started to gain proper roots in



our old region, but even then, its penetration must have been very slow. The old ancestral customs persisted for a long time in the most remote valleys, and the new religion was forced to compromise with them; the ethnography of the *Eskual Herri* still bears notable traces of those distant survivals. Around 1140, the *Codex of Compostella* indicates that the time when the Basque mountain dwellers were real pagans, greatly feared by the Christians who ventured among them, was still a recent memory.

In fact, the actual jurisdiction of the oldest bishops of Baiona cannot have been very extensive. Saint Leo himself is considered to be the first of these, but considerable uncertainty still reigns over the lineage of his successors, down to the celebrated Raymond de Martres (1121–1125). The episcopate, as well as all the other institutions, had by then greatly declined: it was practically the rule that one man could hold several dioceses at this time (they were often picked up by laymen and considered more or less to be simple feudal fiefdoms), and this remained true until the Gregorian reform in the middle of the eleventh century.

Among those who held this bishopric of Vasconia, and who wrongly combined in the hands of one man the diocese of Baiona together with the dioceses of Bazas, Dax, Aire, Lescar, and Oloron, it is worth considering the name of Arsius Raca in particular. Actually, we know nothing about this prelate, but he has remained known as the alleged author of a charter (albeit apocryphal, and dating from the twelfth century) in which the southern limits of the diocese of Baiona are enumerated, for the first time with a certain degree of precision. These limits extended from Charles's Cross near Ibañeta Pass, stretched across the mountains, including several high valleys in Navarre, the entire course of the Bidasoa, and a significant part of Gipuzkoa. This line may have originally coincided with the political frontiers of Aquitaine itself, either from the time of Caesar, or just from 812, following a campaign waged by Louis the Debonair against the Vascones beyond the Pyrenees. Whatever its origin may have been, this spiritual jurisdiction was enforced simultaneously over regions that were subsequently to fall under temporal sway—some came under the kings of Navarre and Castile, others under the kings of England or France, and yet lasted centuries and came to an end only in 1566. In the Middle Ages, such an anomaly—inconceivable in our own age—shocked nobody.

If the diocese of Baiona extended its spiritual sway over a number of Basques of the Iberian Peninsula, it was far from being the case that,

as it does today, it brought together all the Basques of France. In Lower Navarre, the regions of Amikuze and Oztibarre (Ostabarret; seigniories that had originally belonged to the viscounts of Tartas and Dax) remained attached to the diocese of Dax up until the French Revolution. Zuberoa had also initially belonged to the bishopric of Dax, but in 1058 passed into the bishopric of Oloron, of which it continued to be a dependency until the end of the ancien régime.

Formation of the Basque Country — Feudal Organization — Religious Expansion

Formation of the Basque Country

The legend of the year 1000, in which the Christian peoples awaited the end of the world in terrified expectancy, is these days considered to be a fabrication. However, it is easy to understand, especially with the benefit of hindsight, that the millennium really did seem to mark a new era. After centuries of anarchic barbarism, it was the moment when—in the Basque Country as throughout Europe—the benefits of feudal institutions started to appear; only much later, when it had produced all its fruits and lost its reason for being, would people become only too inclined to note its drawbacks. On the threshold of the eleventh century, it was the start of a real renaissance, the creation of a new social order. Political structures of increasing complexity had emerged from the chaos: they would gradually crystallize into shape, albeit in fits and starts. France and Spain as we conceive of them today would be the final stage of this evolution; for the time being, these nations were merely at the dawn of their destinies. But, dominating with their suzerainty the crumbling of the feudal system that occurred at the end of the first millennium, two states, quite powerful already at the start of the eleventh century, had been born in obscure conditions on both sides of the western Pyrenees.

The duchy of Gascony, incorporated in 1032 into the possessions of the counts of Poitiers, who were also dukes of Aquitaine, formed a vast and quasi-independent territory, over which the first Capetians had only a very distant right of control. The second was the Kingdom of Navarre, whose importance as a bastion of Christian resistance in the Peninsula was to grow rapidly. Between the two, a still tiny viscounty, Béarn, began on a course that would in time take its owners very far.

In this complex framework, our three Basque countries thus appear, for the first time, with distinct individualities. In fact, these groupings, derived from the ancient *pagi*, probably already existed implicitly, but their constitution into fiefs gave them a clearer character and stricter limits.

The land of Labourd (in Basque Lapurdi), which William Sánchez, Duke of Gascony, had handed over to Sancho the Great, king of Navarre, was raised by the latter to the status of a viscounty to benefit one of his relatives in 1023. Sancho López was the first of the eight viscounts whose power stretched down to 1193. Their initial residence was in Baiona (Bayonne), where they built the keep of Floripès (demolished in 1680) and around it a number of the buildings that these days still comprise the Old Château. The coat of arms of Lapurdi—the first side of gold, a red lion holding a red harpoon dart in his left paw, positioned diagonally across the shield, the point upright; on the second azure side a gold fleur-de-lis—seems to relate to the emblem of the former viscounts, since the house of Sault, which descended from them, did indeed bear a gold and red lion. The fleur-de-lis is probably a reference to the annexation of the country by France in 1451, but nothing proves that this was a royal concession. Bought back by Eudes de Poitiers, the successor of Sanchez William, the viscounty of Lapurdi returned, in 1033, to the dukes of Gascony who later became dukes of Aquitaine. This apparently insignificant detail would later have important consequences.

A century later, in 1130, the king of Navarre and Aragon, Alfonso the Battler, perhaps responding to an appeal by local feudal subjects, felt a sudden urge to bring Lapurdi back into his circle of influence. He easily occupied Baiona, but other activities brought him quickly back into the Iberian Peninsula; the region remained a dependency of Aquitaine.

The origins of the viscounty of Soule (in Basque Zuberoa) are unclear. The first viscount known to us with any certainty is Guillaume-Fort of Lavedan, who came to power in 1023. Like him, his son Raymond-Guillaume I was descended from the dukes of Gascony and the counts of Bigorre, and from 1078, the viscounts of Béarn. Later, in 1234, Raymond-Guillaume IV also recognized the suzerainty of the king of Navarre over the only castle in Maule (Mauléon) and paid him an annual rent of sixty livres. The successors of Raymond-Guillaume seem to have made the most of this confusion, with more or less cunning, until 1307 when they were definitively ousted from the land. Their coat of arms, *a red lion on gold*, remains in use by the town of Maule, and by extension of the whole Zuberoan area.

The formation of Lower Navarre took place at a later date. At the start of the eleventh century, only certain small distinct fiefs were as yet known: Arberoa (Arbéroue), Oztibarre (Ostabarret), Ortzaize (Ossès), Garazi (Cize), Amikuze (Mixe), and Baigorri (Baïgorry). Most of the latter were handed over initially to Sancho the Great, at the same time as Lapurdi. But this annexation to Navarre was only temporary, and without it being possible for us to presume when and how it came to an end, we do know that in 1120 at least some of these lands had returned to the duchy of Gascony.

Later on, in 1191, when Richard the Lion Heart married Bérengère, the daughter of the king of Navarre, he thereby willingly abandoned his claim to the possession of these lands, or so it was said. But this supposition is disproved by an act of 1189 in which the region appears to have already returned to the crown of Iruñea-Pamplona, which needs to be accepted in the absence of other details.

In any case, at the start of the thirteenth century, the sixth *merindad*, of Ultra Puertos (transmontane county —ed.) as it is called, certainly seems to have constituted an integral part of the Kingdom of Navarre. This state of affairs lasted until the split that occurred in 1530, after which Lower Navarre, which—with its legitimate sovereigns, the viscounts of Béarn—had remained under French rule, was to be distinguished from Upper Navarre, which was incorporated into Spain.

The two Navarres, although separate, would in any case continue to claim the same coat of arms representing, originally, rays of bright-red gems. This figure was, from the sixteenth century onward, transformed so as to illustrate a historical legend referring to the chains captured in 1212 by Sancho the Strong from the Moors in his victory at the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa. Ever since that date, it has been customary to define the coat of arms of Navarre in these terms: golden chains on a red background placed in horizontal stripes across the shield with narrow bands along its edges; sometimes—in our view wrongly—the following is added: “encumbered in the center with an emerald.” The red color of the French tricolor flag is distantly taken, according to some scholars, from the enamel of gules of the arms of Navarre; this is a detail of which the Navarrese would have some cause to be proud.

Feudal Organization

Before we pursue the series of events that in turn united or separated Lapurdi, Zuberoa, and Lower Navarre, it will be useful to gain some idea

of the social state of the French Basque Country in the Middle Ages. This will help us to understand these same events.

From the eighteenth century to the present day, most local historians have insisted on maintaining that the feudal system had never taken root in Basque soil. Some have even claimed that the Basques were all noble. Others have asserted that the noblemen of the land were landowners richer than their neighbors, and that they enjoyed merely honorific rights.

What may have given credit to such exaggerations is the fact that people have been too ready to consider the democratic administrative organizations and particular liberties as they appeared in the *ancien régime* without seeing these as the end point of a long evolution whose point of departure might have been completely different. While it is true, for instance, that within the local assemblies, before the French Revolution, the nobility no longer played more than a limited political role in Lower Navarre and Zuberoa, and none in Lapurdi, it is nonetheless certain that in the High Middle Ages, all power belonged to the viscounts and their barons. Several texts prove as much. What is more, a host of exceptions, added to the general rule and becoming enmeshed with it, continued—sometimes to the end of the eighteenth century—to bear witness to what had originally been the indisputable grip of the feudal system.

In Lower Navarre, for example, seven great baronies, those of Lüküze (Luxe), Izura (Ostabat), and Landibarre (Lantabat; belonging to the house of Lüküze), of Agaramont (Gramont) and Burgue (Bergouey; belonging to the Gramonts, sovereign princes of Bidaxune [Bidache]), of Sorhapuürü and Behorlegi (Behorleguy), not only owed no allegiance to the king, but possessed rights of high justice and individual militias, forming a separate body among those of the country. In Lapurdi, where administrative unification was, however, much more advanced, the Saint-Pées continued for a long time to enjoy the typical rights of lords over the barony of Arbona (Arbonne), and likewise the Belzunces, in their tiny viscounty of Makea (Macaye).

Religious establishments such as the abbey of Lehuntze (Lahonce) and the commanderie of Lekuine (Bonloc) thus constituted real islands of feudalism.

While the rights of the barony of Donibane Lohizune (Saint-Jean-de-Luz) given to the chapter of the cathedral of Baiona had soon been bought back by the inhabitants, who had them exercised by their aldermen, by contrast, the villagers of Ezpeleta (Espelette) continued to depend on their lords alone, until the day when (the last baroness, Doña

Juliana Henriquez, having died without posterity in 1694) an adjudication allowed her vassals to acquire the chateau and all the rights of use attached to it (1707).

Given these isolated survivals, which are so characteristic, it is certain that most Basques had enjoyed several clear advantages from an early date that elsewhere remained the prerogative of the aristocracy: rights to hunt, to fish, to bear arms, to build mills, and so on. But we must emphasize that these minor privileges, so highly appreciated, had come into their possession only in virtue of various financial transactions in which feudal customs were implicitly recognized, such as (to mention one of the most ancient disposals of property) the buying back of certain monopolies by the Lapurdians from their viscount Sancho García in 1106.

So the Basque Country did indeed form part of the feudal system, but the latter came with one important proviso: in public law, all land was free and people were entirely exempt from servitude. This was called *franc-alleu*, and in our view it dated back to the obscure origins of the Vascones' social organization when they settled on this side of the Pyrenees.

When these Vascones divided up the lands where their descendants at present live, it seems, according to evidence in the Basque vocabulary, that they had already formed a multitude of small clans whose members, called *jabe*, the owners of the soil, were happy to acknowledge the preeminence of one of them, called *jaun*. In return for the tasks and responsibilities incumbent on him, he doubtless had actual ownership of all forests and grazing lands, use of which remained common to every closed collectivity that was formed mainly of shepherds. The need to defend the land against the Normans must have contributed to specifying and reinforcing both the military titles and the civil and judicial authority of those minor lords, independent from each other, issuing from the same region by common consent and, moreover, not powerful enough to attempt to restrict the liberties of their subordinates. By stages which are unknown to us, but preserving its initial character, a hierarchy, the essential feature of any feudal system, came into being among these minor seigniories. After the year 1000, this development authorized the creation of viscounties, thus centralizing the bulk of political power—mainly, it appears, under the aegis of the king of Navarre, Sancho the Great.

In the following centuries, this feudal system—with the exception of the *franc-alleu*—similar to that which reigned everywhere else, would be maintained and would even evolve in Lower Navarre. The kings of Navarre were the sovereigns of an essentially military state, and they

continued to ennoble new houses to reward their subjects for services rendered on the battlefield, thus spontaneously limiting the extent of their own direct powers, revenues, and domains.

Things would turn out quite differently in Lapurdi and Zuberoa, where the kings of England and dukes of Aquitaine would pursue an entirely different policy. Taking advantage of the troubles caused in these two regions by viscounts and their barons, they obliged the latter to yield to the crown all their rights over the public domain. From that time on, Lapurdians and Zuberoans would (with a few rare exceptions such as those mentioned above) have no lord but the king alone, represented by mere officials controlling the acts of a population that administered itself. Thus the feudal system would find itself practically suppressed, if not *de jure*, at least *de facto*. The French conquest would later simply confirm this situation. Stripped of their personal political and judicial prerogatives, some of the noblemen would in any case find an equivalent for them in the administrative duties given them by the sovereign for his relations with the inhabitants; nonetheless, most of them would remain poor and lacking in influence, and their families would fade away into obscurity before very long. When the Estates General were summoned in 1789 only nine houses of ancient nobility remained in Lapurdi, out of the sixty that had been counted in 1311.

From this account, we can deduce that while all Basques were free men and women, there reigned among them, as far back in history as we go, an inequality in social conditions. One feature of this was that the hierarchy established between the different classes was not due so much to birth, as to the situation of the land owned by each person. In short, on every level of society, it was the status of the house—that cornerstone of Basque life—that determined the status of its inhabitants.

So, from the bottom to the top of the scale, there were the *fivatier* houses, the *maisons franches* (literally “free houses”), the *infançon* houses, and the *noble* houses.

The *fivatiers* were tenants of portions of a noble property that they had cleared and for which, thanks to a private law contract implying no idea of serfdom, they paid a quitrent: this was tax money or in kind, sometimes even in delivery of labor. In Zuberoa, a distinction was drawn between the *botoys*, who cultivated the portion of land that had been conceded from the foundation of the noble house, and the *fivatiers*, properly speaking, who had settled later. The owner of a *fivatier house* enjoyed full possession of his lot, which he could apparently even sell

or give away; but if he died intestate, the estate immediately returned as of right to the lord. Some noblemen who possessed vast areas of land had founded a number of *fwatier* houses: 244 tenants in this category still depended on the viscounts of Etxauz (Echoux) at Baigorri in the eighteenth century; 83 houses of Senpere (Saint-Pée-sur-Nivelle) were paying taxes to the Caupennes of Amou in 1684. These figures seem to be the exception: in general, *fwatiers* were much less common in most villages. Note that, since they were not landowners, these tax payers had no access to public functions or even, it seems, to public deliberations. In Lower Navarre, they were—more heavily than in Lapurdi—personally subject to forced labor. In Zuberoa, they generally had no right to grind their corn except in the lord's mill.

Above them, forming the most extensive layer of the population, came the masters of the free houses (*maisons franches*); they too were commoners, but from time immemorial they were owners without qualification of their estates. Because of the *franc-allevé*, they were not individually subjected to tallage; in fact, they were responsible for the voluntary gift that their representatives voted every year for the king. In fact, they were the ones who, in the capitular assemblies, debated the affairs of each parish and sent delegates whose votes swayed the decision in financial matters, in the Bilçar (today *Biltzar* —ed.) of Lapurdi, the Estates of Lower Navarre, and the Cour d'Ordre of Zuberoa. The masters of these simple rural houses had (and still have) a very strong sense of their own dignity. In 1609, Pierre de Lancre noted this without understanding it: "I must not forget to mention that in Lapurdi the most beggarly male and female villagers are called lords and ladies of such a house—and these are just the houses that each of them has in their village, even if it is just a pigsty!"

Houses called *infançon* houses also existed in Lower Navarre (eighty-seven of them around the year 1700) and in Lapurdi (thirty-three in 1505). The name *infançon* has still not been defined clearly. Perhaps it was simply a quality claimed by the descendants of a younger son of the Navarrese nobility married to the heiress of a *maison franche*. In fact, the *infançon* was sometimes considered to be a commoner, sometimes a nobleman. In support of the first opinion it can be pointed out that the *infançon* house never held any seat in the Estates of Navarre. On the other hand, all its other characteristics were indisputably drawn from the privileged caste. For example, such a house was always transmitted to the eldest male and not just to the eldest child, whether this was a boy or a girl, as Basque custom dictated for other rural houses. Furthermore,

the *infançon* house claimed to owe no service to the king, but was itself able to hold in its own dependence other rural estates that paid it an annual fief. Finally, several of them were “remissioned,” in other words exempted from the payment of certain taxes.

Infançon houses are rarely distinguished in appearance from ordinary dwellings, apart from the odd more elaborate architectural detail, or by some inscription recalling a title that, however trivial, was still sought after. This is the case with the fine Gastambidea house in Senpere and with the dwelling in Baigorri on which the following proud motto can be read:

INFANÇON SORTU NIZ, INFANÇON HILEN NIZ

“*Infançon* I was born, *Infançon* I will die”

Finally, to crown the social edifice, came the noblemen, properly speaking. The Customary Laws of Zuberoa described them as “landholders” (*terre-tenants*) a term that strikingly sums up the origin and character of the Basque nobility. For this nobility, following the common law that we explained above, was “real”—in other words, not linked to blood, but attached to the ownership of land. The maxim “No land without a lord” that reigned in the rest of France was countered, within the limits of the *Eskual Herri*, by the golden rule “No lord without a title”—a title to property, of course. One unexpected, but unremitting, consequence arose from this. In the seventeenth century, Froidour pointed it out with an indignation tempered by humor:

Even if you were the lowest commoner in the province, if you possess one of these houses, you are reputed to be a noble and you enjoy the privileges of nobility. If you were as much a nobleman as the King, if you do not possess a noble house, you enjoy no more prerogative than the lowest peasant.

Between the members of Lapurdian nobility, there was no distinction of rank, whatever their personal titles might have been. Nor was any precedence observed for places in the Estates for the noblemen of Lower Navarre and Zuberoa. However, in medieval Navarre, twelve of the principal lords formed around the sovereign a sort of council of the first dignitaries in the land: the *ricombres*. It is claimed that this institution was the origin of the “Spanish *grandees*.” Several men from Lower Navarre were honored by *ricombrie*, including Arnaud Raymond de Gramont who received it in 1350 from Charles the Bad. Béarnais kings

were obliged to content themselves with the Merindad de Ultra Puertos (transmontane county —ed.) alone, after the loss of Navarre, but they did not maintain the (nonhereditary) title of *ricombre*. In Zuberoa, one institution—apparently based closely on the preceding one—survived: above the *cavers* or knights were set ten *potestats* who, in exchange for judicial functions that were originally obligatory (a vestige of their role at the viscount’s court), enjoyed a special right of grazing in the vast common land of the valley. Furthermore, the “ancient barons,” namely the three lords of Atharratzte (Tardets), Hauze (Haux), and Domintxaine (Domezain), had kept a right of precedence, but only at the Cour de Justice of Lextarre (Licharre).

Apart from the chateau of Latsaga (Laxague) in Izura, there was no really remarkable Basque chateau in the medieval period. The term *Gaztelu* (*castellum*) seems to have been applied mainly to fortified works, a few traces of which can be seen in Aiherra (Ayherre), Izturitze (Isturits), and Ahatsa (Ahaxe), for example, or that are found in places called *Gastelugain* in Ainhoa, Atharratzte, and so on. The other county seats—with the exception of a few fortified houses such as Senpere, Etxauz in Baigorri, Apat (Aphat) in Duzunaritze (Bussunarits), Ürrüti or Urrutia (Ruthie) in Altzürükü (Aussurucq)—have been rebuilt and altered many times and are more like bourgeois dwellings than manors. Some of them, however—such as Olhontz (Olhonce) in Zaro (Çaro), and Elizabelar (Eliçabelar) in Iholdi (Iholdy)—are distinguished by the presence of cylindrical watchtowers at the four corners of the roof, a very frequent arrangement in the *palacios* on the other side of the frontier. The noble houses are called *jauregui* or *salha*, the second term being more widespread in Lower Navarre and Zuberoa. In this latter region, when there were several noble houses in the same village, the most important was given the distinctive name *domec*.

Religious Expansion

From the eleventh century, Christianity had finally conquered the whole Basque Country, and flowered in a swathe of monastic foundations, motivated at once by the military current of the crusades for the reconquest of Spain and by the parallel, purely religious current that led huge crowds of people to the presumed Galician tomb of the apostle Saint James.

Admittedly, the Basques—as Aymeric Picaud has taught us—were still rather rough people, more inclined to brigandage than to regular work on the land—but was this not an additional reason to try and civi-

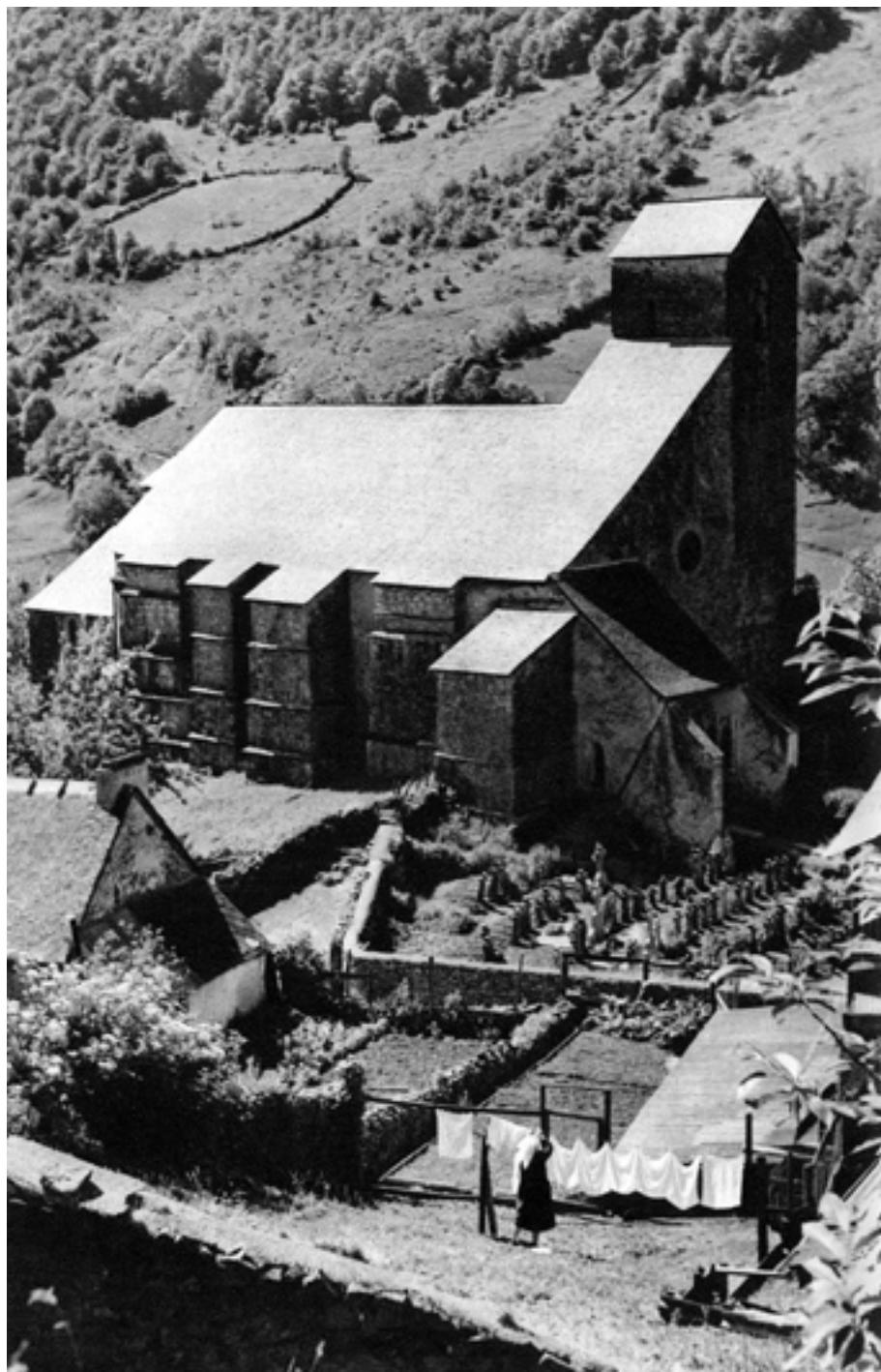
lize them (while protecting the pilgrims from their exactions) by showing them how to benefit more from their wild country? So, albeit with the exception of the Benedictines and the Cistercians who devoted all of their efforts to the highways of Gascony and Béarn, certain religious orders of the time—Augustinians, Knights of Saint John of Jerusalem, Hospitaliers of Orreaga (Roncesvalles/Roncevaux)—would vie with each other throughout the Middle Ages. Under their benevolent impulse, the land would be cleared and all forms of agriculture would gradually complement the original modes of pastoral life; a new vocabulary that Basque assimilated bears witness to this process. The working of the subsoil was perhaps itself first carried out by monks. After all, the initial use of the mine deposits of Ainhoa is attributed to the Premonstratensians of Saint-Sauveur of Urdax.

From the twelfth century onward, other Premonstratensians, probably a swarm from the mother house of Lacaze-Dieu in the Gers, would settle in Lapurdi, in Subernoia near Hendaia (Hendaye) on the sides of the Bidasoa, in Lehuntze above the banks of the Aturri (Adour), and at Behaune in Lower Navarre.

We have already had occasion to mention the even more numerous pilgrim hospices strung out mainly along the principal road to Garazi (the Ports de Cize), from the priory of Donapaleu (Saint-Palais) to that of Eiheralarre (Saint-Michel-le-Vieux), and also along a few other secondary roads.

In Zuberoa, apart from Ospitalepea (L'Hôpital-Saint-Blaise), some way away from the valley of the Uhaitzandi (Saison) and that of Santa Grazi (Sainte-Engrâce; originally named Sainte-Madeleine d'Urdaix), tucked away in the deepest recesses of the mountain, one could find, in succession, the priories of Ozaraine (Osserain), Ainharbe (Ainharp), Pagola (Pagolle), Arrokiaga (Roquiague), Hauze, and Larraine (Larrau), and an important commanderie, that of Urdiñarbe (Ordriarp).

Most of these religious foundations, sometimes created from lords' donations, were quite ancient: some of the most notable enjoyed tracing their origins back, fabulously enough, to Carolingian times—a claim that the absence of authentic documents made it difficult to sustain. Across the centuries, very different orders would sometimes succeed one another within the same buildings. Later on, when the militant effervescence of the first ages was followed by a more limited activity, many of these hospices ended up dependent on the powerful abbey of Orreaga, which was to exercise a sort of monopoly over the pilgrim route; only



in the eighteenth century did an act of exchange between the famous monastery and the bishop of Baiona bring all this property under strict obedience to the latter.

Lodging for travelers was the main *raison d'être* for these houses, but it is also likely that several of them were—at least in their early years—devoted entirely to the care and isolation of lepers, who were very numerous after the passage of the Visigoths and Saracens. This appears certain as far as the hospital of Saint-Nicolas outside the walls of Baiona is concerned. It was originally combined, in our view, with the hospital of Saint-Lazare and of Sainte-Quitterie in the same district; a similar destination is just as certain relative to the two priories of Sainte-Madeleine in Izpura (Ispoure) and Orizone (Orisson), which each bore the significant name of La Recluse, in Basque *Erreclusa*. The four saints we have just mentioned were indeed particularly frequently invoked for the protection of lepers—and the descendants of the latter, the *cagots*, continued almost always, around the same locations, to place themselves under the heavenly protection of these saints.

Of all these useful and benevolent creations of the Church there remain, from the archaeological point of view, fewer artistic marvels than one might have expected. The reason is that many of these foundations, proliferating as they did over a narrow territory, were not particularly large, individually speaking: the Arbelaenea house in Eiheralarre (Saint-Michel-en-Cize; an ex-hospice that belonged to Orreaga, as is attested by the coat of armor sculpted over the door) gives one an idea of the great simplicity of these *ospitale*, as the Basques still call them. However, there were more majestic examples: one was the colossal commanderie of the Knights of Malta, whose haughty mass dominates the town of Irisarri (Irissarry). It was admittedly rebuilt in the seventeenth century, but in a still somewhat archaic and rather military style, strangely evocative of its distant past.

The chapels that accompanied these places of refuge and indicated their presence to travelers were definitely more elaborately constructed. Many of them, including the most venerable, have unfortunately succumbed to the ravages of time, and few traces of them can now be found. Others, such as the little sanctuary of Apat-Ospitale (Aphat-Ospital) converted into a barn, have finally lost their religious function, not without suffering great damage in the process. Finally, those which have been preserved in the form of village churches have not always, in spite of this, met with a better fate: they have been restored, or clumsily enlarged, and only a miraculous fragment of their original appearance still exists—such



as the porches of Hauze and of Donazaharre (Saint-Jean-le-Vieux), the sculptures around the door of the sacristy of Arüe (Aroue), the chrisms of Haranbeltz (Harambels), of Sorhoeta, and of Altzabeheti (Alçabehety), and the chevet of Urdiñarbe, to name but a few.

The only two masterpieces of Romanesque art in the Basque Country to have escaped disfigurement are in Zuberoa: the abbey of Santa Grazi has a triple nave that ends in a number of semi-circular apses covered by hemispherical domes; its strong, fully arched vaults are supported by robust pillars with curious capitals, symbolically sculpted and painted in polychrome. A majestic ironwork grill bars access to the choir.

Ospitalepea (L'Hôpital-Saint-Blaise), a church lost in the woods on the edges of Béarn, is an edifice unparalleled in the region thanks to its half-oriental style: it has a Romano-Byzantine plan in the shape of a Greek cross, in the center of which an octagonal bell tower covers an exquisite dome whose unexpected architectural shape reveals exceptional Arabic influence. Trefoil openings, and strange windows closed by slabs of stone pierced by geometrical openings, add to the indisputable Hispano-Moorish feel of this surprising sanctuary.

Also worth mention, in Lehuntze in Lapurdi and in Bidarraï (Bidar-ray) in Lower Navarre, are two gracious twelfth-century churches that have more or less safeguarded their outer appearance, which is one of great simplicity.

This powerful upsurge of religious initiatives, which renewed the face of the Basque Country at the start of the second millennium, was not limited to the population of the countryside. The cities themselves were influenced by the ferment, chief among them Lapurdum, the *cathedra* of a bishopric that had regained its autonomy thanks to the Gregorian reforms. The viscounts of Lapurdi possessed a considerable number of ecclesiastical properties, which had probably been usurped during the Norman invasions and had subsequently, nobody knows how, fallen into their hands; these viscounts contributed to this renewal in the Church by often considerable restitutions or donations.

This glorious renaissance in the life of Baiona is often attributed to the great figure of Raymond de Martres, a former monk of Saint-Sever, who occupied the bishop's seat in 1125 where he enjoyed temporal as well as spiritual authority, as was the custom of the time. In fact, half of the city—still tightly trussed up within the narrow limits of its Roman walls—already belonged to the bishop, as a result of a donation made by



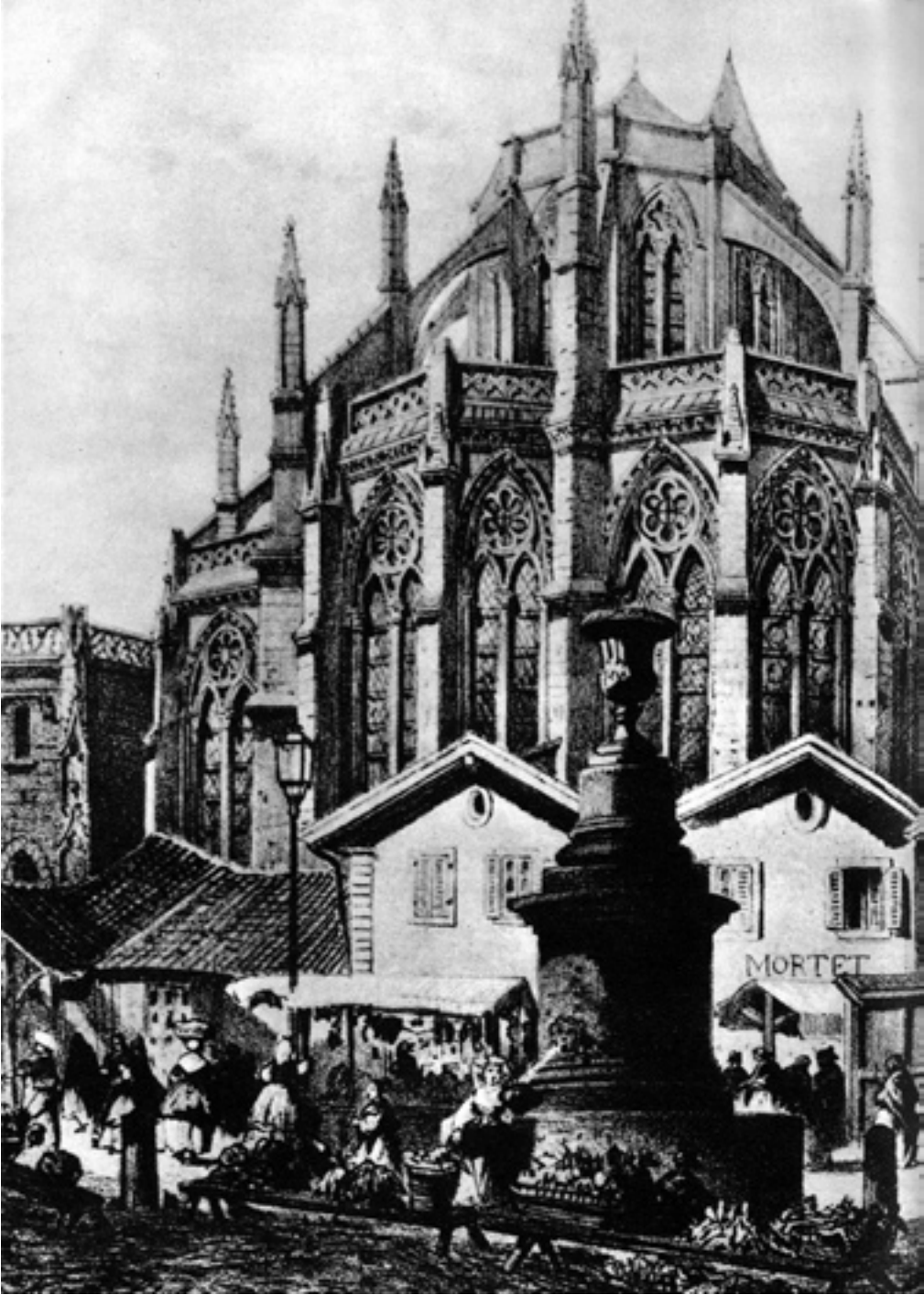
one of the first viscounts of Lapurdi and ratified by William VII, Duke of Aquitaine.

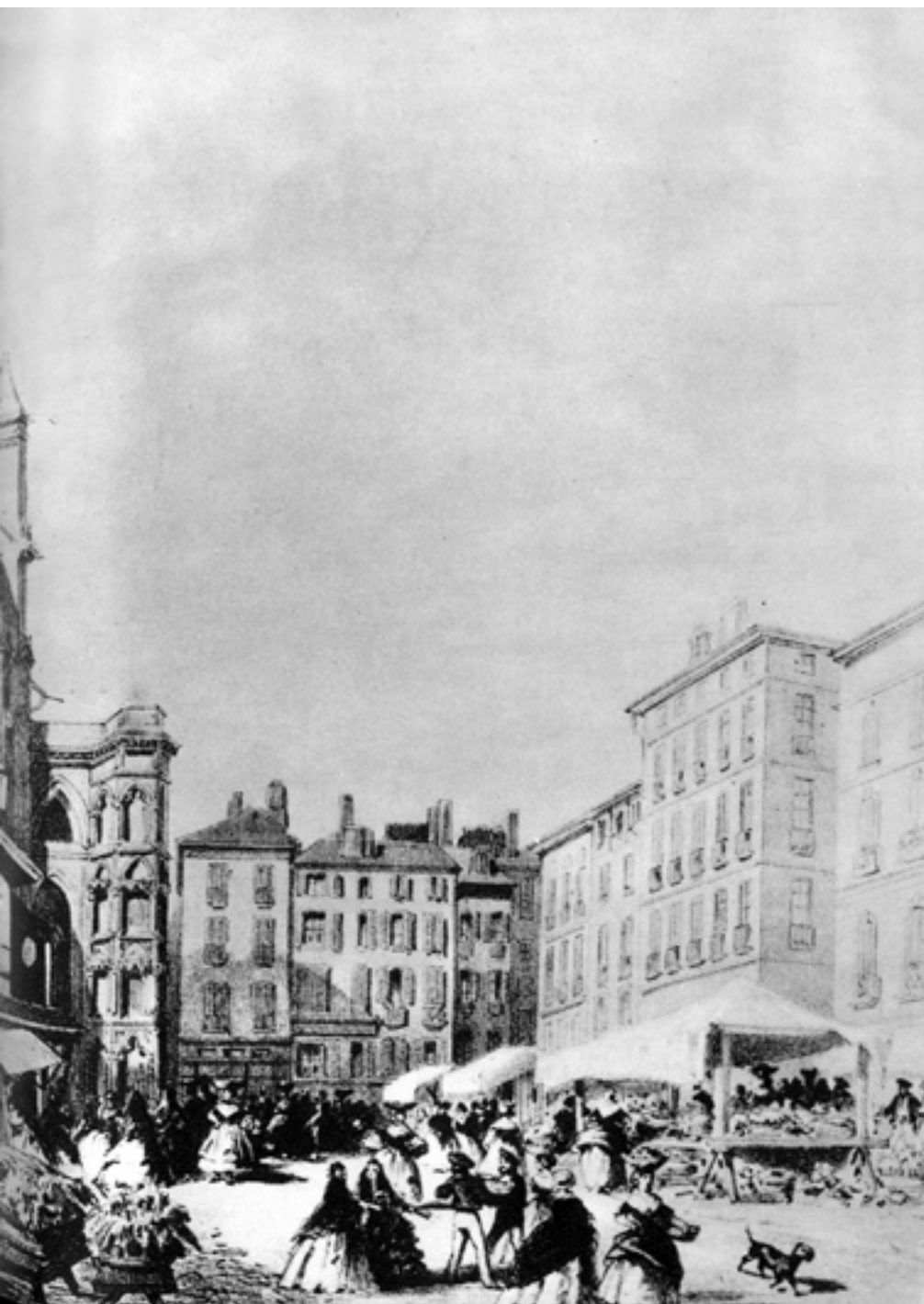
At the instigation of Raymond de Martres, it was decided to settle the more or less wandering populations or renegades of the Southwest by creating, in the wasteland at the foot of the ramparts and beyond the Errobi (Nive) near its confluence with the Aturri, a “place of safety” whose inhabitants would have right of residence and neighborhood. Anyone who moved into these places of safety—characteristic institutions of the period—found shelter there from all pursuit and violence and was protected by the secular authorities. The fiscal and commercial privileges granted to this Bourg-Neuf or New Town rapidly succeeded in attracting a growing number of inhabitants, mainly Gascon-speaking. This was the exact moment when the old name of Lapurdum was replaced by that of Baiona, which was initially, perhaps, simply the name of the new district, but soon designated the city as a whole. It is not certain that *Bayona* comes from the Basque *Ibai-ona* “good river” (as is commonly claimed), since this name can also be explained by the Romance dialect that was then starting to assert its predominance over this stretch of Basque territory. Be this as it may, the Bourg-Neuf, or Petite-Baiona (Baiona Ttipia), was shortly thereafter surrounded by a defensive wall that joined the original enclosure at the tower of Sault (still existing—it recalls the name of the last viscount of Lapurdi, even though the tower probably antedates him). The Mayou bridge was built across the Errobi, as was the long wooden bridge crossing the “great sea of Baiona,” as the Aturri was called. On the Landes bank, near the Saint-Esprit hospital, the town of Cap dou Pount soon came into existence. At the highest point of the old city, a Romanesque basilica—the first cathedral—which was to be destroyed in two successive fires in 1258 and 1310, was built at about the same time. All the essential and definitive features of the Baiona agglomeration were thus fixed under Raymond de Martres and his immediate successors, aides in this task of town planning by Bertrand, the fifth viscount of Lapurdi, whose mild-mannered reign lasted no less than forty-six years.

In the portrait gallery of those energetic bishops of Baiona, one of them, the Lower Navarrese Bernard de Lacarre (1186–1206) stands out for his picturesque and vivid character. He did not confine his activities to governing his little diocese. He was a soldier and sailor as much as a clergyman, and in 1190, having been given the rank of admiral in the Crusader’s fleet, he set off for Palestine with Richard the Lion Heart. During this memorable Crusade—rich in adventures, such as the sack of

Lisbon, which was definitely not on the program—the bishop was present at the wedding on Cyprus of the English sovereign with Bérengère, sister of Sancho the Strong, king of Navarre—a historic union that he may have organized. During restoration work on the cathedral in 1853, they found in a tomb a crosier and episcopal ornaments cut from an oriental fabric embroidered with Kufic characters that mean “God is God and Mohammed is his prophet,” which were long attributed to Bernard de Lacarre. Recent studies of these objects at the Musée de Cluny in Paris have unfortunately disproved this alluring identification. The enamels on the crosier can date back only to the second half of the thirteenth century, so they are clearly later than the episcopate of Bernard de Lacarre.

Among the other prelates who succeeded one another in the cathedral of Saint Leo, several came from the diocese itself and sprung from the main noble houses in the region. These houses had sent their younger sons into the service of the Church and were thus influencing the life of the Basque Country in a way that was unofficial but still effective. Apart from Bernard de Lacarre, we can cite with certainty an authentic Baiones, Barthelemy of Arribere who reigned between 1383 and 1392; a Zuberoan, Fortaner of Mauléon (Maule; c. 1150); three Lapurdians: Pierre-Bertrand de Sault (1230), Bertrand de Lahet, from Sara (Sare; 1504–1519), and Johannes de Sossiondo, from Azkaine (Ascain; 1566–1578); three Lower Navarrese: Saxe d’Ahaxe (Ahatsa; 1259–1277), Bertrand d’Echoux, from Baigorri (1598–1618), and Jean d’Olce, from Iholdi (1644–1681), who was the last on the list of the prelates of Basque stock. We will come across some of them again as they took part in the great events of their time, but their main achievement between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries was the completion of the gothic cathedral that crowned their episcopal city. They were greatly aided in this task by the participation of the Basques of Lapurdi and Arberoa, who were gathered into a vast confraternity and did not stint on their labor or their gifts, but this in itself would not have been enough without the very generous contribution of a Baiones who had become a very influential personage in the Church, namely Cardinal Guillaume-Pierre Godin, who died in Avignon in 1336. His coat of arms is sculpted on one of the keystones of the transept; they recall the decisive part he played in financing the enterprise. The cathedral of Baiona and the magnificent cloister that completes it were fortunate to find, in the nineteenth century, a second patron in the person of Lormand. A considerable legacy from this latter benefactor enabled the construction, in 1880, of two spires, and still finances several workshops for maintenance and restoration. Several other key-





stones in the cathedral, decorated with the leopards of England, bear witness that much of the building was carried out in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, but the later work, although bearing the stamp of their respective epochs, are very skillfully linked to the ensemble, which is still remarkably unified. We do not know the name of the architect who conceived this cathedral—and it is a unique monument in the whole of our Southwest—in an entirely northern style, such as those of León and Burgos in Spain. However, it is thought that he must have been from Champagne, since he seems to have recalled both Reims and Soissons by creating a building of reduced dimensions, but also of profound originality. The little that remains of the sculptures, savagely hacked away in the Revolution, shows that they too were akin in style mainly to the school of Reims.

In addition, it is worth noting how little gothic architecture left its stamp on the French Basque Country; at least any trace of it has long since more or less vanished. Apart from the vaults of Saint-Martin in Biarritz and the apse of Uharte Garazi (Uhart-Cize), only rare vestiges allow archaeologists to reveal, in Donibane Lohizune, Donibane Garazi (Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port), Urruña (Urrugne), and Suhuskune (Suhescun), the existence of gothic churches that certainly preceded the present-day buildings.

Baiona was not, as one might have thought, the only episcopal city in the French Basque Country. When the Great Schism occurred in the West, England recognized the Pope of Rome, while France and Navarre chose to follow the Pope of Avignon. Consequently, the bishop who remained faithful to Rome stayed in Baiona, while another prelate (or anti-bishop, as the old Baiones historian Veillet put it) would, in the name of the Pope of Avignon, have his seat at Donibane Garazi, taking with him several members of the chapter. In this way, three bishops succeeded one another in the little capital of Lower Navarre. A traditional memory of the place they lived in has been preserved, but the house in the rue de la Citadelle dates only as far as back as 1584. The neighboring house, which is melodramatically called the “Bishops’ Prison,” however, is more ancient, but there is no reason to believe that the curious dungeon it contains ever held those summoned before or found guilty by ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Indeed, the very words of the *Fors* of Navarre categorically dismiss this as impossible. So it is merely a legend.

Guillaume Arnaud de Laborde, the last of the schismatic prelates, took part in the Council of Constance, where it was decided that, on the death of one of the two bishops simultaneously in post, the survi-

vor would bring the two seats together. Pierre of Mauloc, who lived in Baiona, died first, and so the bishop of Donibane Garazi and his chapter returned to take control of the episcopal city on the banks of the Aturri. This strange interlude had lasted for thirty-five years (1383–1418).

At the same period, the diocese of Oloron also had bishops occupying their seats at the same time, but their history is more obscure. Generally speaking, the bishops of Oloron played but a minor role in the history of the Basque Country, even though Zuberoa was part of their spiritual domain.

English Domination — From 1155 to 1337 — The French Conquest — Baiona, an English City

English Domination

The year 1137 was a turning point in the political dependency of the territories forming the French Basque Country. Up until then, whether they had been, as historical circumstances fluctuated, vassals of the kings of Navarre or of the dukes of Aquitaine, the feudal Basques in fact preserved considerable autonomy. Henceforth, more powerful, albeit more distant states, would increasingly interfere in their affairs. Through his marriage to Eleanor, the sole heiress of William X, the last duke of Aquitaine, Louis VII the Young extended the borders of France as far as the Pyrenees. He did not have time to strengthen his authority: after fifteen years, a divorce undid what this union had striven to achieve.

That same year, 1152, Eleanor then married Henry Plantagenet, the heir to the throne of England, who himself was crowned two years later. In 1155, without war or conquests, but merely through the normal course of feudal laws, the first of the British “dominions” came into being. Constantly undermined by the intrigues of the kings of France, it nonetheless lasted three centuries.

Open conflict, in the form of the Hundred Years’ War, would break out only in 1337, but long before that—apart from short periods of truce—it was preceded by more underhand endeavors of the kind that our frontier period would frequently witness. Ousted from Lapurdi (Labourd) and Zuberoa (Soule), as from the rest of Gascony, Capetians and Valois would continue to enjoy a sort of pied-à-terre in Navarre. The old Pyrenean state was shaped by French influences during the crusades for the reconquest of the Peninsula; its royalty was half elective, and in

1234 it accepted kings of French stock: the counts of Champagne, who cleared the way—from Philip the Fair to Philip of Valois—for momentary reunions of the two crowns on a single head. The viscounts of Béarn, living adjacent to Lower Navarre, practiced a longstanding, skillful policy of changing allies frequently before definitively throwing in their lot with the French cause and were overall valuable auxiliaries of our kings. Finally, their plans were also served, on several occasions, by the unavailing efforts of the kings of Castile to exercise their somewhat hypothetical rights over Gascony. Such were the main pieces on the diplomatic chessboard over the long period that would come to an end in 1451 with French victory.

From 1155 to 1337

Theoretically, it seems that the Basque population accepted the ascendancy of Henry II with indifference, and certainly without realizing its full extent. The same was not true of the feudal aristocracy. In 1167, and then again in 1174, several great lords of Aquitaine rose in rebellion; Arnaud-Bertrand, viscount of Lapurdi, was one of their number. Richard the Lionheart was obliged to lay siege to Baiona (Bayonne), which he captured in ten days. He then pushed on to Garazi (the Ports de Cize) to repress the exactions extorted from pilgrims by certain Basque noblemen (Raymond of Soule, Vivian of Gramont, and the Lord of Saint-Michel, according to the *Codex of Compostella*). Expelled from Baiona, the viscount was obliged to transfer his residence to the chateau at Uztaritz (Ustaritz; on the site of the present city hall); this town would then remain the capital of Lapurdi until 1790. A few years later, in 1193, the successor of Arnaud-Bertrand, Guillaume-Raymond de Sault—whether willingly or not nobody knows—sold all his rights over the viscounty to the king of England in return for 3,680 golden florins. This latter sovereign, already sole master of Baiona, thus became the direct overlord of Lapurdi, but this did not mean that the city and the surrounding area were united.

In Baiona, royal authority was initially represented by a provost whose job was to guard the Château-Vieux and gather taxes. This colonial regime was, in 1215, replaced by a Common Charter by Jean Sans Terre. On its side, Lapurdi was firstly subjected to the expeditious administration of the seneschal of Gascony, a peripatetic senior official who roamed around the lands for which he was responsible, halting at the main centers to *hold his court*, in other words to receive grievances, judge cases, and ensure that taxes were paid in full. En route, he required

for himself and his suite the right of *albergade* at the stopover point, which, as it happened, was in Basusarri (Bassussarry) when the seneschal was on his way from Baiona to Uztaritze. The establishment of a bailiff of Lapurdi, the permanent representative of the king vis-à-vis an autonomous local administration, as envisaged by Richard the Lion Heart, would be brought about only in 1245, by Henry III. It would greatly help the Lapurdians to feel closer to their sovereign. The post of bailiff, which was actually an annuity from Auger de Sault in 1337 onward, became practically hereditary under the kings of France.

The total separation of Baiona and Lapurdi had one disadvantage: it encouraged a different state of mind between the city and its hinterland (there are still traces of this today), and terrible commercial rivalries broke out, to which we shall be returning. This regime was no doubt convenient for the English, but it was definitely detrimental to the local inhabitants.

When he came to power, Richard had recognized—subject to her paying him homage—the rights of his sister over Gascony; she married Alfonso VII in 1170. During the reign of Jean Sans Terre, Alfonso, impelled by the wish to make the most of a gift that had remained merely theoretical, invaded Zuberoa in 1204 and burned down Baiona. The attempt had no further consequences than the incursion of the king of Navarre Alfonso the Battler had had in 1130; by 1206, order had been restored.

Twenty years later, it was from the north that the English possessions were attacked. La Rochelle was besieged by Louis VIII of France, and the Baioneses sent vessels to the aid of the beleaguered city—in vain. This gesture meant that for four years they had to concede the revenue of the Pays de Gosse to strengthen their fortifications. From this collaboration dates the indestructible alliance between the city of Baiona and the crown of England. Common interests lay behind this alliance. It was unambiguously expressed in the meeting at Pons where the Baiones aldermen found themselves in the same company as the representatives of the whole of Gascony in the presence of the seneschal Jean de Haverling. They all declared that “if they were subjected to the French, they would be ruined; at present, the land belonged to them, they could do whatever they wanted, since, as for the King of England, even in Bordeaux and Baiona, he did not count, and this king gave them enough; as for the French, they would take away their possessions” (1242).

However, their interests as feudal subjects did not coincide with those of the merchants. Anarchy persisted in the Southwest; in order to suppress it, Henry III was obliged in 1248 to send his brother-in-law Simon de Montfort, earl of Leicester. He summoned several lords to Dax who had pillaged Lapurdi and, without any other judgment, ransomed them for high sums. The viscount of Zuberoa refused to reply to the summons and was captured in his castle at Maule (Mauléon) and managed to buy his freedom only by paying ten thousand morlan sous (a *sou morlan* was the twentieth of a pound —ed.). Simon brought his mission to a successful conclusion by negotiating an agreement with the king of Navarre at Ainhoa. He returned in the following years, but eventually fell into disgrace. It has been claimed that this great righter of wrongs, whose role later on was of the greatest importance in the reform and extension of the parliamentary regime in Great Britain, drew his democratic principles from his memory of Basque institutions. This is an alluring but somewhat risky suggestion.

In spite of various incidents, the opposition of Zuberoans had remained largely latent. Nonetheless, the king of England found it difficult to tolerate the semi-independence of their viscounts. In 1257, one of the latter, Raymond-Guillaume V, died in harness while defending his country against an attack on the part of the seneschal of Gascony, Etienne Longue-Epée (his name means “Long-sword” —ed.). The son of the dead man, Auger de Miramont, was obliged to accept a peace imposed by force, but, the following year, taking off the mask of his feigned submission, the young viscount again went off to war. Fomented by Alfonso X of Castile, an attempt made by the viscount of Béarn against Baiona failed given the resistance of the ordinary folk, who were all devoted to the English cause. Gaston VII was beaten and taken prisoner. Auger, who had rallied to his own party and had even managed to dislodge the English from Zuberoa, found himself, in spite of this success, in a dismal position; on the advice of the Pope, he agreed to exchange his viscounty for the lordship of Marensin, a region of the Landes between Dax and Baiona (1261).

Dissatisfied by this result, Auger awaited a propitious opportunity to recover his old fief. He was to find it in 1294.

It was on the sea that French-English hostilities would resume. Basque and Baiones sailors had become active rivals of the Normans in northern markets. Following a brawl in 1292, the Normans sunk several ships from Baiona. The English fleet took reprisals, and the Baioneses pillaged La Rochelle.

On the pretext of these events, Philip the Fair set the habitual procedure of the Capetians in motion and declared war on the Plantagenets: he summoned them to his court, and then carried out a feudal seizure of the whole of Gascony. It was a resounding failure; the occupation could not be maintained for long. In Baiona, the action of a fleet sent by Edward I to sail up the Aturri (Adour), joined to a popular uprising, drove back the French troops into the Château-Vieux on January 1, 1295. One week later, they were forced to capitulate.

However, Auger de Miramont had gone over to the king of France and been appointed provost of the Castle of Dax; he had invaded Zuberoa and was now refusing to surrender. Edward I, preoccupied by stamping out a rebellion in Wales, had no time to oppose this *fait accompli*; but, a few years later (1307)—a provisional peace had meanwhile returned—Philip the Fair forced the headstrong viscount to yield, for a second time, his domain to the king of Navarre, Louis the Stubborn, who retroceded it to the king of England. Auger was generously compensated: he was given the lofty post of *Alferes Major* in Navarre and the lordship of Rada. He was not heard of again on this side of the Pyrenees. Zuberoa, like Lapurdi a century previously, now became the direct property of the English sovereigns. They were represented in it by a captain and lord, the guardian of the fortress of Maule.

As a result of these fruitless attacks, the authority of the English over the Basque Country emerged generally reinforced. Various measures would consolidate it. To suppress the banditry of certain nobles who had a foot both in Lower Navarre and the English domains, and used this fact to escape any punishment, a treaty for the extradition of malefactors was signed in 1308 between the seneschal of Gascony and the governor of Navarre. With an eye to rectifying the disorder caused by the short-lived feudal seizure of 1294, Edward II ordered a vast inquiry to be carried out in 1311 to establish the exact extent of his sovereign rights over Lapurdi. In it, we read that no lord could build a fortified house without the king's permission. At that date, the different taxes brought in a total of just 100 morlan livres (3,800 gold francs). It is easy to understand why Lapurdians were fond of this far from onerous regime.

The French Conquest

It seems paradoxical, but with the Hundred Years' War a long period of relative tranquility opened for Baiona and the Basque Country. This is easy to explain with a little reflection: the English, who had hitherto



suffered the intermittent quarrels aroused by the kings of France in their territories of Aquitaine, started to carry their hostilities to the north of the Loire from 1207.

The main historic event worth mentioning from this period occurred in 1365, with the passage of Bertrand de Guesclin at the head of the *Compagnies de Routiers*, or Companies of Mercenaries, who were to conquer the throne of Castile for Henry of Trastámara. Hastening to the aid of Don Pedro the Cruel, the Black Prince followed his trail through Garazi, carried off a brilliant victory at Nájera, and brought the celebrated French warrior back to Baiona as a prisoner. In a tower of the Château-Vieux, Bertrand du Guesclin was forced to await the arrival of the ransom that the daughters of France were spinning for him. He would soon, however, be in a possession to take his revenge. When he was finally crowned king of Castile, Trastámara, his grateful ally, tried in 1374 to seize Baiona from the English. He failed. The time was not yet ripe.

On the local level, fratricidal quarrels often disturbed the always precarious relations between the sailors of Lapurdi and those of the rival ports on the Spanish Basque coast. In 1419, to give just one example, eight thousand Gipuzkoans, under the command of their *merino mayor*, Ferran Perez de Ayala, undertook a punitive expedition against Donibane Lohizune (Saint-Jean-de-Luz), whose church was burnt down.

The fifteenth century saw the end of English domination over Lapurdi and Zuberoa. Should we remind the reader that a certain “Le Basque” was among the Gascon gang leaders in the entourage of Joan of Arc, the standard-bearer at the critical siege of Orleans? But that bold companion of the French heroine remained an exception. Their geographical position was far removed from the theater of operations, and the inhabitants of our region apparently wished for nothing more than to remain under an English rule that was barely distinguishable from autonomy. Even though Destiny had declared itself in favor of the king of France, the region’s inhabitants refused to rush to join in the victory, and remained hopelessly obstinate right until the end.

After Formigny, Guyenne alone remained in the hands of the English. In 1449, the French were at our gates. Gaston de Foix, the viscount of Béarn, who had been appointed lieutenant general by Charles VII, won the support of Agaramont and then besieged Maule in August. Whereupon, his father-in-law, the king of Navarre, arrived in turn at the head of an army to rescue the castle of which he was the suzerain. However, he contented himself with parleying with his son-in-law and, judging the

cause to be lost, agreed to withdraw. The capitulation of the place led to the submission of the whole of Zuberoa without any bloodshed. The lord of Lüküze (Luxe)—of the English party—rendered homage with six hundred of his men; this produced a considerable effect.

The second episode occurred shortly afterward. It was the siege of the powerful castle of Gixune (Guiche); at the confluence of the Aturri and the Biduze (Bidouze), it commanded the threshold of Lapurdi. A rescue troop, comprising Basques and Baioneses under the command of Ogerot de Saint-Pée (Senpere), bailiff of Lapurdi, and John Astley, the English mayor of Baiona, was defeated. Gixune capitulated on December 15, and Gaston de Foix immediately swept across the lands of Lapurdi. The chronicle of Guillaume Leseur has preserved a vivid account of events:

And he crossed this land as far as Donibane Lohizune, without a single man daring to show himself or venture onto the roads, or even in the villages; they had all fled and were hiding out in the woods. So our men easily seized their property and their cattle, as much of them as they deemed fit. . . . As they swept through, our men found that their route passed through a village of the aforesaid Ogerot de Saint-Pé, in which village [Senpere] the said de Saint-Pé had a moderately fortified house, enclosed by ditches and water mills. There were in the same house twenty or thirty crossbowmen, who were crazy enough to think that they could defend this house. Our men did not banter or barter with them but assailed them on all sides and charged them so fiercely that in less than a quarter of an hour they had trampled them under-foot; and the said house was pillaged and ravaged, and soon afterward set on fire. And likewise, the mills of the said Ogerot de Saint-Pé were burnt, being the property of a treacherous man, a rebel to the King his sovereign master.

It had been a harsh lesson. On March 18, 1450, the representatives from Lapurdi turned up at the castle of Beltzuntze (Belzunce) in Aiherra (Ayherre) to offer their submission: noblemen or ordinary inhabitants, they all had to swear an oath of fidelity within a fortnight. In return for two thousand gold crowns, the payment of which was guaranteed by the handing over of ten hostages, they were allowed to keep their organization and their particular privileges.

The fortified city of Baiona, which Jean de Beaumont, Grand Prior of Navarre, and a sworn enemy of the viscount of Béarn, had rapidly taken over with a few troops, continued to taunt the victors. In spring 1451, Charles II gathered an army under the command of Dunois. After



the fall of Bordeaux and Dax, the city was invested on August 7 from the Mousserolles side, while Gaston de Foix took up a position near the Saint-Léon district and the sire d'Albret blocked the bridge over the Aturri at Saint-Esprit. Attempts at making a sortie proved fruitless. Food started to run out . . .

The surrender was negotiated by Bishop Garcie-Arnaud de la Sègue, with a retinue of several nobles. The conditions were harsh: payment of forty thousand crowns (a million gold francs) and, as regards the municipal freedoms and liberties, total submission to the good will of the king of France.

A miracle occurred to sweeten the bitterness of the Baiones. On the morning of August 20, as possession was being taken of the Château-Vieux, they saw, against the blue sky, from the direction of Spain, a cloud with the shape of a white cross topped by a crown which changed into a fleur-de-lis. Heaven itself was making its will known. Medals were later struck to commemorate this event. On August 21, the sumptuous train of the conquerors, each of them entering by a different city gate, met up in front of the porch of the cathedral of Andra Mari/Sainte-Marie. Baiona was French once and for all. The work of Joan of Arc was finished.

It was from this time on that the arms of the city took their current form, by the transformation of the leopards into lions and the adding of a fleur-de-lis (on a red field with an azure chief on the shield), with this motto, the symbol of eternal fidelity to the kings of France: *Nunquam polluta*. Today, after several passing variations, the blazon of Baiona reads as follows:

On a red background, a notched tower set in gold, an aperture walled up with sand, set on an undulating sea of gold and sand, bordered by two gold lions confronting each other, placed against the trunk of two sinople oak trees with a gold fleur de lys overhead.

By letters of patent in September 1451, Charles VII generously allowed the Baioneses to keep their municipal freedoms and reduced their war indemnity by half. But, opposite the Château-Neuf which had been the citadel of a quasi-independent commune, he raised the Château-Neuf du Roy, the menacing image of the new epoch.

Baiona, an English City

If Lapurdi and Zuberoa were never, as far as the English crown was concerned, anything other than provinces providing a very slender rev-

enue, the same was not true of Baiona, which, after the capture of La Rochelle, remained (together with Bordeaux) the only port through which the English could gain access to their rich possessions in Guyenne. The importance of this as a strategic as well as an economic trump card was always appreciated by the sovereigns of England, who willingly favored the rise of the city by conceding to the townsfolk the maximum number of privileges. It cannot be denied: the era of English domination was, for Baiona, the beginning of a golden age that has never been equaled. In the fourteenth century, rivalry with the Normans and conflicts with the ports on the Cantabrian coast undermined this prosperity, but did not shake it too seriously.

The maritime and fluvial commerce of the city reached an almost European level thanks to the geographical position of its port. Vast cellars with multiple ogival bays, sometimes linked to one another and in bygone days probably opening, at ground level, onto the sides of the slopes bearing the cathedral, comprise a strange subterranean city that still attests, in the entrails of old Baiona, to the importance of the warehouses in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. From England and Flanders came tin and draperies. From Spain came oil, leather, and untreated wool. From nearby Landes came honey, beeswax, resin, and tar. Baiona exported, especially to England, wines of sought-after vintages and imported wheat when its hinterland did not produce enough. Among the merchandise that it manufactured and exported, the work of its *faures* (ironworkers and gun makers, a powerful guild whose street—the one in which they worked—still bears its name) was particularly prized abroad. It was their famed daggers that, at the end of the sixteenth century, would give their name to the bayonet.

Baiona had been queen of the river from the Bec du Gave to the Port-d'Albret (Vieux-Bocau): the city had a veritable monopoly and forbade ships and galleys to be unloaded anywhere other than in the basin that extended right to the heart of the city. Every evening, enormous chains stretched at the edge of the Errobi (Nive) protected the accumulated wealth from any surprise attack.

The purely regional traffic was no less regulated in favor of the city. All the fish caught at Capbreton and Biarritz could be sold only on the market floor of the Port of Bertaco. A highly protectionist police system, established for all sorts of foodstuffs, enabled them to flood into the Baiona market, the only place where sale was authorized, which enabled substantial customs rights to be levied. These often exorbitant advantages caused difficulties with the Basques on more than one occasion.

The most critical period of these ever-renewed conflicts was in the middle of the fourteenth century. Arnaud de Durfort, a nobleman from the Agenais, had lost his property in the service of England. As compensation, Edward III rather rashly gave him the lordship of Lapurdi in 1338. In his lifetime, Dufort made no attempt to make his endowment concrete, but on his death, his son decided to resuscitate the title of viscount of Lapurdi. Faced with the uproar of the inhabitants, who feared with some reason that they would fall back into the feudal regime, the king, now more enlightened, restored the alienation of his rights as overlord. But, at the head of a small army, Durfort was already attempting to occupy his pseudo-viscounty. This curious venture led nowhere, but the adventurer had been cunning enough, during his brief passage, to obtain the support of the Baioneses, confirming them in several fiscal rights that Lapurdians had been disputing for a very long time.

It was in these confused and troubling circumstances that the bloody episode made famous by the French writer Taine occurred. The Basques refused to pay customs duty on the import of wines and *pommades* and did not miss an opportunity to traffic fraudulently: they would always be inclined to smuggling. Claiming that the jurisdiction of the city extended as far as the tide rose, the mayor of Baiona, Pès de Poyanne, had set guards in front of the bridge (now no longer there) of Prodines on the Errobi, four miles to the south of Baiona. The passage was however forced. Losing all his sangfroid, Pès de Poyanne, during the feast of Milafranga (Villefranque) in August 1343, took a few armed men and attacked the castle of Miotz where several noblemen of Lapurdi were banqueting, and seized five of them. What did he do with them? Legend shows the unfortunate men garroted to the arches of the bridge and slowly drowning as the tide rose; they thus attested by their violent deaths to the exact extent of the sovereignty of Baiona. Actually, this romantic anecdote appears doubtful; the documents of the period do not specify how the victims perished.

Whatever the details, Lapurdi rose up in rebellion. The Baioneses themselves turned their mayor out of office for abuse of power; he was forced to flee, and died shortly afterward, assassinated in obscure circumstances. This expiation did not restore peace. An inquiry carried out in 1344 by the seneschal of Gascony depicts the situation in somber colors: "The Basques pursued the men of Baiona as far as they could, stripped them of their belongings, ransomed them, and massacred them; as a result, nobody dared now leave the city; area outside was untended and the whole city desolate . . ."

In 1355, arbitration by the sire d'Albret was finally accepted. He treated the Baioneses quite harshly, and they appealed to the Black Prince, who was at the time the governor of the duchy of Aquitaine. The latter confirmed the decision, albeit reducing the amount of the indemnity to be paid and lowering from ten to six the number of prebends to endow the souls of the Basque noblemen slain by Pès de Poyanne.

These hostilities between neighbors were sometimes, it has to be admitted, aggravated by quarrels between the factions fighting over control of the city hall. The Charter of Jean Sans Terre had created a municipal body with many members: the Hundred Peers, renewable each year, from among whom were recruited twelve aldermen, twelve municipal magistrates, and a mayor—the latter being chosen by the king from three candidates put forward. Swearing an oath on the relics of Saint Leo, this magistrate, head of the judiciary in the city and the militia of townsmen, had the right to call the general assembly of *Vesiaux*, in other words all those who had acquired right of residence in Baiona.

The party of rich merchants was opposed to that of the craftsmen and the seafarers who were more willingly supported by the English princes. The names of the Vièles and the Dardirs often symbolized the rise to power of the popular faction. But the struggles continued to be fierce and on several occasions (1253, 1434), the inhabitants were obliged to yield their right to appoint their mayor.

In 1312, a Basque sailor, Pès-Sanz de Jatsu, even seized the city hall, acting as a veritable dictator whom only the English seneschal was able to drive out. Overall, however, it is clear that the plutocratic party tended gradually to come out on top in the course of the fourteenth century. From the French conquest onward, it was an oligarchy of a few wealthy families that would continually hold power.

These disastrous troubles, evidence of hot blood, must not allow us to forget the considerable political and administrative achievement of the Baiones rulers: the Criminal Charter, in force from 1190; the Act of the Society of Navigators of 1213; the Custom of Baiona, drawn up in 1273; the Book of Establishments, a valuable collection of city statutes brought together by Guilhem Arnaud de Vièle in 1336. Such are the great memories and the honorable examples bequeathed to us by the townsmen of Baiona at a period when they prided themselves on being English.

France and Spain — The History of the Kingdom of Navarre — From 1451 to 1530

France and Spain

In less than ten years, in the aftermath of the conquest of 1451, a firm and at the same time generous policy had established bonds (that would never again be broken) between Baiona (Bayonne), Lapurdi (Labourd), and Zuberoa (Soule) on the one hand, and the kings of France on the other. The vain hopes of an English revenge would come up against a staunch fidelity, all the more meritorious in that the previous peaceful prosperity would henceforth be replaced by a period of ceaseless disturbances.

In 1469, the marriage of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabelle the Catholic marks the beginnings of Spanish unity. France had freed itself from the English threat only to find itself face to face with the victorious ambitions of the kings of Castile who had once been its allies. For two centuries, until the Peace of the Pyrenees in 1659, French-Spanish rivalry would turn our region into a rampart—often breached—of the French defenses.

The port of Baiona had lost its markets in England and Spain at the same time, and would experience a noticeable decline, while the military role of the city as a fortified place would become predominant. This change of direction would have repercussions for the appearance of the city and, from the administrative point of view, would find expression in a weakening of its independence, the result of a growing grip on power by the central power. In the Basque Country, the feudal system—before disappearing from the foreground—would indulge in real private wars, a consequence of the state of anarchy in which neighboring Navarre was floundering.

Following the serious crisis of 1512, for the whole of a long period that came to a definitive end in 1523 with the abandoning of French claims, the domination of the old Navarrese state would be, in our region, the main object of competing French and Spanish devices and desires. From 1530 onward, only Lower Navarre, in tune with its destiny as dictated by geography, would remain within the orbit of our influence, until it was finally made part of France under Henry IV. So, in order to understand these events, we need to go back quite a while in history.

The History of the Kingdom of Navarre

From whatever angle we envisage it, Navarre's history is that of a great destiny being missed. If Sancho the Great, who had managed to subdue the greater part of the Iberian Peninsula, had not in 1035 shared out his heritage between his four sons, we would probably today be the neighbors of a Navarrese Spain spiritually closer to France than to Castilian Spain, and many past misunderstandings could have been avoided.

If the Navarrese successors of this great monarch had given up their overambitious dreams and contented themselves with seeking to federate under their aegis the different Basque countries (something that Navarre alone was capable of bringing about), a Basque nationality would perhaps have come into being. Neither of these policies finally prevailed, even had they indeed been conceivable for the mentalities of that era, which is quite doubtful.

The Navarrese were henceforth too weak to dominate their neighbors, but strong enough to waste their strength fighting endless battles against them, seeking to extend their power toward Aragon or Rioja, but allowing the inhabitants of Bizkaia (Vizcaya), Araba (Álava), and Gipuzkoa (Guipúzcoa) to unite with Castile to harass their frontiers. In the hope of finding support from outside, they eventually accepted the leadership of French princes whose interests, being focused far away, did not really coincide with theirs. Tossed between the unscrupulous ambitions of its great neighbors, undermined by the civil wars fostered by its rivals, the Kingdom of Navarre—one of the most ancient in the whole of Europe—was to crumble in the sixteenth century. Its dismemberment merely underlined the loss of an independence that by this time was more or less fictitious.

Of these five centuries of history, a vast heraldic tapestry, dazzling and monotonous, a tissue of heroic actions and dark deeds of violence, of vile

treasons and chivalrous gestures, we will here mention only what may concern the tiny part of the country (about a sixth) that remained French.

It was under the reign of Sancho VII the Strong (1194–1234) that the territories of the *Merindad de Ultra-Puertos* (transmontane county—ed.) definitively paid homage to the crown of Navarre. Sancho VII, the last of a dynasty of seventeen kings of the Vascon race whose line went back to the ninth century where it was lost in the mists of legend, is best known for his victory over the Moors at Las Navas de Toledo in 1212. This date, in fact, marked the end of Arab expansion in Spain. Until then, they had been slowly driven back, with advances and retreats following each other alternately; from now on they would renounce any offensive designs and confine themselves to the south of the Peninsula. The Basque lords, who had found a use for their warlike temper in the interminable work of reconquest, would be obliged to find another outlet in the East, in the Crusades for the deliverance of the Holy Sepulcher. They felt all the more encouraged in this endeavor by the change of dynasty that, in 1234, set on the throne of Navarre a companion of Saint Louis—Thibault I, Count of Champagne, the illustrious French troubadour.

The four kings of the royal house of Champagne were succeeded, in accordance with the more or less regular mechanism of Navarrese institutions, by four Capetians who—long before the Bourbons—were at the same time kings of France: Philip the Fair, Louis the Stubborn, Philip the Tall, and Charles the Fair. In 1328, the Valois lost Navarre, which passed legitimately into the hands of the house of Evreux (of which the most decisive personality, thanks to his anti-French policies, would be Charles II, called “le Mauvais” or “the Bad”), and was finally ruled, from 1479 onward, by the last viscounts of Béarn.

The essential cause of these dynastic changes resides in the fact that Salic Law, which excluded women from succession to the throne, did not apply in Navarre. So the daughters of the kings of Iruñea-Pamplona were greatly in demand as they were in a position to bring their husbands a throne. In addition, by virtue of the contractual origins of the Navarrese monarchy, recognition by the *Cortes* (which were composed mainly by noblemen) was a prior condition for the coronation of the new sovereigns. In fact, heredity and the rules of the feudal regime were more or less the only criteria, but in the—quite frequent—case—in which two claimants were fighting over the throne, the acquiescence of the Estates, the unanimity of which was difficult to realize, triggered bloody civil wars.

A brother of Charles the Bad, the infante Louis, Count of Beaumont-le-Roger in Normandy, had produced, from a daughter of the noble house of Lizarazu in the Baigorri (Baïgorry) Valley, several bastards. One of them, Charles de Beaumont-Navarre, the holder of several Navarrese fiefs and lord of Gixune (Guiche) in Lapurdi, was to be the founder of a fateful and memorable line. His son Louis, created Count of Lerin on his marriage to a natural daughter of Charles the Noble, and a powerful personage also because of his situation vis-à-vis the kings of England and Castile, placed himself at the head of one of the two great factions that perpetually divided the support of the Navarrese between them. The troubles became endemic when, after the death of Charles the Noble (1425), his son-in-law John of Aragon assumed the regency of the kingdom and kept it until his death, in contempt of the rights of his own son, Charles IV, the so-called Prince of Viana. The latter perished—poisoned, it is believed—in 1461. After a series of dark intrigues, the crown returned to his youngest sister Eleanor of Navarre, wife of Gaston IV of Foix-Béarn. But she died immediately after her accession, leaving just a grandson, François Phébus, nephew of Louis XI by his mother Madeline de France, first of the Béarnais sovereigns of Navarre.

These quarrels over succession were more the pretext than the real cause of the fierce struggles between the “Beaumontais,” partisans of the Prince of Viana, the faction commanded by the Count of Lerin, and the “Agramontais,” supporters of the usurper, led by the marshal Pierre de Navarre and his uncle Pierre de Peralta. The proof of this lies in the fact that they long outlasted their initial reason, and led to the total destruction of the kingdom. The great dream of delivering the Holy Sepulcher faded away, and the nobility of Navarre, like that of almost the whole of Christendom, was consumed in sterile jealousies. On our side of the Pyrenees, the struggle between the parties was a horrible aggravation of the rivalry, which had begun a century earlier, between the Gramonts and their powerful neighbors the barons of Lüküze (Luxe) in the region of Amikuze (Mixe).

The last Béarnais kings of Navarre were in no position to restore peace among their subjects, particularly as they preferred to reside in Pau and so lacked the esteem and the support of the Navarrese *Cortes*. François Phébus died young, and his sister Catherine, who was being courted by several suitors, married—on the advice of the Estates of Béarn, in conformity with the policies of the late King Louis XI—Jean II d’Albret, Viscount of Tartas (1484). The Albrets, who came from the wretched seigniory of Labrit in the Landes, had used their intrigues and alliances—

especially under Alain the Great, Jean's father—to build one of the most powerful feudal houses in France. This marriage fulfilled their ambitions, but it was practically the final step in bringing Navarre under the increasingly strict dependency of the kings of France.

This, indeed, was the way Ferdinand the Catholic saw it, desirous as he was to bring about the final unification of Spain to his advantage. Profiting from the state of delinquescence from which Jean and Catherine had managed to draw Navarre, on the pretext of a fake treaty between the Navarrese sovereigns and Louis XII (who was then waging war in Italy), and even making use of a dubious bull of Pope Julius II, he invaded the whole country and—with the complicity of the Beaumontais—conquered it in a few days in July 1512.

Attempts that were either isolated, or else inadequately supported by French arms, did not permit either Jean or Catherine, or their son Henry II of Navarre (who succeeded them in 1516), to reestablish themselves in the kingdom. After 1523, François I would completely lose interest in the Navarrese cause; he would content himself with naming his brother-in-law (Henry II of Navarre would marry Marguerite d'Angoulême in 1527) lieutenant general in Guyenne and Gascony.

Even such close bonds with the house of France did not, in any case, prevent the dethroned king from intriguing, his whole life long, with Spain in an attempt to have Navarre surrendered to him. Depicting his situation, Henry II of Navarre was wont to say: “A weak king between two great powers, who cannot protect himself, resembles a louse between two monkeys—no sooner has the one got rid of him than the other catches him.”

In 1530, this mercurial sovereign was, however, happily surprised: finding it too onerous to occupy Lower Navarre, even partially, Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor, decided spontaneously to evacuate it. The division of the old Basque state was complete.

While a fraction of the nobility of Lower Navarre remained faithful to its legitimate sovereign, other noblemen had rallied to the usurper. In this way the disloyal attitude of the barons of Lüküze impelled Henry II of Navarre to confiscate their property in 1524 and to have their mighty chateau in the Amikuze area razed. Although they were later restored to favor, the lords of Lüküze never entirely regained the power that they had so often put to ill ends; their very name was soon to be extinguished.

With the help of the officials who had fled before the army of Ferdinand, Henry II of Navarre reorganized an entire streamlined adminis-

tration in Lower Navarre, closely based on the one that had been based in Iruñea-Pamplona as its capital. Estates analogous to the old Cortès assembled periodically in Donapaleu (Saint-Palais). This small town also became the seat of the Chancellery of Navarre, the supreme jurisdiction of the kingdom. In 1578, they also reestablished a mint there: it had been first created two centuries previously by Charles the Bad and would last until 1669.

In any case, Lower Navarre would long remain imbued with Spanish influences; it would be nearly two centuries before French became the sole official language there. Until around 1660, in Eiheralarre (Saint-Michel) and Donazaharre (Saint-Jean-le-Vieux), for example, the official documents would be drawn up exclusively in Castilian; French alone would be used only after 1707. This must have been at least partly the result of the fact that the successors of Henry II of Navarre, in other words the kings of France, refused to recognize the usurpation and continued to consider the inhabitants of Upper Navarre as their subjects, with full rights to possess any employments or assets in our territory. The most striking example of this treatment is that of Axular (nom de plume of Pedro Agerre Azpilikueta —ed.), the great Basque writer, a native of Urdazubi (Urdax, in Navarre —ed.); in a very curious letter to the Parlement of Bordeaux, Henry IV of France confirmed him in the possession and use of the curacy of Sara (Sare) in Lapurdi, which had been disputed since he was a foreigner. Note that, reciprocally, and in virtue of an analogous fiction, the kings of Spain unreservedly granted rights of naturalization to the inhabitants of Lower Navarre, who were glad to make use of them.

From 1451 to 1530

For nearly a century, the circumstances we have just broadly set out would profoundly dominate—on the international level as on the local level—the existence of the whole French Basque Country.

As a result of the natural process of matrimonial alliances and successions, the lords of Zuberoa and Lapurdi found themselves almost all intimately linked with Navarre, either by family bonds, or even by duties of vassalage because of the estates they owned there. Thus, the barons of Ezpeleta (Espelette, in Lapurdi —ed.) were simultaneously viscounts of the Erroibar (Erro) Valley (Navarre —ed.); the Garros of Lekorne (Mendionde, Lapurdi —ed.) were viscounts of Zolina (Navarre —ed.); and the Lehets of Sara (Lapurdi —ed.) were lords of Lesaca (Lesaca, Navarre).

Likewise, in 1370, the barony of Lüküze in Lower Navarre had, for lack of a male heir, fallen by marriage into the hands of the Zuberoan lords of Atharratze (Tardets); in the fifteenth century, in his turn Gracian the brother of the baron of Lüküze likewise became lord of Senpere (at the time, Saint-Pée-d'Ibarren, and later renamed Saint-Pée-sur-Nivelle—ed.) in Lapurdi. Such unions greatly added to the power of one of the mightiest houses in the region, the neighbor—and fierce rival—of Agaramont (Gramont) in the Navarrese civil wars. So, at the time of the French conquest, Lapurdi and Zuberoa, no less than Lower Navarre, had long been lying desolate as a result of the continual excesses, murders, and pillages committed by gangs armed by the two enemy lineages. The towns of Donapaleu, Donibane Garazi (Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port), and Maule (Mauléon) were alternately captured and recaptured by each side, to the great detriment of their inhabitants. Attempts at a peaceful settlement rarely brought any enduring truce. The little chapel of Muskildi (Saint-Antoine-de-Musculdy) in Zuberoa, originally dedicated to Our Lady of Peace, was first built to commemorate one of these short-lived reconciliations. The populations formed *hermandades*, defensive associations that tried, without great success, to put an end to crimes that the sovereigns themselves were unable to prevent. The complaint of *Berteretch* (“Bereterretxeren khantoria” or the song of Bereterretxe—ed.), the epic narrative of a murder committed between 1434 and 1449 by Louis de Beaumont of the party of Lüküze—at that time captain and lord of Maule—is even today quoted by the peasants of Zuberoa and evokes the bloody atmosphere of that dark epoch. At the crossroads of Ezpeldoï (Espeldoy pé) in Etxebarre (Etchebar), a curious stele in discoid shape, five centuries old, still marks the site of this tragedy, of which popular art alone has preserved the memory among so many other forgotten analogous episodes.

Charles VII had not come in person to visit his last conquests. With the reign of his successor there opens the magnificent series of princely personalities whose passages or sojourns marked a bright day in the history of the Basque Country, or indeed in history as such.

In 1462, Louis XI made an appearance in our region. On the bridge of Ozaraine (Osserain) in Zuberoa, on the boundaries between Béarn and Lower Navarre, he met John II of Aragon to conclude a treaty that would be signed and registered on May 9 in Baiona. Struck by the poverty of this latter city, which was suffering acutely from the loss of its traffic with England, the king of France restored half its customs rights that Charles VII had taken away. He took a great interest in the hôpital du

Saint-Esprit where, twenty years later, on the eve of his death, he would found a collegiate church endowed with sumptuous gifts.

The following year, it was Donibane Lohizune (Saint-Jean-de-Luz) that attracted royal attention: Louis XI granted it valuable commercial privileges, which, with diverse modifications, would—until 1789—be constantly renewed by his successors.

On this second journey, the king had apparently settled in the castle of Urtubie, with the aim of holding a discussion with Henry IV of Castile on the shore of Hendaia (Hendaye). The main object of this diplomatic encounter—narrated by Comminges—was arbitration on the subject of Catalonia and also Navarre, in which Louis XI was particularly interested now that his sister Madeleine de France had just married the son of Gaston IV de Foix-Béarn, heir presumptive to the Pyrenean throne. The agreement between the two sovereigns, who were both tortuous negotiators, actually led to amputating Navarre temporarily from the *merindad* of Lizarra (Estella), to the profit of Castile. By way of compensation, Louis XI had an ingenious bargaining counter: at his accession, he had in fact, whether he wanted to or not, taken Zuberoa from Gaston de Foix, who had conquered it—we have already related how—in 1449. He offered to return it to him. Gaston, who was eager to have this close link between his Béarnais domains and his future kingdom beyond the mountains, accepted the compensation, which actually seems not to have lasted.

After several somewhat obscure transactions, only in 1510 was Zuberoa definitively reattached by right to the crown of France.

The sojourn of Louis XI in the nearby mansion of Urruña (Urrugne) marked the clear rallying of Lapurdi lords. Several of them agreed to follow the king and did not hesitate to hold important posts at the court of France. Jean de Montréal, husband of the lady of Urtubie, would even go for thirty years without returning home. So much so that his wife, allowing herself to be a little too easily persuaded that their marriage was null and void, brazenly married Don Rodrigo de Gamboa, lord of Alzate near Bera (Vera) in Navarre. This sort of bigamy, giving rise to two lineages that could both lay claim to Urtubie, was to lead to extraordinary local conflicts—especially at the start of the reign of Louis XII. The castle was burned down, and Marie d’Urtubie fled to Navarre when her first husband belatedly returned. The seigniory was taken by force by the gangs of harquebusiers of Jean Ochoa, son of Alzate. The latter openly rebelled, supported by the population of Urruña, against the execution



of a decree of the Parlement of Bordeaux ordering the restoration of his property to Louis de Montréal, the legitimate heir. To put an end to these disturbances, which were causing great harm to the guarding of the frontier, the king was obliged to take ruthless military action. On the judicial level, the case continued to be argued in court, with many vicissitudes, until 1563; after a century's worth of trials, a marriage between the two enemy branches would bring a final end to this hundred-year-old quarrel, though not until 1572.

Under Charles VII, the Spanish danger had remained latent. Navarrese anarchy was fermenting. In our part of the world, the main action of this reign was the creation, in 1491, of a Baiona mint, which resuscitated an institution dating back to the time of the English. Coins would be minted in Baiona until 1837, with several periods of respite.

Under Louis XII, the usurpation of Navarre triggered a period of threats and uncoordinated hostilities in our region, miseries to which would be added, mainly in 1518–19, the ravages of the plague. The very year of the Castilian invasion of Navarre (1512), a body of English troops disembarked in Gipuzkoa and crossed the Bidasoa in the direction of Lapurdi—a mere show of force that had no further consequences.

In addition, with the help of a French army brought by the count of Angoulême (the future François I), and commanded by La Palice, Lautrec, and Longueville, John III of Navarre (Jean d'Albret) attempted, in September, to recover his kingdom. Under this pressure, the Duke of Alba was forced to take refuge in Iruñea-Pamplona, from whence a rescue mission would soon deliver him. After this failure, the retreat of the French over the passes of Maya and Belate (Velate) turned out to be costly in terms of men and materials. At the start of 1513, a one-year truce, signed by Lautrec in Urtubie, left John III of Navarre with just Lower Navarre, minus the fortress of Donibane Garazi. Before he died, the king of Navarre would try again to recapture this city, this time alone. He met with no better success.

War was rekindled in 1520 after the inevitable rupture between François I and Charles V. A French army under the command of André de Foix then retook Donibane Garazi, forced Iruñea-Pamplona to capitulate, but was finally beaten at Noain. Soon, Donibane Garazi itself was again lost, in spite of a powerful diversionary tactic attempted by Admiral Bonnivet. The latter abandoned his attempt to penetrate deeper into Navarre, but fell back on Gipuzkoa and invested Hondarribia (Fuenterrabía), which surrendered after a siege of twelve days.

Nonetheless, in 1523, the Imperials took their revenge: the Prince of Orange blocked Hondarribia (which he eventually reconquered) and, leaving the place under siege, simultaneously invaded Zuberoa and Lapurdi, devastating the whole country as far as Bidaxune (Bidache), whose castle was burned down. A surprise attack on Baiona was meant to bring these incursions to a successful conclusion, but Lautrec, with the heroic aid of the whole population of Baiona, so effectively mustered the defenses of the city that after four days of fruitless attacks the assailants were forced to withdraw. This brave resistance caused a great stir.

In the final analysis, all these military operations produced negative results on both sides. They would not be attempted again for several years, but our region had suffered greatly and did not manage to recover for a very long while.

The previous circumstances had the consequence of hastening the planned transformation put in train to adapt the walls of Baiona to the necessities of defense against artillery. Certain districts outside the ramparts were ruthlessly razed. This work, continued throughout the reign of François I, was completed in 1545. These precautions were not superfluous. Indeed, the liquidation of Navarre, by now a secondary operation, did not stop the struggle for supremacy on the continent from being pursued elsewhere, especially in Italy.

Some Basque noblemen made their way there to make their fortunes—and did so. One of these was Gracian de Garro who was captain of Brescia in 1516 and of Como in 1521, another was Menaud d’Aguerre who died governor of Ostia. Then there was Pierre de Tardes, called “the Basque,” squire of Bayard; Captain Hirigoyen who took part in the battle of Marignan; and those two Basque soldiers of whom Montluc, praising their valor, wrote: “those men have such weird names that I cannot remember them, much to my dismay.”

François I was defeated at Pavia—taken prisoner by another Basque, Urbietta from Gipuzkoa. At the end of his captivity in Madrid, he returned to his kingdom on March 15, 1526, crossing the Bidasoa. His children traveled in the other direction—they would be acting as his hostages. It was on Basque soil, once the exchange had been carried out in the middle of the river, that the sovereign uttered the no doubt historic words: “I am still King of France.” Nonetheless, given the gravity of the circumstances, he refused the solemn entry that the Baioneses had prepared for him.

They were able to make up for this four years later, with the return of the children of the French royal house and the simultaneous reception

of Eleanor of Castile, sister of Charles V, who—under the terms of the treaty of Cambrai—was to marry François I. The event was preceded by an amazing spectacle: several months in advance, from all the provinces of France, the gifts gathered together to redeem the king once and for all had been converging on Baiona. The twelve hundred thousand crowns (60 million gold francs) of the ransom were piled up, ducat by ducat, in a tower of the Château-Vieux under the guard of the Marshal Anne de Montmorency. Verification of the amount by the Spanish delegates was a laborious process; in fact, there was no shortage of outrageously worn-down crowns and even some counterfeit coins. When the sum was complete, on the day fixed, a convoy of thirty mules escorted by armed men took the road to Behobia (Béhobie), where the exchange, after a few final misunderstandings, was able to take place with the aid of two barges sailing an equal distance away from the shores. The hour was so late that the new queen, received on the bridge of Ziburu (Ciboure) by Basques bearing torches, had to spend the night at Donibane Lohizune, with the young princes. The next day, July 2, 1530, she entered Baiona in great pomp.

In 1539, Charles V himself, authorized to cross France to suppress the revolt of the people of Ghent in Flanders, spent one night in Baiona, but left at dawn the next day, without any other ceremony. His arrival passed almost unnoticed.

From 1530 to 1660 — The Reformation and the Wars of Religion — The Reign of Henry IV — From Richelieu to Mazarin — The Treaty of the Pyrenees

From 1530 to 1660

Between the Renaissance at the period of its full maturity and the dazzling sunrise of the *ancien régime*, life in the Basque Country continued to be disturbed essentially by the events associated with the rivalry between France and Spain, as during the preceding age.

Under the reign of Henry II, the years before the treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis (1559) were especially tumultuous. A Spanish fleet had threatened the Vieux-Boucau in 1552. In 1558, it was on land that an incursion aimed at influencing the negotiations under way took place: Donibane Lohizune (Saint-Jean-de-Luz) was occupied and burned down from top to bottom (the old Esquerrenea house remains the only one that, previous to this disaster, survived it). Burie, the lieutenant of Antoine de Bourbon, came to Baiona (Bayonne) to try and take reprisal on Hondarribia (Fuenterrabía), but without success.

Nonetheless, throughout an initial period extending until the accession of Henry IV, military operations would prevail somewhat less than the underhand dealings of our neighbors on the occasion of the Wars of Religion (so-called). Just like the gigantic ideological conflicts of the present day, which, on a smaller scale, they strangely resemble, our atrocious sixteenth-century civil wars indeed covered concrete political ambitions with the cloak of faith.

However, our region would have remained relatively safe from the fateful consequences of the Reformation if Jeanne d'Albret (Jeanne III of

Navarre —ed.)—while persevering in vain to demand the return of lost Navarre—had not taken evangelical propaganda particularly to heart in the domains she still possessed. Zuberoa (Soule) and Lower Navarre suffered quite cruelly as a result.

A second historical period, distinct from the previous one, opened with Louis XIII and the Thirty Years' War. Like all the frontiers of France, ours was again threatened, attacked by the enemy, and crushed under the weight of military activities. Only the signing of the Treaty of the Pyrenees in 1659 would finally bring the Basque Country—*pax optima rerum*—the longest era of tranquility that it ever experienced. Foreigners would no longer tread its soil until 1793.

The Reformation and the Wars of Religion

Today, there are no longer any Huguenots in the Basque Country, but the total success of the Counter-Reformation so completely wiped out any trace of Protestantism that it is not easy to assess the extent to which the doctrines of Calvin had managed to penetrate our lands. It does seem that the mass of people initially remained passive, if not hostile—the Basque temperament is, quite reasonably, mistrustful of novelty. Still, we should perhaps not exaggerate the extent of the initial failure. Baiona and Lapurdi (Labourd), which were directly dependent on the king of France, admittedly remained more or less untouched. The same was not true of Lower Navarre, and especially Zuberoa where Béarnais influence was predominant. Long before the accession of François II, which led to the triumph of the Guise family and decidedly drove Antoine de Bourbon and Jeanne d'Albret into heresy (1559), one could already find a few Protestants in the area around Maule (Mauléon). Doubtless, these early disciples had followed the spiritual leadership of the bishop of Oloron, Gérard Roussel: we know that a sermon he preached in the church of Maule gave rise to a violent incident. Pierre de Maytie, a fervent Catholic, armed with an axe, smashed the pulpit of the evangelist preacher. Roussel fell and was wounded—the cause, it is believed, of his death shortly afterward. Be that as it may, in 1549, supporters of the new ideas were being prosecuted; men and women were sentenced by default to make a full apology (*amende honorable*) in front of the church in Maule. But the movement really took off in 1562, under Jeanne d'Albret who was driven by a fierce proselytizing spirit. Under her instigation there the Basque translation of the New Testament would appear in 1571. The very fact that, in spite of merciless proscription, a certain number of copies (over

a score) survived proves that this classical masterpiece of Euskara had at that time been in wide circulation. Its author, Jean de Liçarrague, of Beskoitze (Brisous), had been aided in his task by a dazzling array of collaborators. We know their names as well as those of several other Basque ministers of the Reformed Church. So there is no doubt that the movement had found, in the countryside itself, enough adepts to become organized. What was more serious was that a considerable number of the ruling class, practicing what they preached, flocked to the religion of Jeanne d'Albret: there was Encot de Sponde, procurer of the king; Jean de Belunce, captain and lord, as well as governor; and Gérard de Bela, bailiff and lieutenant general of the former, all senior officials of Zuberoa. It is not sure whether Gramont himself joined the Protestant movement for a while, but the fact remains that he threw all his weight behind the party of the Queen of Navarre and her religious policies. Thereupon, Charles de Luxe showed his colors as one of the main leaders of the Catholic party and took with him the lords of Etxaux (Echaux), of Armendaritze (Armendarits), of Domintxaine (Domezain), and others. The merciless quarrel was reignited, in a new guise.

In fact, things would become tragic only after the split between Queen Jeanne and the Court of France (1568). Nonetheless, cunningly using the pretext of the threat of heresy, Philip II of Spain put into practice, this time successfully, a maneuver tried out already by Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor, between 1525 and 1533. He obtained from Pope Pius V a bull that relieved the bishopric of Baiona of spiritual jurisdiction over the whole part of the diocese that was located in Spanish territory. The latter was temporarily annexed to the seat of Iruñea-Pamplona. The protest of Bishop Johannès de Sossiondo and the reserves of his successors were not to modify the definitive character of this 1565 dismembering.

The same year, in an attempt to bring peace to the general anarchy that was still threatening to erupt, Catherine de' Medici made the young King Charles IX embark on a great journey throughout the south of France. His stopover in Baiona was of particular importance. His stay, marked by a visit of the king's sister, Elisabeth of Valois, the third wife of Philip II of Spain, lasted from May 30 to July 12, 1565. The official reception of Charles IX took place with great magnificence on June 3. The city was bristling with triumphal arches; on the one that rose at the end of the Saint-Esprit bridge, one could read the pompous verses that ingeniously referred to the miracle of 1451 and the deep meaning of the motto of Baiona:

THE HEAVENS ABOVE DID CHOOSE ME LONG AGO
 TO GIVE BACK TO GAULS THEIR RESTORED FAITH . . .
 SO, KING, THAT I AM PURE DO ALL MEN KNOW,
 AND THIS MY TITLE I STILL BEAR IN TRUTH.

There were not only many festivities, mythological tournaments, and even nautical excursions down the Aturri (Adour) and along the Basque Coast, but also serious secret diplomatic conferences with the Duke of Alba who was accompanying the Queen of Spain. Nothing very useful emerged from this, but, whatever has been claimed, they definitely did not hatch the plan for the Saint Bartholomew's Day massacre.

This event, grimly famous (to anticipate our story) did not lead to bloodshed in our region. In Baiona in particular, where several members of the upper middle classes had been susceptible to Calvinist influence, the most remarkable tolerance continued to reign; but a proud letter of protest in response to the orders of Charles IX was never written—as has long been thought—by Viscount d'Orthe, the governor of the city. This was a mistake, or an invention, of Agrippa d'Aubigné, a Calvinist historian more passionate than truthful. In any case, such an act would hardly have been typical of Adrien d'Aspremont: this magnificent soldier, military governor of Baiona between 1552 and 1574, had so many problems with the corps of the city—including the drowning of the alderman Menaquet d'Andoinche in the Aturri—that he was obliged to withdraw to his castle of Montréal in Peyrehorade.

In 1567, the increasingly strict measures taken by Jeanne d'Albret to impose the Reformation in her states came up against a first uprising of the Catholics of Lower Navarre. The Huguenot minister of Donapaleu (Saint-Palais) was dismissed; the lord of Larrea (near Izpura [Ispoure]), captain and lord of Garrüze (Garris), was imprisoned. Escorted by a few noblemen, the young Henry III of Navarre (later Henry IV of France—ed.), fourteen years old, was sent on a mission: the Basque procurer Etchart, addressing a meeting of the *Junte* in Galzetaburu (Galcetaburu) in Henry's presence, managed to calm everyone down.

This was a brief truce, for the civil war broke out openly in 1569. Charles IX ordered the Parlements of Bordeaux and Toulouse to proceed to the seizure of all the estates of the Queen of Navarre. At the same time, the baron of Terride invaded Béarn in the name of the king, to reestablish Catholicism, while the lord of Lüküze (Luxe) took Maule and ravaged Zuberoa.

From La Rochelle, Jeanne d'Albret responded by sending a rescue army under the command of Montgomery who, in a lightning offensive, regained the lost ground. His lieutenants, Montamat and the baron d'Arros, finished off the task he had begun by mercilessly subjugating Lower Navarre. Donibane Garazi (Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port) was occupied the day after Ash Wednesday 1570, and Larrea, appointed captain and lord, would endeavor for at least two years to convert the populations, by force or persuasion. The church Sainte-Eulalie of Uganga (Ugange), the most ancient parish in Donibane Garazi, was thereupon burned, and that of Our Lady of Pont converted into a stable. The destruction or disaffection of many other ancient Basque sanctuaries dates from this period. As far as the harm done to persons, Catholics and Protestants indulged in turn, with equal enthusiasm, in those atrocities that always dishonor civil wars.

The situation was to become somewhat more peaceful after the death of Jeanne d'Albret (1572), thanks to the tolerant spirit of her son; but at first, under the reign of Henry III of Navarre, then before the Béarnais had succeeded in entirely reconquering the Kingdom of France, the repercussions of the violence perpetrated by the Catholic League would be felt on many occasions.

One curious detail: it was a Basque, Loys du Halde, faithful first valet of the chamber of Henry III of France, who let his guard down enough to allow the assassin Jacques Clément to gain access to his master and caused—quite involuntarily—the accession of Henry IV (1589; Henry III of Navarre—ed.). This modest cause led to big effects, but this would not be the last time that we will see the Basques occupying a role in the margins of the history of France.

To return to our region and to show how the calm there was only relative, it needs to be said that in 1587 Belzunce reconquered by force the castle of Maule and reinstalled himself in his Governorship of Zuberoa that Charles de Luxe was still holding against all right. The captain and lord easily won, as his adversary had fled to Otsagabia (Ochagavia) in Spanish Navarre—and he treated the valley as a conquered country, allowing all sorts of cruelties to be committed by his troops against the Catholics. The express protection of Henry IV spared him the bother of having to account for his exactions. In the enemy camp, Captain du Lau, a member of the League, at the head of five or six hundred knights, took Donapaleu by storm, on August 8, 1594, sacked the mint there, and had the elderly Enecot de Sponde, former secretary of Queen Jeanne, led away and killed. However, Philip II of Spain, an ally of the League, was

hatching vain machinations to take Baiona by surprise. A triple capital execution was planned in 1596, as punishment for the traitor Château-Martin and his accomplices, who had determined to deliver the place to a Spanish fleet.

When Henry IV, in a France weary of so many pointless murders, finally managed to restore order, the Huguenots, in spite of their efforts, had basically not succeeded in gaining a foothold in Lower Navarre. In Zuberoa, on the contrary, there were still small knots of faithful Calvinists who would long resist all the pressures that would be brought to bear on them from Louis XIII onward. The famous lawyer Jacques de Béla, who died in 1667, always refused to abjure. The pastor Jacques de Bustanoby was still in post as a minister in 1661 in Maule, Zalgize (Sauguis), and Montori (Montory). Even today, malicious popular sayings—quite out of touch with reality—describe the inhabitants of these last two Zuberoan villages as Huguenots!

The Reign of Henry IV

The reign of Henry IV finally brought peace to this monotonous series of public misfortunes. It is worth remarking that—as he did not dare go against the express wish of the inhabitants—the new king excepted Lower Navarre and Béarn from the measures that he took to unite all his other seigniories to the crown of France. It was only Louis XIII who—by an edict issued at Pau in 1620 taking another step toward unification—would proclaim the indissoluble fusion of the big kingdom and the tiny one. The Estates of Lower Navarre would never give their consent to this unilateral decision, but in fact their protest could only ever be theoretical.

Under the good king—the only one, it has been said, to be remembered by the people—there are only purely local events to be mentioned. He himself never came back to Baiona, which, as the impecunious king of Navarre, he had entered in 1584, being received with mistrust in spite of a small escort, to sell to the city the seigniorial rights of the Albrets over Saint-Esprit and Saint-Etienne-d'Arribe-Labourd (today, neighborhoods of Baiona —ed.). It was this handover—be it noted in passing—that explains the count's crown with which Baiona topped its coat of arms.

Among the valiant companions who had fought with the Navarrese king in the difficult times and who remained close to the king of France when the good times came, there were a few Basque noblemen, such as the fine captain of the light horse, Harambure, nicknamed “Le Borgne”

(“the One-Eyed”), whose old house at the far end of the Landibarre (Lantabat) Valley can still be seen.

Even in our region, the reparative policies of Henry IV found valuable aid in the person of another faithful friend and confidant: Bishop Bertrand d’Echaux who had risen to the seat of Baiona in 1598. He remained there for twenty-two years, in spite of the rowdy enmity of the mayor Antoine II de Gramont who, on his arrival, had closed the gates of the city in his face and threatened him with death at every opportunity. The role played by the prelate—a descendant of the viscounts of Baigorri (Baïgorry)—was important in this period.

In 1598, Baiona opened itself to the influence of humanism and created its college, on the pediment of which an inscription engraved in marble (now deposited in the Musée Basque) proclaimed, with mouth-watering enthusiasm:

O GOD, THE HAPPY SUCCESS, THROUGH MY THREE BASTIMENS
 THE SCHOOL, THE ARSENAL, THE RAMPART OF FRANCE
 I BANISH, I DESTROY, I CHASE THE ENEMY
 AT THE SAME TIME FAR AWAY FROM ME
 THE ENEMY, HUNGER AND IGNORANCE

At around the same era, Bertrand d’Echaux, took an interest in a brilliant man, whom he was to turn into a priest of Itsasu (Itxassou) and a canon: the Baiones of Basque extraction, Duvergier de Hauranne.

Sent to Louvain to complete his studies, this young man became an associate of Jansenius, whom he later lured to Baiona, where, in his goodness, Monsignor appointed the newcomer as the head of the famous college. In this way, in the shade of the estate of Camp de Prats (now a hospice for old men), the future bishop of Ypres and the future abbé de Saint-Cyran had time, between 1612 and 1614, to forge that austere doctrine on divine grace that was to arouse such passionate controversies. The Basque clergy would long be marked by this influence, and Baiona would remain, under the ancien régime, a stubborn center of Jansenism. When the Jesuits tried, more than once, to establish themselves there, they were driven out by popular rebellions.

It was also under the episcopate of Bertrand d’Echaux that the lamentable witchcraft trials took place in Lapurdi. We know how, on the advice of the prelate, who was disturbed by the excesses of the criminal commission, Henry IV recalled the cruel councilor De Lancre who had been unwisely granted overextended powers. In 1611, the foundation of

a monastery of Recollect friars dedicated to Our Lady of Peace, on a little island in the mouth of the Urdazuri (Nivelle), was aimed mainly at calming the unrest of the bewitched by spiritual means more efficacious than torture and the stake.

In that same year, 1611, an event in the domestic politics of Spain had repercussions that added to the troubles of Lapurdi. The Moorish populations, converted only in appearance to Christianity, and whom the secret agents of Henry IV had attempted on more than one occasion to raise against Philip II of Spain, were expelled in mass from the Iberian Peninsula. Forty thousand of these *moriscos* entered France over the Bidasoa, to the great disquiet of the local worthies of Donibane Lohizune and Baiona. In spite of a royal commandment demanding that they embark for North Africa or fall back beyond the Garonne, certain of those emigrants—especially the craftsmen—settled in our region, especially around Biarritz where their memory is still attested by the name of Lake Mouriscot.

As part of the exodus of the Moors, a large number of Marrano Jews also crossed the frontier. They did not tarry among the Basques, but were given a friendly reception at Bidaxune (Bidache), in the sovereign principality of the Gramonts, in Bastida (Labastide-Clairence) (where you can still see their ancient cemeteries), and finally at Saint-Esprit, opposite Baiona where their community is still flourishing, even today. These *portuguese*, as they were called, are credited with the introduction into our region of the chocolate industry, though this has not remained in their hands.

Let us note, finally, that—thanks to his intimate knowledge of the region, Monsignor d'Echaux played a very useful part in the negotiation of the settlement signed in 1614 to solve the ages-old dispute between the inhabitants of Baiogorri and those of the Erroibar (Erro) Valley on the subject of the pasturelands of Aldude (Aldudes). But he did not manage to bring this very complex frontier question to a conclusion: the dispute would resume all its bitterness in the eighteenth century and cannot be considered to be absolutely closed even now.

In 1615, the bishop of Baiona, as much in favor under Louis XIII as under his predecessor, accompanied Elisabeth of France, daughter of Henry IV, who was to marry the future Philip IV of Spain, while Anne of Austria was at the same time crossing the Bidasoa to become queen of France. This exchange of princesses was not enough to establish a sincere

peace between the two countries; this success was reserved for another Spanish marriage, some forty years later.

From Richelieu to Mazarin

The politics on the grand scale that, not without setbacks, and drawing alternately on force and cunning, would gradually strengthen the French monarchy within, would have few direct repercussions on the Basque Country.

However, the Counter-Reformation was developing in Béarn and, to a lesser extent, in Zuberoa. The bishops of Oloron, all Zuberoans from the same noble family of la Maytie, would successively turn themselves into apostles of this movement: Arnaud I (1598–1623), Arnaud II (1623–1646), Arnaud-François (1660–1681). Their memory is preserved by the magnificent palace, in Renaissance style under a huge Béarnais roof, which the first of them constructed in Maule.

While Richelieu, pursuing the total destruction of the Protestant party, was laying siege to La Rochelle, the last fortress where the supporters of the Reformation obstinately maintained a state within a state, the island of Ré was blocked by an English fleet. A rescue convoy formed by pinnaces fitted out in Baiona and Donibane Lohizune managed to break through the blockade. This dazzling achievement on the part of Basque sailors enabled the Cardinal to bring his enterprise to a successful conclusion (1627–1628). It is worth remembering, for the sake of the story, that in 1599, the year of the Edict of Nantes, the Protestant mayor of La Rochelle was a man named Alexandre de Haraneder, originally from Donibane Lohizune. In the same context, let us point out that the Count of Chalais, the illustrious victim of Richelieu's severity, had—like many noblemen of his time—a Basque lackey, Martin of Seinich (or of Etchenique?), a native of Senpere (Saint-Pée-sur-Nivelle), with the help of whom, during his captivity, he was corresponding with the Duchess of Chevreuse. A curious letter in Basque from this boy to his brother Johannes figured in the trial that led Chalais to the scaffold. The Duchess of Chevreuse herself had to flee across the Pyrenees a few years later, and passed through Baigorri, where—on the recommendation of her admirer Bertrand d'Echoux, now the archbishop of Tours, she found plenty of people to help her slip across the frontier.

From outside, Spain continued to be an eternal subject of anxiety for our country. The fort of Hendaia (Hendaye) and that of Socoa (Socoa), hitherto rather rudimentary buildings, were reconstructed from top to



de las Cortes
de los Reyes
Felices

donde se celebraron las Cortes
y se trató de los derechos de la

Y. Puerto de Plasencia para la comunicación
G. Parte de España
H. Desembarcadero del Rey año 1764
Y. Galera Real de España en el puerto de
X. Galeras de la familia Real

V. Diferentes Galeras y embarcaciones de
S. M. y de España
M. Batallones de Camallería de la guardia del Rey
año 1764 con sus armas y armamento

año 1764
O. Parte de
P. Coche de los
Q. Guardia de



la misma "Castilla"
 anca
 Rey Christianissimo
 la Reyna Christianissima

la Reyna Madre con otros
 Reyna
 Rey Christianissimo con otros
 Reyna Christianissima con otros

V. Castillo de Santibon
 X. Tron ultimo lugar de España
 Z. Calzada para el camino de Fuenerrabia
 A. Especto principal de una Fanda a otra

Y. Santiago
 4. Casas para la Poesarria del Tabor
 S. Casas de San Juan de Leon

bottom and assumed the powerful appearance that the second of them has preserved until the present day. Actually, work on them was never finished and was later to be of little use, when, in 1635, the final phase of the Thirty Years' War began on our territory. In 1636—the year of Corbie—the Spanish overwhelmed Lapurdi militias, which apparently broke and fled, and invaded Urruña (Urrugne), Ziburu (Ciboure), and Donibane Lohizune, whose inhabitants were forced to take refuge in Baiona where preparations to defend the city were immediately made. Hundreds of houses were burned and the port of Donibane Lohizune disastrously pillaged. The occupation lasted a good year, and was disturbed by the incessant skirmishes of the French troops of the Duke de la Valette who, camped in the hinterland near Ezpeleta (Espelette) and sometimes advancing boldly as far as the cliffs of Sainte-Barbe, harassed the enemy that was solidly established around the bay of Donibane Lohizune.

Richelieu was still intent on humbling the House of Austria: he wanted revenge. In 1638, a land expedition concentrated in Donibane Lohizune, attacked Hondarribia and simultaneously a fleet commanded by the Admiral de Sourdis, archbishop of Bordeaux, crushed the fleet of the Spanish before Getaria (in Gipuzkoa, not to be confused with a town of the same name in Lapurdi —ed.). The enmity between La Valette and Gramont, who were rivals for the command, led to the lamentable failure of the Gipuzkoan fortress, which was relieved on September 8 by an army that suddenly turned up at the reverse of Mount Jaizkibel. A picturesque procession of the inhabitants of Hondarribia to Our Lady of Guadalupe has commemorated this anniversary ever since. A little later, at the time of the Fronde, Pedro Mantillo hatched a plot in which he managed to forge false keys to the Château-Vieux, so as to surrender Baiona to a Spanish disembarkation: the plot was foiled by the far-seeing courage of a young woman, Marie Garay, nicknamed by her compatriots Menigne Saube-le-bile (1650; Menigne “Savior of the Town” —ed.).

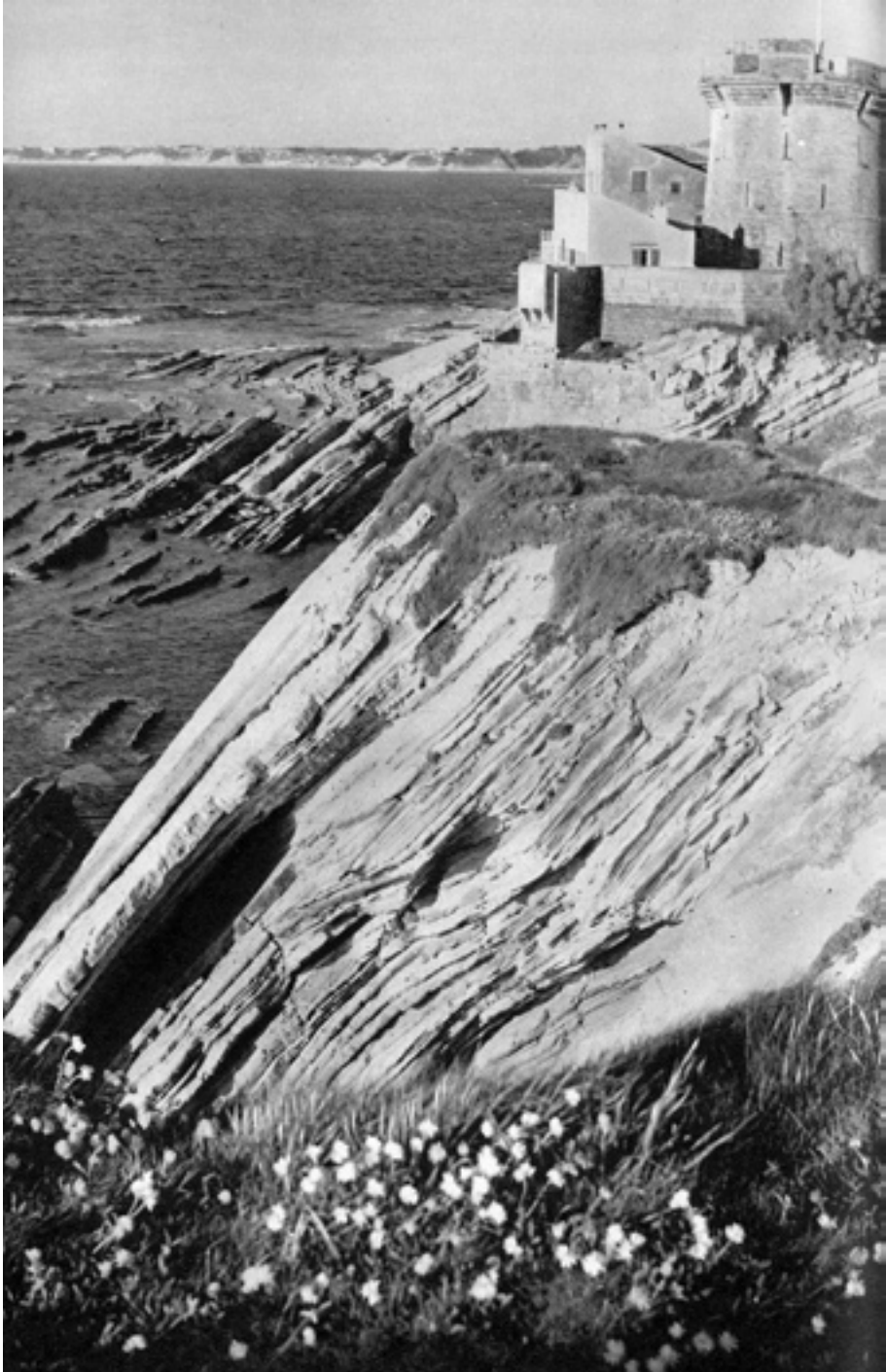
The Treaty of the Pyrenees

France, and even more, Spain, were however starting to feel exhausted by these ruinous wars that may have humbled the one country but had not enriched the other. Both populations were bending beneath the burden. A man of genius—unpopular among his contemporaries as almost all the true servants of our land would be—was able to turn these feelings to advantage and bring about the reconciliation that appeared impossible. Our Basque Country had the glory of being the framework of this act, the

most considerable of the Grand Siècle. For three months—from August to November 1659—Mazarin, already gravely ill (he would die less than two years later), was expending his energies tirelessly to draw up the 124 articles of the treaty of the Pyrenees with Don Luis de Haro, the representative of Philip IV of Spain. How many problems the subtle mind of the Cardinal was forced to resolve! Those of simple etiquette were not the least tricky . . . the place chosen for the debates, which were held in the greatest secret (diplomacy in public had not yet been invented) was Konpantzia (the Ile des Faisans). From time immemorial, this was where the modest gatherings of the Basque delegates of France and Spain had been held, with the authorization of their respective sovereigns to conclude—in spite of the ongoing wars—commercial treaties, those called the “Good Correspondence” treaties. This time, far more was at stake! On this patch of alluvial ground that barely emerges from the waters of the Bidasoa, the two plenipotentiaries, after endless and almost daily discussions, finally signed the much-desired agreement on November 7.

Ever since the start of the negotiations, a prediction had been going round among the Basques that the capture of a whale—they were starting, alas, to be quite rare visitors—would be the sign announcing success. By a fortunate concatenation of circumstances, the whale of peace duly appeared, just in time, within sight of the coasts; after four days’ pursuit, it allowed itself to be harpooned by sailors from Donibane Lohizune on the very date the treaty was concluded. One can imagine the enthusiasm this aroused!

In the spring of the following year, the whole French court arrived in Donibane Lohizune, where the marriage of Louis XIV with the Infanta Maria Theresa of Spain was to seal the enduring alliance between these two nations. The island of the conference, which had been splendidly decorated and brought to a pitch of perfection by Velasquez himself, was again the theater for scenes as brilliant as they were moving. But it was mainly Donibane Lohizune that, for a few weeks, had the eyes of the whole of Europe on it. The little town, then at the pinnacle of its prosperity, at a time when Baiona was still vegetating, was more heavily populated than it is these days (around twelve thousand inhabitants). The Bilçar (Biltzar) of Lapurdi had imposed a voluntary tax contribution of twenty thousand livres on our land, but this sum did not prevent the inhabitants of Donibane Lohizune from ruining themselves so as to give the king and his suite a worthy reception. The community and the individuals in it were all zealous, as the aldermen put it, to “place the name of Donibane Lohizune in high consideration.”



And so, how many festoons and astragals there were! How many hams and bottles of wine offered to the greatest dignitaries! How much gunpowder the cannons blasted to the four winds! How much money was splashed out to dress the personnel of the city, to paint and decorate a galliot decked with gold and coats of arms! And, next to all this magnificence—in a fit of admirable parsimoniousness, a virtue as Basque as it is French—the aldermen had contented themselves with simply having their old hoods, the insignia of their municipal dignity, “turned inside out.”

From May 8, when the royal entry had, in the fashion of the country, been enlivened by the leaps and bounds of Basque dancers (called *cars-cabilayres* in allusion to the little bells sewn into their clothes [*kaskabilo* is a small bell —ed.]), until June 15, when Their Majesties finally left the region, there was a deafening commotion. The Lohobiague house where the Sun King stayed, the Haraneder house, the residence of Anne of Austria, where the Infanta Maria Theresa of Spain lodged for a few nights, the city hall where, in a long hall that occupied the whole of the south of the building, took place the balls, festivities, and performances of the theater players of the Hôtel de Bourgogne—none of these places have changed much. On the other hand, the church—half surrounded by a construction site—was then in the middle of reconstruction. Apart from the porch under the bell tower and the southern wall where one can see the trace of the door (now walled) through which the wedding procession passed, there is not a great deal left of the religious décor with which Monsignor d’Olce blessed the royal union. Not without several quarrels over precedence, the ceremony took place in great pomp. The king and queen showered abundant largesse on the people, in the form of coins specially struck to commemorate the event. On that day, June 9, 1660, a great era began.



The *Fors* — The Royal Officers — The Local Assemblies — The Estates of Lower Navarre — The Bilçar of Lapurdi — The Court of Order at Soule — The Judicial Institutions — The Militias — Sabel-Churi and Sabel-Gorri — The Ambitions of M. de Troisvilles

The *Fors*

The *Fors*, a Gascon expression equivalent to the Spanish *Fueros* (*Foruak* in Basque —ed.), represented the traditional charters of public and private law in our French Basque Country.

“As has been performed since time immemorial,” our ancestors liked to specify when invoking their ancient customs. But we need to be a little wary of folk memories; a hundred years or a thousand years were easily confused. So we have preferred to wait until reaching the threshold of the seventeenth century to describe the way that institutions operated before their decline, insofar as the texts (which are from this period fairly numerous) enable us to do so.

Actually, the oldest record from the Bilçar (Biltzar) of Uztaritze (Ustaritz) is that of a session presided over on January 24, 1567 by Micheau de Sossiondo, the lieutenant general of the bailiwick of Lapurdi (Labourd).

It was only later, in 1721, that the Zuberoans started to keep a register of the deliberations of their Court of Order, but several documents from previous years give us some idea of the way they had previously governed themselves.

For the Estates of Lower Navarre, created all at the same time by Henry II of Navarre to replace those established in Iruñea-Pamplona and then broken up, the first session we know of took place in 1523; but, as a result of the Wars of Religion, these meetings were not called regularly, and the deliberations were imperfectly collected until the following century.

As far as the actual text of the *Fors* is concerned, we know that the Customary Laws of Baiona (Bayonne), Lapurdi, and Zuberoa (Soule) were drawn up under Louis XII and François I, and all three of them were (separately) printed for the first time in Bordeaux, in 1553. This was a rather restricted assembly of delegates, mainly members of the nobility, that codified the traditional customs of Lapurdi, as a general ordinance of Charles VII had strictly enjoined in April 1453. Since the work was carried out in 1513, it is apparent that the Basques took no less than sixty years to implement the order. Indeed, exactly the same was true of the Baioneses. Zuberoa needed even longer to be persuaded: only in October 1520 did the general assembly of the three orders, presided over by the lawyer Jean Dibarrola, the commissioner of the king, take the time to debate, over a fortnight, a bill prepared by the Court of Lextarre (Licharre). This Customary Law of Zuberoa is probably, in its somewhat naïve and clumsy character, the one that best reflects the spirit of the ancient legislation of the Basques. Furthermore, the voluminous manuscript *Commentaries* of Jacques de Béla at the start of the seventeenth century and of Meharon de Maytie toward the end of the eighteenth are of great help when we try to grasp the details of the way the laws were applied. However, the *Fors* of Lower Navarre are quite different. Up until 1608, people had been content to refer to the ancient *Fuero General* of 1237, supplemented—somehow or other—by the later laws of the Cortes. Henry IV flatly refused to accept a new edition of the Customary Laws, one which had been drawn up without his authorization by the Estates of Lower Navarre. Instead he took it upon himself to prepare a completely different version. In 1611, Louis XIII in turn created this *Fors* of 450 articles, written in Béarnais dialect. He would accept almost no amendments. A collection of laws like this, very different in inspiration from those of neighboring areas, was very typical of its time insofar as it was drawn up to order by professional lawyers, and no longer contained any real trace of public law that might have constituted an obstacle to royal authority. So its interest is considerably diminished as far as we are concerned.

The Royal Officers

Before we study the purely local institutions, it will not come amiss to say a few words about the main royal officers who maintained the link between the almost self-governing Basques and their sovereign. Thanks to an inevitable tendency (found in modern states, too), the number of these functionaries continued to increase through the ages, at the same time as their tasks became increasingly specialized and their interference in regional life intensified.

A major reason for this growth lay in the fact that—as was commonplace in the Middle Ages—every great functionary was authorized to find a substitute through a “lieutenant” of his choice. An ordinance of Charles VIII in 1493 had made these lieutenants obligatory: their appointments now depended more on the central power and the proposals of the governed. From the time when, under Henry II of France, the venality of positions was instituted into a principle, the functions of the lieutenants became practically hereditary, just like those of the incumbent employees. There was thus a veritable doubling of employments.

Let us take Baiona as an example. Ever since the French conquest, the upper bourgeoisie alone had held power, divided between six aldermen and six jurats. These were always selected from the same families, where many Basque names—Lahet, Dibarsoro, Sorhaindo, Sossiondo, and so on—were mixed with Gascon patronyms—de Luc, de Prat, Lalande, Laduch, and so on. There were also twenty-four councilors, but their role was negligible. The mayor no longer came from the Corps de Ville; he was any gentleman who could be appointed by the king as a reward for his services. Surprisingly, he could even be a foreigner: a Spaniard in 1455, an Italian in 1459, the Scot Makanam from 1487 to 1495. This mayor hardly ever lived in Baiona, but always chose his deputy there. This situation continued even when, thanks to Gramont, the mayor’s office became hereditary (from 1495 to 1633); but in 1596, Henry IV demanded that the mayor’s lieutenant be changed every two years and chosen from a list of six bourgeois presented by the Corps de Ville. In 1633, Baiona bought up the mayor’s post for twenty-four thousand livres, and thereafter it was held by its principal alderman. The lieutenant was thus suppressed. In addition, the Gramont family maintained—and preserved until the Revolution—a post created in 1513 and, just as important (if not more so), that of “military governor” of Baiona and the surrounding areas. And here, in 1692, there appeared, in tandem with this post, the job of “king’s lieutenant,” a sort of military

deputy governor: this would be held by the Caupenne family of Amou, lords of Senpere (Saint-Pée-sur-Nivelle).

Originally, in Lapurdi there was only one direct representative of royal authority, the “bailiff,” who was simultaneously captain, magistrate, judge, and tax collector. He could perform the most varied tasks in turn. In 1310, Brasco de Tardets investigated the limits of the lands of Berriotz; in 1450, Ogerot de Saint-Pée armed the Lapurdians and led them into battle on behalf of the English king; in 1457, Auger de Lahet attended the assemblies at Dax that fixed the levels of taxable income; in 1513, Louis de Montréal d’Urtubie played a part in the drawing up of the Customary Law of Lapurdi . . . From Jean de Chicon onward, “commander of two galleys for the security of the King on the coasts of Bizkaia,” the post of bailiff remained in the house of Saint-Pée from 1516 to 1654; then it passed to the Urtubie family, in circumstances that we shall describe below, and the barons of Garro, their successors, would continue to hold it until 1789. But in the interval, the functions of the post had been considerably modified: the bailiffs had started by delegating to a lieutenant general all judicial affairs as well as the presidency of the Bilçar. Maintenance of public order, the policing of the land, was entrusted to a royal “Attorney General,” a post established in Lapurdi around 1540 and often occupied by the Arcangues. Finally, the heaviest administrative and financial task fell on the shoulders of the “general syndic” who was not in the slightest a royal officer. From Salvat d’Urtubie onward, the bailiff bore the name of “bailiff of the sword” (“*bailli d’épée*”); his functions were now purely military. He answered to the governor of Baiona, and simply commanded the one thousand men of the local militia.

Originally appointed by the English sovereigns, the “captain-lord” (“*capitaine-châtelain*”) of Maule (Mauléon), later bearing the title of “governor of the País de Soule (Zuberoa),” was also, from his first appointment, the king’s sole right-hand man. He looked after everything: he presided over the Court of Order or Assembly of Estates as well as directing judicial debates. From the fourteenth century onward, he needed a lieutenant to stand in for him; from 1550, this was, furthermore, a senior magistrate, the “lieutenant of the long robe” (“*lieutenant de longue robe*”), who habitually presided on his behalf over the celebrated Court of Justice known as the Court of Licharre (Lextarre in Basque —ed.), after the name of a village next to Maule. This latter personage naturally held his commission from the central power and, although he was almost always from Zuberoa, he would often tend to look somewhat askance

at his compatriots, being a fierce enemy of ancient local privileges. One of them, Hegoburu, went so far as to have the house where the Court of Licharre held its sessions pulled down in 1625.

In Navarre in the Middle Ages it was a *merino* who concurrently held the military, administrative, and judicial posts, and governed on the king's behalf each of the six *merindades*, the sixth of which was our own Lower Navarre. Over time, the post lost its importance, to such an extent that, in the French part of Navarre, during the ancien régime, the only person known as a "*merin*" was the one in the Arberoa (Arbéroue) area: he was a modest executor of judgments of justice, at once a bailiff, a gendarme, and a jailor. As in all the state regions of ancien régime France, the essential link with the Crown was here maintained by a military governor—the Duke of Agaramont (Duc de Gramont) bore the title of viceroy—and, in his absence (which occurred frequently), by his lieutenant, who summoned the Estates and communicated the wishes of the sovereign to them.

The Local Assemblies

The composition and operation of local assemblies differed considerably—as we shall see—in the three parts of the Basque Country, all nonetheless had one characteristic in common: the remarkable extent of their responsibilities.

All the branches of the civil administration, in fact, fell within their sphere of competence: the maintenance of forests and waterways as well as of bridges and roads, the regulation of seasonal migration, the land registry, the maintenance of order and police measures against gypsies and other vagrants, the setting of tariffs for foodstuffs and the supervision of markets (the struggle against monopolization is not a recent phenomenon), and the maintenance of local militias—all services that nowadays are the responsibility of the state alone. While these assemblies did not make laws as such, they applied themselves to fixing and maintaining ancient usages, and were quite prepared in their deliberations to settle the interpretation of points of law raised by the application of the Customary Laws. In so doing, they did not fail, on occasion, to protest courageously and sometimes successfully against the usurpations of royal power.

Finally, their main prerogative was financial autonomy. Not only did the Bilçar of Lapurdi, the Court of Order of Soule (Zuberoa), and the Estates of Lower Navarre raise, on their own authority, the taxes neces-

sary to cover the costs of their administration, they also had their say in consenting to general taxes levied by the royal exchequer. Direct taxation was paid in the form of a lump sum due annually. This was called the “subscription” (“*abonnement*”). The sum was fixed by the King’s Council, but the assemblies could vote on it and were thus able to argue, to a greater or lesser degree, over the overall amount. They were then given entire freedom to ensure the division of taxes and the way in which they were collected. In spite of the ever-growing demands of the state, these precious privileges left the Basques much less overburdened than most of their neighbors.

The implementation of the decisions taken by the assembly was (and again this was a characteristic shared by all three of our *pays*) entrusted by each of them to a “general syndic,” a post that had existed since the thirteenth century, at least in Lapurdi. These delegates drew little or no pay, and they took on responsibilities from their compatriots that were often quite overwhelming. The syndics were given the task of ensuring that local autonomy was respected against the (often excessive) pretensions and inroads of royal officials, and they often stood bail against the central power for a financial management that was usually rather chaotic. As they were held personally responsible for delays in the payment of taxes to the state, certain syndics (those of Lapurdi in particular) were more than once jailed or forced to live with men of the garrison so as not to compromise the constitution and the liberties of the Basque Country. At the very least, when the syndics paid their accounts, they were almost always in debt to the Basque Country for the considerable sums they had volunteered to pay on behalf of their constituents. The civic virtue of these champions of Basque patriotism under the ancien régime should not be completely forgotten.

The Estates of Lower Navarre

In the ancient Merindad de Ultra-Puertos (transmontane county —ed.), apart from the five towns of Donapaleu (Saint-Palais), Donibane Garazi (Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port), Bastida (Labastide-Clairance), Garrüze (Garris), and Larzabale (Larceveau), parishes taken separately did not form the sole basis for the administration. More extended groups of people, which probably antedated feudal organization—the *pays* or *vallées* of Garazi (Cize), Baigorri (Baïgorry), Ortzaize (Ossès), Amikuze (Mixe), Arberoa, and Oztibarre (Ostabarret)—had preserved their own assemblies governing a whole set of parishes and hamlets. A similar system is

still widespread in the Spanish Pyrenees: the *Universidad de Baztan*, for example, has only one *ayuntamiento*, based in Elizondo, for fourteen villages. These primary assemblies each sent just two or five delegates to the Estates of Lower Navarre. The pattern of these tiny parliaments, entirely governed by ancestral customs that were not even written down, can be seen in the Estates of the Valley of Baigorri, the only ones that have hitherto been studied in depth.

From time immemorial the jurats of the twelve communities of the valley held *Berrogain*, in other words met in the open, on the pass of this name, between Irulegi (Irouléguy) and the main town of Baigorri. This gathering, which merely swapped information, was closely followed by a general court, an assembly outside the church of Anhauze (Anhauz), where the same jurats were joined by an equal number of deputies, the latter endowed with full powers. From 1753 onward, the sessions, although always held in two parts, met under the same roof, a shepherd's refuge (*borda*) rented for the purpose in the place known as Laurbieta. In the brief interval between sessions, which were held as many as twice or thrice a month, the prosecution of business was supervised by three public officers, educated men, chosen from the notables born in the valley and paid by it: the syndic, assisted by a secretary and a treasurer. In highly exceptional circumstances—such as the solemn protest against the Treaty of Limits in 1785—it sometimes happened that the whole assembly was summoned, including all the heads of households, that is, 828 “fires.” Some proprietors of noble houses took part in these gatherings of the people, but they apparently had no particular political weight, except for the post of first jurat, which they had the right of occupying each in turn.

Things were completely different in the Estates of Lower Navarre, a considerably less democratic assembly. Its members were summoned to sit in ordinary session only once a year, though extraordinary deliberations could sometimes be held when there was urgent business. These latter meetings, limited in their objectives, had kept the name of *jointes* (from the Spanish *juntas*) and were summoned by the captain-lord of Donibane Garazi, without there being any need for express consent from the king. Most of the time the meetings were held out in the fields, near Ainhize-Monjolose (Ainhice-Mongelos), in the Galtzetaburu (Galcetaburu) pass. An old stone cross still marks the spot. Later, they preferred to meet at Irisarri (Irissarry), which is not much farther from the middle of Lower Navarre. As for the annual ordinary session, whose ceremonial was minutely regulated, it initially took place usually at Donapaleu,



sometimes at Garrüze or Bastida, and, after 1715, generally in a house in Donibane Garazi that is still in existence, in the rue d'Espagne.

In spite of the vehement protests of the Estates, the kings of France never bothered to come in person as kings of Navarre to swear the traditional oath to maintain the *Fors*. They had to make do with the governor or his lieutenant to preside over the session, sometimes assisted by a few councilors. In a book of grievances, needs, and draft regulations, drawn up beforehand by their commissioners, the three orders deliberated in turn, and separately. There were only six members of the clergy (the bishops of Baiona and Dax—or at least their delegates—plus the priors of Donapaleu, Utziate [Utziat], and Haranbeltz [Harambels], and the *capelmayor* of Saint-Jean); some thirty deputies from the Third Estate, chaired by the one from Donibane Garazi, represented the towns and the *pays*; finally, all those who possessed noble houses without distinction of rank attended. The number of houses that gave one the right to enter the Estates was 141, according to a note written by the steward Lebret in 1700. It was simply necessary for two of these bodies to be in agreement to dispense with the approval of the third. An important exception meant that the voice of the Third Estate always won out on financial matters, which was perfectly legitimate, since this group was practically the only one to bear the burden of taxation.

The Bilçar of Lapurdi

The Bilçar of Lapurdi, a unique administrative organization in a Basque Country without subdivisions was more closely akin to little local assemblies of Lower Navarre, such as those of the Valley of Baigorri, than to Estates proper. It had, though on a greater scale, the same character of ancient simplicity and native originality. At its basis, as in the whole of the Basque Country, each of the thirty-five parishes of Lapurdi possessed its tiny *capitulary assembly*, composed entirely of all the masters of free houses (when this was a woman, she was represented by her husband or by her son). People met to discuss the town's affairs on Sundays as they came out of mass, either at some crossroads that can still be recognized from its name, *Kapitaleku*, or, as in Uztaritze, in a clearing around a big stone—*Kapito-harri*; but most often, they met in the cemetery, or on the church porch.

Once a year, town elections, which assumed the most varied and often the most bizarre forms, designated four jurats (four per district, generally speaking) who, with no right to withdraw, exercised executive

power during the short term of their mandate. One of them had the rank of mayor; he was called *hauz-apheza* (today, *auzapeza* —ed.), “the abbot of the neighbors,” or *baldarn-apheza*, “the abbot of the assembly.”

It was the free assembly of all these abbot-mayors or of their representatives at the château of La Motte in Uztaritze that constituted the Bilçar. It is particularly significant that the nobility and the clergy were politely but rigorously excluded.

This assembly, essentially a popular assembly, was also different from the Estates in that its members had no power to deliberate by themselves. Each session of the Bilçar (this was summoned at variable dates, in a very irregular fashion, not by a commissioner of the king but on the initiative of the syndic alone, with the bailiff’s consent) comprised two meetings. During the first, the delegates from the parishes were told of the proposals of the syndic. The latter, who acted simultaneously as secretary and treasurer, enjoyed considerable freedom of action in the fine detail of executing these wishes during the two years that his mandate lasted. A week later, the members of the Bilçar brought back the imperative replies from their communities, who had gathered meanwhile in capitulary assemblies. It is thus evident that, however many inhabitants it had, each parish had a voice of equal value in the final vote that authorized decisions to be taken. In this way (insofar as it functioned without hiccups) there flourished, in the easy-going shadow of so-called monarchical despotism, the most ideal democracy in France.

The Court of Order at Soule

The system in Zuberoa was extremely complicated—a mixture of the systems in force in Lapurdi and the Estates of Lower Navarre.

The session (held annually, with some rare exceptions) of the Court of Order (from the Basque word *orda*, today *ordara*, tocsin —ed.) was in fact the result of the work of two separate organizations of different origins. The first was the Assembly of the Grand Corps, a feudal institution, a sort of council of the local lord including the forty-six gentlemen and the ten *potestates* of the valley, joined only in exceptional circumstances by the members of the clergy. The second was the Silviet, a general assembly of the Third Estate, which had certain analogies with the Bilçar.

The link between the two bodies was maintained by a general syndic, apparently appointed for life, who performed a function quite similar to that of Lapurdi.

It is not easy to grasp the way these institutions worked unless we have an overall understanding of the amazing administrative fragmentation of such a small region—barely twenty-five thousand souls. Apart from the town of Maule, which was completely independent of the rest of the Basque Country, and the royal townships of Barkoxe (Barcus), Montori (Montory), Atharratze (Tardets), Hauze (Haux), Santa Grazi (Sainte-Engrâce), and Larraine (Larrau), which had their own separate organizations, Zuberoa was divided into three *messengeries*, themselves subdivided into seven *vics* (from the Latin *vicus*) or *degairies* (*degeriak*—ed.), covering a variable number of parishes. In each parish, the owners of several free houses were traditionally expected to fill in turn the hereditary post of *fermance vezalière* (in Basque *zainko*, or *zainho*—ed.), a sort of representative serving as a guarantor for the community and as an obligatory intermediary for the central administration of the *pays*. The *Igourbe* or general assembly of the parishes of each *degairie*, was in turn represented by a *degan*, appointed by lot every year.

Apart from their political functions, the *degans* were ex officio the guardians of the archives of Zuberoa. In the time of Jacques de Béla, who was writing in the first half of the seventeenth century, it was in the village of Bildoze (Viodos) that “from the beginning onward the inhabitants of Zuberoa have placed and kept the writings of their privileges, which are all sealed in the church, in a place in the wall set aside for this purpose, and locked by seven keys, which are kept by the seven *degans* of the land, each of them possessing one key.”

This being said, things happened more or less (for there were many variations from one period to another) in the following manner: Summoned by the messengers, the Great Corps first met at Lextarre, on the Sunday following the feast of Saint Peter and Saint Paul (June 29) and facilitated, under the direction of the syndic, decisions on all the questions raised on that day’s agenda. Once its vote had been taken and set down in a record, the latter was made known to the people—by the deputies to the six royal townships, by the *degans* at the assembly of each *degairie*, and by the intermediary of the *fermances vezalières* to the least little parishes gathered together by the ringing of the tocsin. The amendments proposed immediately by the inhabitants were made known to the syndic, about a fortnight later, at the main meeting of the Silviet.

In principle, this gathering of peasants was held in the Forest of Irabarne (Libarrenx; it is however highly unlikely that *silviet* comes from the Latin *silva*, as one might be tempted to believe). Originally, every inhabitant had the right, and perhaps even the obligation, to come and

vote. Subsequently, it was only the “attorneys”—*degans*, deputies of the parishes, and jurats of the royal townships—who turned up, all given strict instructions by their constituents. If any unexpected solution were presented to the assembly, the delegates returned to their villages to receive further instructions. If there was a complete disagreement with the proposals of the Great Corps, it appears that the governor acted as umpire, which gave royal power the permanent opportunity to intervene. At all events, as in Lower Navarre, the opinion of the Third Estate played the preponderant role in consenting to taxes.

The Silviet was less fortunate than the Bilçar, and did not last until the Revolution. In 1730, at the suggestion of the syndic Hegoburu, a downright traitor to the duties of his post, the Council of the King promulgated a new regulation. This was the most severe blow inflicted on the liberties of the Basque Country. Despite the vain protests of the inhabitants, following this date the Third Estate was represented only by thirteen deputies endowed with full powers, and the three orders deliberated in common. These newfangled Estates in any case preserved only a ghostly independence.

The Judicial Institutions

The judicial institutions of Lower Navarre and Lapurdi were inextricably interwoven at every level, as were those of the whole of France under the ancien régime, and they had little originality of character, apart from the fact that the royal officers entrusted with the principal jurisdictions were always chosen if possible from the Basque Country itself, and were introduced to local assemblies.

Thus, for example, in the case of the appointment of the lieutenant general of the Bailiwick at the Court of Uztaritze in 1567, the Bilçar put forward to the king three candidates selected for their knowledge of Basque, “a thing in great demand and necessary for the solace of the people of the said country who barely understand any other tongue.”

This tribunal of Uztaritze, where almost all the trials in Lapurdi were held, was of venerable age. In 1235, the *Golden Book* of the cathedral of Baiona mentions the *antiqui probi homines et seniores terrae Laburdi* as sitting *in plena curia de Ustaritz*. Under French domination, this court of law would come under the purview of the Parlement of Bordeaux, via the intermediary of the lieutenant of the seneschal’s court of Lannes at Baiona. This state of affairs was to last until 1790, when Uztaritze was definitively deprived of its court, in favor of the neighboring town.

The Lower Navarrese equivalent of the tribunal of Lapurdi, the Chancellery of Donapaleu—created, as we have said, when Navarre was dismembered—had but a more fleeting existence. In 1620, Louis XIII joined it perforce to the Supreme Council of Béarn to form the Parlement of Pau, whose jurisdiction was the smallest in France. So as to appease the recriminations of the Lower Navarrese, they were merely granted one concession in 1624: the new organization would take the name of Parlement of Navarre. However, until the Revolution, Donapaleu would remain the seat of a modest seneschal's court.

So as to heighten the rather lackluster prestige of the Parlement of Navarre, Zuberoa (which then came under the Parlement of Bordeaux) was included within its jurisdiction. But the Estates of Zuberoa opposed this measure—following which, the magistrates of Pau indulged in extravagant demonstrations of hostility against the Zuberoans. Only in 1691 did Louis XIV again grant to the court sitting in Pau the right to judge appeals from the many courts in Zuberoa.

In the first rank of the latter, one tribunal in particular stood out for its extensive competence and its real local autonomy. It was to exist until 1776. Let us say something about this exceptional survival, the Court of the Viscount. While the nobles of Zuberoa no longer administered justice independently, they still maintained the right and the duty to exercise a real magistracy in common. They sat with their swords at their sides, and their attendance was at first obligatory and on a rotating basis, and later on a voluntary basis at the Court of Lextarre. The hearings were originally held in the shade of a walnut tree; they were presided over, when the captain-lord of Maule representing His Majesty the King was not there, by one of the ten *potestates*. *Bayles* and *messagers*, officials named by the *pays*, were responsible for implementing decisions. It is easy to see the extent to which the archaic and family-based character of this High Court of Justice persisted, maintained as it was by the members of the Great Corps who not only possessed little in the way of legal expertise but also, according to Béla, were quite often illiterate, including the *potestats*! And so, during the sixteenth century, they adopted the habit—for better or worse—of getting lawyers to assist or replace them. The latter gradually managed to oust, de facto if not de jure, the masters of the noble houses. Thus, thanks to the Court of Lextarre—and thanks too perhaps to the pettifogging spirit of the Zuberoans, lawyers managed to assume an increasing importance and to worm their way into the management of the affairs of the *pays* at every turn. Indeed, the lieutenant of the magistracy succeeded in appropriating, quite illegally, the right

to summon and preside over the Estates. This confusion between justice and politics was especially harmful in that these lawyers, driven by a zeal for innovation, almost always tended (against the will of the inhabitants) to ruin the old liberties of Zuberoa all too effectively and rapidly.

The Militias

One of the privileges to which the Basques clung most stubbornly was exemption from service outside the frontiers of their land. In return, they all enjoyed the right of bearing arms, with the obligation to support militias for their own security at their own expense. The somewhat obscure origin of these militias seems to lie in the *armandads* (from the Spanish *hermandades*, fraternities), a type of brotherhood that came together spontaneously in the Middle Ages (the most ancient that we know of in Navarre went back to the thirteenth century), for the purpose of suppressing brigands.

Under the ancien régime, the militias of Lapurdi and Zuberoa each comprised a thousand or so men, divided—this varied from period to period—into ten or twenty companies of one hundred or fifty men. In Lower Navarre, the total number was 1,400 militia men: 700 men from the *pays* of Garazi, Baigorri, Ortzaize, and the three communities of Irisarri, Iholdi (Iholdy), and Armendaritze (Armendarits), forming the regiment of the Châtellenie de Navarre, under the command of the lord of Donibane Garazi; 500 men of the regiment of Amikuze under the command of their bailiff; and, finally, the two companies of 100 men from Arberoa and Oztibarre with their respective bailiffs at their head.

Recruitment was fixed for each village in proportion to its population. It involved volunteering and, when enthusiasm was low, the drawing of lots. In this case, married men were able to pay for a man to replace them.

Militiamen did not wear uniforms properly speaking, but their equipment and their weapons were provided by each parish and generally kept in a room in the bell tower that acted as a common house. It appears that, in Zuberoa, people had actually gathered all the equipment of the militiamen in one single place in Maule; in 1762, the Estates gravely enjoined a certain Monsieur Toumalin to “wash the leggings and haversacks and to hang the clothes and hats out in the sunshine and beat them from time to time, and supervise everything like a good father of the family.”

The appointment of officers and NCOs depended on the military governor of the *pays*, apparently following the proposals of the local assemblies. This was at least the case in Lapurdi, where in 1689 the bailiff André d'Urtubie was stripped of his power to choose his own officers himself. Only the masters of households could aspire to a military rank.

In time of war, all of the militias were mobilized into a reserve force designed to reinforce the French troops garrisoned in Baiona, Dax, or Donibane Garazi. For lack of any sustained training, the military value of the militiamen was—as became evident on several occasions—not always the equal of their goodwill. They were more apt at defensive than offensive maneuvers, and better at harassing the enemy than fighting in ordered formation.

In times of peace, appeal was made to small contingents of militias, either to chase away Gypsies, or to ensure policing and to form a guard of honor when persons of importance were traveling through the country. It also happened, though much more rarely, that they were summoned for tasks of public interest—what was called the King's Service. Thus, during the last efforts to open the Boucau-Neuf in 1578, the syndic of Lapurdi agreed to send a thousand men for three days, on condition that they be provided be accommodation.

The militias had their own flags, but we do not know what they looked like. It has been claimed, on the basis of the color of the hoods worn by the jurats of several communities, that the flag of Lapurdi must have been black and red. At all events, these insignia had nothing in common with the current Basque flag, which is a creation of our period.

Sabel-Churi and Sabel-Gorri

The preceding pages may to some degree help the reader to grasp some of the inner conflicts that gravely disturbed the peace of Lapurdi and Zuberoa during the first part of the reign of Louis XIV.

The lord of Senpere, Jean de Caupenne, the hereditary bailiff of Lapurdi, had rather compromised himself with the Duc de La Valette during the ill-fated siege of Hondarribia (Fuentarrabía) in 1638: the latter had, through his inertia, incurred the wrath of Richelieu. Was this the reason for which, on his death, Louis XIV preferred to appoint Salvat d'Alzate d'Urtubie as bailiff of the sword instead of his son Léonard? Nobody knows. After three centuries, the mysteries of the sovereign's action have not been cleared up. The fact remains that, on his part, Léonard de Caupenne had already registered in the Parlement of Bordeaux

prior letters of provision that enabled him to succeed his father. When Urtubie voiced opposition to this, the Court, on its own initiative, decreed that Caupenne was confirmed in his post; but the King's mind was made up, and he immediately broke all resistance (1654). Several years later, the Caupenne family was to receive substantial compensations; for the time being, its disgrace was evident to all. It is against the background of this rivalry between two powerful families, each of them with its own clients, that the affair of the general syndic Martin de Chourio, a notary from Azkaine (Ascain), should be seen.

Devoted body and soul to the Caupennes, Chourio initially campaigned through the parishes for the next Bilçar to refuse to recognize Urtubie as bailiff. When he got wind of this maneuver, M. d'Arcangues, the king's attorney, himself assembled the Bilçar, on February 20, 1655, and forced it to repudiate Chourio's attempt and—arguing that the syndic was way behind in settling his accounts—he maintained, perhaps a little improperly, that the latter be stripped of his post and replaced.

Chourio immediately reacted by summoning a new Bilçar, at which his accomplices turned up armed and revoked the decisions adopted on the pretext that the syndic alone had the right to call the assembly.

Thereupon, a struggle broke out between the king's officers: a warrant for the arrest of Chourio was served, but he escaped. His supporters sacked the castle of Arrangoitze (Arcangues), seized two cannons from the fort of Sokoia (Socoa) and stormed the prison of Uztaritze where some of their number were imprisoned. Such deplorable excesses came to the attention of the Parlement of Bordeaux, which was in turn roused to anger. In July 1657, the bailiff Lambert, given the task of arresting the rebel, rode to Azkaine escorted by thirty armed men, but the Basques took refuge in the massive bell tower, which acted as a fortress, and fired at Lambert's little group until it was forced to withdraw.

Thereafter, a veritable civil war broke out, adding to the problems caused by the endless legal chicanery of a man already expert in finding his way through the thickets of judicial procedure. Salvat d'Urtubie, as bailiff, raised the thousand men of the Lapurdi militia. Chourio, who claimed credit for defending the liberties of the country, managed for his part to arm nearly three thousand supporters who, on the pretext that they were seeking recompense, ransomed the peasants, seized their cattle, and perpetrated countless acts of vandalism. They were called, after the color of their belts, *sabel gorri*, "red bellies." Urtubie's party was that of the *sabel churi* (today *txuri* or *zuri*—ed.), "white bellies."

The year 1658 marked the height of the troubles. Frustrated by this inextricable confusion, over half the parishes had decided to force Chourio to withdraw by designating Jean de Habans to succeed him as syndic. This appointment provoked redoubled fury on the part of the hot-tempered agitator.

Direct appeal to royal authority was the only way to put an end to the conflict, and the appeal was heard. In June 1659, the Council of State decided to send a commissioner to head the inquiry. The task of the latter was soon made easier by an unexpected event: the illness and death of Chourio. His supporters disbanded in consternation, the royal officers reestablished themselves in their posts, and a proper trial was soon held to sentence the rebels.

The epilogue of the affair was almost fatal to local freedoms. Louis XIV was not pleased by these uprisings and apparently thought of suppressing the Bilçar. When he came to Donibane Lohizune (Saint-Jean-de-Luz), inclined to more indulgence once he had become properly acquainted with the Basques, he contented himself by imposing strict regulations—which proved effective. He also appointed a commission of arbitration to fix the level of reparations for the damage caused to individuals. The bill came to 140,000 livres; it was imposed by the Bilçar on all parishes. It would weigh long and heavy on the financial affairs of Lapurdi.

The Ambitions of M. de Troisvilles

The ambitions of M. de Troisvilles caused a series of disasters in Zuberoa at about the same time; they form a melancholy pendant to the Chourio affair. This great personage was none other than the cadet of Gascony, now captain of the King's Musketeers: Alexandre Dumas gave him a role in his most famous novel. He enjoyed a good reputation at court, and in spite of a passing disgrace brought about by a plot against Richelieu, and yet Troisvilles was but the descendant of a parvenu. His father, Jean de Peyrer, a wealthy merchant of Oloron, had bought the noble house of Elissabea in the Zuberoan village of Iruri (Troisvilles) in 1607, and had automatically found himself ennobled, as Basque customs permitted.

If he had been content to build—as he later did—the pretty little château in his home village, to plans by Mansard (it still exists), the Captain de Troisvilles would not have left a bad memory behind. Unfortunately, he was avid for glory and had the wealth to go with his ambitions. He bought the barony of Montori (and, later, that of Atharratze), and

around 1643 he managed to have Iruri raised to the status of a county, which conferred on it significant rights of jurisdiction over several villages. In 1641, he had already taken advantage of a sale of the royal demesne in Zuberoa to acquire the castle of Maule, the right to appoint the judicial officers of the *pays*, and so on. In fact, what he was after was no less than the rebirth of the old viscounty to his own profit.



Opposition by the Estates of the *pays*, by the Court of Lextarre that was threatened with abolition, and by Armand of Belzunce, captain-lord, lasted for some thirty years. It was pursued without the plaintiffs being able to work together, and was slackly prosecuted in Paris by inadequate attorneys: it finally imposed on the unhappy Zuberoans the burden of a crushing debt.

And so, to settle the dispute between Troisvilles and Belzunce, the king, issuing a decree worthy of the judgment of Solomon, had ordered the demolition of the castle of Maule. Some time later, when the Count of Toulangeon, son of the Duke de Gramont, had bought his position from Belzunce, he demanded its partial reconstruction—which cost the *pays* another thirty-six thousand livres.

Weary of these difficulties, in 1669 Louis XIV agreed to buy back the royal demesne from Troisvilles—but in the meantime, the peasants, enraged at seeing all their efforts leading to nothing more than additional taxes, had risen in revolt. As early as 1661, roused by the priest Bernard de Goyenette, nicknamed Matalas, things took a particularly serious turn. Here is the account written by Froidour who, in 1673, was able to gain precise information from contemporaries:

Two pieces of business involving the Zuberoans caused their ruin: the first was a loan that they took out, a considerable amount [seventy thousand livres] to reimburse M. le Comte de Tresville for the money he had paid for the demesne to be made over to him. The *pays* pleaded, quite in vain, with the [king's] Council to be allowed to reimburse him, as did several communities in these provinces, so as not to fall into the hands of an individual lord and to have none other but the king. But whatever justice lay in their request, they [the *pays*] had their case dismissed, so the reimbursement was not made and the money was misused and entirely consumed by deputies who were in Paris. The second reason is that those who had stood surety for the *pays*, when this loan was made, were constrained to pay this sum, and thus obliged to appeal against the *pays*.

A crazy priest, Matalas by name, of the parish of Mitikile [Moncayolle], roused the people to sedition; the Court [of Bordeaux], intent on quickly extinguishing the fire which this wretched priest had lit and which might have had unfortunate consequences, sent three or four hundred horse commanded by Don Joseph Calvo, a Catalan captain, who remained there for a month, much more intent on pillaging and occupying himself with his own affairs than taking Matalas, as he could have done on the first day he entered Zuberoa. I even believe that he

would have stayed there for the rest of his life if he could have found supplies on which to subsist and stuff to pillage, or if the inhabitants of Maule, who had remained firm in the service of the King, had realized how he was behaving and seen that the entire ruin of their whole country was imminent, and resolved to deliver themselves of this war of their own accord. They assembled several inhabitants with all the young men of the place, and a few peasants from the environs who did not belong to the party of the seditious, under the orders of the Viscount de Saint-Martin, a gentleman of Béarn who commands the castle of Pau and is the lieutenant of M. le Comte de Toulangeon in the government of Zuberoa; and they attacked Matalas who had withdrawn to the noble house of Gentein, which is in the middle of the woods in the plain. The latter, hoping better to defend himself, at first went up to the first story, but the attackers managed to reach that level without losing a single man, and with only two wounded; they then set fire to the floor and forced him to surrender with his men. He was seized with four or five others and the rest were allowed to escape. He and those arrested with him were put on trial; he was sentenced to having his head cut off; a *degan*, which is a kind of *quartenier*, was sentenced to be hanged; one of his nephews and another peasant were sentenced to prison with hard labor; and by this means this war was ended, the King having granted a general amnesty to the people.

This exemplary punishment of the rebels, whom the worthy Froidour describes with the tranquil serenity of a perfect official, had been possible only thanks to the inhabitants of Maule who openly distanced themselves from the cause of the insurgents from Zuberoa. Their attitude can easily be explained by the curious fact that, from time immemorial, the capital of Zuberoa had been exempt from provincial taxes. Following the vivid—and truthful—expression used in one of the books of grievances compiled by the communes in 1789, the town of Maule was, from an administrative point of view, “as foreign to the *Pays* as if it had been located in Turkey.”

From 1660 to 1789 — Seafaring Activity — Life in the Basque Country — The Struggle against Centralization

From 1660 to 1789

During the period of the peak and decline of the ancien régime, France was on more than one occasion at war, but the Basque Country would have the advantage of being entirely spared by the hostilities.

Only a few clashes on the borders would, here and there, affect this tranquility, and then only fleetingly. In 1693, for example, Spanish gangs were emboldened to come and pillage certain of our villages on the frontier with the Bortziriak (Cinco-Villas, or five towns —ed.) of Navarre—until finally, the inhabitants of Sara (Sare), warned of their approach, routed them. Armories granted by Louis XIV to the commune of Lapurdi (Labourd) still preserve the memory of that intrepid action.

A source of much more serious threats than these local quarrels was the sea, from which an unforeseen danger almost emerged in 1674. During the War of Devolution, a menacing squadron of sixty Dutch vessels, under the command of Admiral Tromp, cruised off Baiona (Bayonne) and Donibane Lohizune (Saint-Jean-de-Luz). There was fear of a sudden bold attack; the militias were summoned. However, nothing untoward occurred, though this alert did draw attention to the inadequacy of the defenses of Baiona, the entire system of which, dating from the sixteenth century, proved to be outdated, in spite of partial improvements. For lack of money, the total rebuilding conceived by Errard de Bar-le-Duc in 1599 had not been carried out by Henry IV. Louis XIV was more fortunate and at the height of his powers he sent us Vauban, in 1680. The illustrious engineer was no more able than his predecessors



to succeed in forcing the unruly Errobi (Nive) to flow into the moats, but his genius endowed Baiona with the splendid polygonal belt of oblique fortifications that, from an airplane, makes the city appear as if it is at the heart of a giant star.

The work was driven forward by the Marquis of Seignelay, the son of Colbert, and Vauban's plan was rapidly finished. But its execution unfortunately entailed the definitive destruction of the old faubourgs of Saint-Léon and Lachepaillet, as well as part of the Bourg-Neuf toward the Arsenal and the Porte de Mousserroles. In one remarkable innovation, the protection of Baiona was resolutely extended beyond the Aturri (Adour). On the neighboring heights of Saint-Etienne rose—commanding access to the river—a veritable independent fortress: the Citadel. In 1814, this played—for the first and last time in the defense of the city—the major role foreseen by its creator. Vauban completed his work by finishing off the forts of Sokoa (Socoa) and Hendaia (Hendaye), and improving the old fortifications of Donibane Garazi (Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port), but his plans were, in this latter sector, realized only very partially.

In return for the security that these major projects brought, the inhabitants of Baiona had to suffer a severe blow to their self-esteem. Up until then, they had always wanted to assume the guardianship of their own city themselves, with the help of a few reserve soldiers in barracks in the Château-Vieux. Only when danger was imminent did they agree, reluctantly, that the king could send troops.

Around 1665, in punishment for an uprising triggered by the installation of farm stewards, Baiona had, however, been obliged to accommodate a garrison, in theory just temporarily. From 1680, this garrison was made permanent, and its presence emphasized the city's military atmosphere, without prejudicing the renewal of commercial activity that was starting to become apparent.

Many troops marched through the country during the War of the Spanish Succession. In 1719, the army of the Marshall of Berwick laid siege to Donostia-San Sebastián, and several regiments remained temporarily billeted in Lapurdi and Lower Navarre. Their presence was a great nuisance to the Basque populations, who complained loudly.

We should not leave the field of arms without mentioning that in 1745, an officer from Zuberoa (Soule), of very good stock, the knight Jeanne-Philippe de Béla, was authorized by the king to raise, in his homeland, a body of "Cantabrian Volunteers," which shortly afterward became the regiment of "Royal Cantabrians" and was abolished in 1749,



but maintained a reduced existence until 1762. The Basques of the Royal Cantabrians were trained in “Prussian” mode, as the fashion was, and particularly distinguished themselves in Flanders. Their leader had given them splendid grenadiers’ uniforms, on which gleamed the insignia of the chains of Navarre. Under the imprecise name of “standard of the Royal Cantabrians,” the little Zuberoan church of Zalgize (Sauguis) still has one of the curious “miter-shaped bonnets,” in velvet embroidered with gold and silver, that their officers wore.

In that age of French peace and prosperity, of a kind we can hardly imagine these days, the only reflections of a wider history on life in the Basque Country were limited to great personages passing through or



staying. There were, of course, displays of splendor comparable to the grandiose visits of Charles IX and Louis XIV, but it was especially once the Duke of Anjou had ascended the throne of Spain that there was an incessant coming and going between the two courts. At every moment, the parishes of Lapurdi and Lower Navarre were being alerted to the need to repair their roads, which, unfortunately, they kept in a dreadful state. Baiona and Donibane Lohizune spent a great deal of money on preparing relays for horses, guards of honor, illuminations, and in particular *pamperruques* or processions of Basque dancers . . . As a result of their efforts, a certain weariness about these expensive receptions would sometimes be expressed by those obliged to put them on.



Here, we will simply mention the travelers of royal blood, first and foremost in 1679, Marie-Louis de Bourbon-Orléans, the daughter of Monsieur, the king's brother, who for eight years was the first wife of Charles II of Spain. In 1701, Philip V of Spain himself came to take possession of his crown. Baiona offered him—and this was a spectacle he had never enjoyed before—a bull fight. Apparently the new king and his brothers played real tennis in the old pelota court in Maubec (it still exists in the shadow of the church of Saint André). The princes also spent two or three nights at Donibane Lohizune, in the Lohobiague house where their grandfather had been married.

In 1739, it was the turn of Louise-Elisabeth of France, the charming daughter of Louis XV, who came to marry the Infante Don Felipe, the future Duke of Parma. She crossed the frontier via Orreaga (Roncesvalles/Roncevaux). A little wooden palace had been built in the pass of Bentarte for the princess to be handed over.

In 1745, it was the Infante Maria Theresa of Spain who was being brought, in turn, to France, for her marriage with the Dauphin.

On the other hand, it was strictly incognito (he was traveling as the Count of Falkenstein) that Joseph II, Emperor of Austria, traveled through the states of his brother-in-law Louis XIV; he spent a night in Baiona and visited Donibane Lohizune (1777).

Also, there were great official rejoicings to mark the reception that Baiona offered to the Count d'Artois (the future Charles X), who was heading off—not without a certain degree of ostentation—to the siege of Gibraltar (1782).

But how pallid were these forced expressions when compared with the veritable sentiments of respect and affection aroused by Maria Anna of Neubourg. The dowager queen, widow of Spanish king Charles II, had been exiled from Spain, and settled temporarily in Baiona in 1706. She would stay there for thirty-two years and become a familiar figure in the whole region. Her presence, and that of a small court on which she imposed strict etiquette, flattered the inhabitants of Baiona and gave them something to talk about. When winter came, they chatted about the good queen's return to her palace in the rue Montaut; when the weather turned fine, they discussed her departure for Hiriburu (Saint-Pierre-d'Irube). They gossiped about the pretty little château she was having built at Marracq and which, out of some strange whim, she refused to live in. They swapped stories about the homage paid to her by the Corps de Ville and travelers of note, about the cure of mineral waters that she

sometimes went to take at Kanbo (Cambo), about her devout pilgrimages to convents, about her visits to neighboring châteaux (indeed, the one at Haitze in Uztaritze [Ustaritz] still has her portrait), about her acts of generosity to ordinary middle-class people for whom she would suddenly be seized by affection, and finally, about her surprising love affair with that bad sort, the son of a cooper, the chevalier de Larreteguy.

This German princess, a woman of mature years, who knew how to take life easy, spending a generous pension to the last penny, was missed when, in 1738, she was given permission to return to Spain, where she died shortly afterward.

During the fortunate eighteenth century, which was to end so badly, diplomacy in our region was almost as absent as war. It did enjoy its moment, however, toward the end of the ancien régime, when the policy of Choiseul, which turned the alliance with Spain into the axis of the Family Pact, endeavored to liquidate all the points of dispute between the two nations once and for all. One of these points was the demarcation, still unsettled, of the borders of Navarre: this was still a problem, especially irritating since the eternal question of grazing lands was now further complicated by the desire to possess iron mines, such as Ondarrola (Ondarrolles; near Arnegi [Arnégu] —ed.) and the neighboring forests necessary to provide the forges with fuel. The negotiations were started in 1765 and then recommenced in 1776–77. From 1784 they were, by common agreement, entrusted with full powers to the Count of Ornano for France and the chevalier Ventura Caro for Spain.

In spite of the most vehement local protests, on August 27, 1785, in Elizondo, the two commissioners, who had carried out conscientious investigations, signed an agreement that later became notorious because of the explosion of anger that it unleashed in Garazi (the Pays de Cize) and Baigorri (Baïgorry). This Treaty of Limits included, for Lower Navarre, the loss of certain territories that Ornano was forced to accept, because of the secret instructions that commanded him to reach a conclusion at any cost. Admittedly, the exchange of ratifications could not take place, and the decisions taken, swept overboard by the upheaval of revolution, were never actually implemented. Nonetheless, this 1785 demarcation would act as the basis, during the nineteenth century, for the negotiations that would finally, under the Second Empire, fix the more or less capricious frontier of the two Navarres.

Seafaring Activity

Seafaring remained a dominant note of the Basque Country under the ancien régime, but it underwent profound modifications.

These affected, first and foremost, the ports themselves. Thanks to the genius of Louis de Foix, after 1578, Baiona gradually reassumed the eminent place that belonged to it. In spite of the civil wars, from 1592 traffic in the port—which had admittedly declined drastically—had tripled! This did not prevent Donibane Lohizune (with its annex Sokoia, whose docks were more or less finished by 1630) from remaining, far and away, the most flourishing center for all sorts of vessels. However, the silting up of the Urdazuri (Nivelle) at its mouth and the ravages of the sea, which started around 1675, and then became ever graver during the first years of the eighteenth century, would rapidly lead to a deterioration in the situation. The figures bear witness to the extent of the disaster: between 1732 and 1783, the agglomeration Donibane Lohizune–Ziburu (Ciboure), which had a population of thirteen thousand and could fit up to seventy ships, fell to fewer than four thousand souls and five or six low-tonnage vessels. Baiona, itself affected by the repercussions of the hostilities with England, did not profit immediately from the decline of its rival. Only under Louis XVI did the intendant Dupré de Saint-Maur, who granted to Baiona, Donibane Lohizune, and part of Lapurdi the liberty long demanded by the Chamber of Commerce of Baiona (founded in 1726), succeed in creating a commercial prosperity of which the city on the banks of the Aturri would be the main beneficiary. In the space of six years, the population, the price of lodgings, and workers' wages would increase by nearly a third. There were more and more houses in cut stone, adorned with splendid balconies and ironwork banisters, the work of the *faures* of Baiona. Elms with their noble foliage were planted along the spacious Allées Marines, the Allées Paulmy, and the Allées Boufflers, among the city's most beautiful spots, though now no longer in existence. We should not forget that, in 1759, Baiona had been judged worthy to appear in the series of "Great Ports of France" painted by Joseph Vernet. The Revolution soon put a stop to this brilliant ascent.

At the same time as grandeur and decline were alternating in the two ports of the Basque Country, significant changes had come about in their modes of activity. After the pursuit of whales, it was its replacement, cod fishing on the banks of Newfoundland, that now started to fail in turn, badly affected as it was by the Treaty of Utrecht. Trade, mainly with the West Indies and Santo Domingo, and probably to some extent the

slave trade, too, made up (although to a very small extent) for the loss of these industries in which the Basques excelled. One resource, however, would always be left to their adventurous temperament—a resource that, arising from war itself, compensated in their eyes for its drawbacks: privateering.

This was an old tradition, as if proven by those strange “treaties of Good Correspondence” mentioned above, that the Basques of France and Spain signed with the aim, in particular, of sparing each other the difficulties that they were all too ready to inflict on the other vessels of their respective nations. We know two of these agreements: that of 1536 and that of 1653 that was renewed until the Revolution. But there were probably agreements prior to these, and in any case the institution was meant to remedy a state of affairs that was obviously older. In the Middle Ages, there is no doubt that most of the ports on the Bay of Biscay more or less resembled pirates’ dens. Between piracy and privateering, however, there is more or less the same difference as that between highway robbery and confiscation. This, at least, was the trend behind the “letters of mark” that were prevalent from the sixteenth century, and were originally mere acts of reprisal. Thus, in 1590, Henry IV granted such letters to Michel de Cheverry, “a mariner of Donibane Lohizune,” one of whose ships, a 460-tonner, had been captured by the English. A little later, these opportunistic corsairs were given a real official mission: they were authorized to operate in wartime on behalf of the sovereign, in return for a proportion of the takings being reserved for the ship owner and the crew. But it was especially under Louis XIV that two great ministers of the navy—Seignelay, the son of Colbert, and his successor, Pontchartrain—gave a definitive and regulated shape to the corsairs’ activities by their ordinances, so that, from then on, the latter had nothing more in common with buccaneers except their boldness.

Under such highly placed patrons, the rich bourgeois, and even the most timorous of them, no longer hesitated to provide seed capital for fitting out a corsair vessel. After all, the ship’s owner now had to gain a commission from the Admiral of France and pay caution money. The king’s arsenals provided the artillery; in the eighteenth century, they would even loan units of the fleet to certain captains. Recruitment could take part only from among the classes that were not called to serve regularly on His Majesty’s vessels. This restriction did not prevent the number of crew members in corsair vessels from Donibane Lohizune and Baiona rising to nearly active seven thousand sailors in 1757. Pay was rigorously fixed. Finally, as soon as an enemy vessel was captured, the on-board





writer, an official personage, drew up an inventory, put on seals, and had the captured vessel brought to the nearest harbor so that the booty could be sold. The spoils were divided: a tenth to the Admiral of France, two thirds remaining in the hands of the owners, and the remainder to the crew, in accordance with rank and seniority. Something was set aside for widows, orphans, and the redemption of prisoners in the hands of the Barbary pirates.

All these prudent precautions and all this paperwork might have completely put off such robust men as our corsairs. However, it was from this time onward that, probably thanks to the creation of a fleet increasingly better fitted to its task, the results became quite amazing. In 1690, four big ships were seized; in 1692, a hundred and twenty were taken as spoils of war to Basque ports. Gramont, exalting in the spectacle of the harbor basin of Donibane Lohizune crowded with hulls and masts, wrote to Louis XIV “that one could pass, from the house where His Majesty was lodging, to Ziburu across a bridge of vessels attached to each other.”

Of all these exploits, barely the memory of a few names has been left to us. There was Duconte who, in a single sortie, brought back as many as eleven vessels; his estate in Donibane Lohizune has become the public park of Ducontenea. And there were Harismendy, Saint-Martin, and Dolabaratz, who would pursue the enemy as far as Greenland, and the celebrated captain of a frigate of the king, Johannes de Suhigaray-chipi, a Basque born in Baiona, who would die in 1694 in the seas off Newfoundland. You could still see his tomb, just a few years ago, in the little church of the town of Placentia; the epitaph related how, “zealous for the honor of Monseigneur le Prince, he would follow his quarry and attack enemies in their very own bases.”

In the eighteenth century, during the Seven Years' War, then in the course of the American War of Independence, our corsairs were not unworthy of their forebears. In 1757, over two thirds of vessels fitted out, with the biggest crews, were in Baiona, but it was always Basque sailors who distinguished themselves by their exploits. As well as the two men from Biarritz, Duler and Dalbarade, the names that tradition has preserved for us all have a thoroughly Basque sound to them: Larregui, Haramboure, d'Etcheverry (celebrated for an expedition to the Moluccas), and S  p  , a native of Baigorri, later a bourgeois of Donibane Lohizune, who, we are told, was summoned to Versailles to receive the king's compliments.

We will find the corsairs being just as bold and active, albeit with lesser scope for their activities, during the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Empire.

Life in the Basque Country

Was life in the Basque Country satisfying in the golden days of the French Monarchy? This might be doubted, given the petitions, memoranda addressed to intendants, and other similar documents in which there returns, like an anthem, the eternal lamentation on the sterility of the soil and the complete ruination of its inhabitants. But these self-centered complaints should not be taken too literally: they were motivated, to a great degree, by the struggle against the growing excesses of the tax authorities.

In fact, apart from periods of grave crisis—such as the epizootic disease of 1774 or the failure of the wheat harvest in 1788–89—the Basque Country seems to have experienced a reasonable prosperity under the ancien régime, as is shown by the rebuilding of at least two-thirds of rural houses. Now, these were in general dwellings that, in size, visibly corresponded with a standard of living that was equal and often superior to that which peasants enjoyed in many other French provinces.

Provision of education for the people—an evident sign of well-being—was starting to become organized, in spite of the lack of public powers. Initially, it was mainly a matter of individual initiatives, like that shown by a real testament carved in stone on a house in Ahatsa (Ahaxe): the foundation (in 1671) by Guillaume de Curutche of a prebend whose incumbent's job was to teach children the catechism for free also gave them a basic education. Likewise, Lady Catherine de Sorhuet, a widow of Iraçabal, at her death in 1685 left a rather significant sum of money to set up two "*escolassies*" or schools in Donibane Garazi. In the eighteenth century, most parishes were already providing for a "regent," as it was called. Subsidies were also being paid, at no great cost, for hermits in the chapels built high up in the hills—Sainte-Barbe in Uztaritze, Saint-Esprit on Mount Larrun (La Rhûne), or Our Lady of Aubépine (Arantzazuko kapera in Basque —ed.) in Ainhoa—for them to teach reading and writing to the shepherds and children of isolated farms who could not easily come right down into town.

These laudable activities were not superfluous; all they needed was to be developed sufficiently. Even in 1785, at the general assembly of the 828 masters of houses in the Valley of Baigorri, the report was signed by

no more than fifteen of those present! It might be claimed that some of those who abstained could write, but this is far from certain.

One level higher, boarding schools, such as the Ursulines of Donibane Lohizune, and the House of Retreat in Hazparne (Hasparren), founded by Mademoiselle d'Etcheverry in 1738, provided for the education of girls from good families. The school at Maule (Mauléon) was less fortunate, though it was endowed by the generous legacy of a member of the Béla family: it was hampered by procedural difficulties, and its establishment could not be carried through. The most remarkable institution was that of the Petit Séminaire of Larresoro (Larressore), founded in 1733. This was a real secondary school, successfully set up, not without difficulty, by a strong-willed personality: the abbot Daguerra. The significance of this establishment, which the Basques have maintained through all the anticlerical persecutions, was and remains preponderant in the formation of the country's elite. Our own days have seen it finding a new lease of life, endowed with more intense activity, on a hillside of Uztaritze, not far from its first site.

The religious life of Eskual Herri, in any case, remained very intense in the eighteenth century, and it experienced no notable upheavals. However, it is worth mentioning that the bishop of Baiona, Mgr. Druillet, a protégé of the Cardinal de Noailles, was one of the "appellants" who protested at the papal bull *Unigenitus* that condemned Jansenism. In any case, only a tiny—but ardent—minority of his clergy followed him.

On the other hand, social conflicts (albeit of limited gravity) were constantly setting the peasants (a word that originally had no pejorative associations) and the possessors of noble estates at loggerheads in every possible court of law.

These tensions were nothing new. The nobility of Lapurdi had already got together to appeal to the king. Their reason? Their *fivatiers* were inclined to refuse the most traditional dues, if written records were not shown them. But these records had almost everywhere been lost or burned during the Spanish incursions of the Duke of Alba and the Prince of Orange at the start of the sixteenth century. The Parlement of Bordeaux, tending to demagoguery like all the assemblies of the *noblesse de robe* under the ancien régime, appeared willing to support the (quite illegitimate) claim of the tenants. It is not known how the affair finished. But although, in the case of the *fivatiers*, the service rendered—namely the granting of land for cultivation—remained completely indisputable; the same did not apply to most of the other useful rights and honorific

privileges that had been preserved by the nobility. For these, their original justification was forgotten in the Basque Country, especially since the political and social reign of the aristocracy had been restricted there for much longer than elsewhere. However, until the eighteenth century (apart from the quite exceptional case of the château of Ezpeleta [Espelette], demolished in 1637 by the turbulent vassals of that small baron-*etcy*), difficulties between the two parties were apparently almost always quite easily settled in a friendly way. Here is one example. The lords of Senpere (Saint-Pée-sur-Nivelle) had three mills of their own. The villagers in turn built a new one (in Ibarron). When the château protested at this competition, an eventual agreement was reached in which the property was shared, as were the costs of maintenance of the four mills, half and half between the lord of the château and the commoners (1656).

However, around the middle of the eighteenth century, there was a marked reaction on the part of the feudal spirit, as everywhere else in France. It is vividly described by Funck-Brentano: “While the basis on which its eminence was founded was diminishing and growing ever more fragile thanks to the weakening of its active role in the state, the nobility thought it should cling all the more desperately to its precedence, to the honorific distinctions which placed it in a favored rank.”

However, it was with an altogether novel intransigence that the heads of our noble houses at the end of the *ancien régime* fought so as not to have the least of their prerogatives prescribed for them, even (indeed especially) those that were matters of pure vanity. Presentations in the parish, a reserved pew in church, the first place when the offering was taken—it was often such tiny trivialities that, under the sway of a pernicky sensitivity, lay behind the cases brought by country squires against the villagers and vice versa. Members of the bourgeoisie who obtained noble estates, either through marriage or simply by buying them (both cases became increasingly common), were in any case as intent as anyone else to lay claim to the marks of respect that could distinguish them from the social rank from which they had only just risen.

To crown it all, ancient or recent members of the nobility, taking advantage of the auctioning off of the royal estate (an operation that the state’s financial distress made very frequently necessary) often turned out to be committed to the rights of the lords. The communities—furious at this interference, which went against their customs—generally had no other resource than to buy them back at a very high price when they could. This was the cause of many growing grievances.

There are countless similar cases, but the problems the Vicomtesse Marthe d'Echoux had with the inhabitants of Baigorri are a good illustration of all the forms taken by this absurd class struggle.

We shall mention just a few representative episodes: 1768, public notification to the population of the valley of a list of the useful or honorific rights of the viscounty of Echoux; 1771, acquisition of the portion of the royal estate that included the prohibitive right to hunt and the rights of high justice (this time, the villagers put up such a fight that the king revoked the law and gave them permission to reimburse the transfer of property to the Echoux family); 1773, the sentencing of four laborers to beg publicly for pardon from the lords of the château for having “wildly, boldly, and to the scandal of those present” managed to disturb them in the enjoyment of the honors reserved to them in the church.

These awkward maneuverings by the Basque nobility (but not by them alone) were soon exacting a heavy price. In the meanwhile, even at the height of these trivial quarrels, it is remarkable to see that all the Basques, whether gentlemen or not, came together temporarily whenever they were again forced to defend their ancient freedoms, increasingly under threat.

The Struggle against Centralization

In internal matters, the most characteristic feature of the period 1660–1789 was indeed the increasing hold of the intendants on provincial administration. Their supervision was overall beneficial, since it led to clear economic progress, but—given the breadth of the framework in which it was exercised—it could tend only to break down, day by day, the old barriers of customs, liberties, and local privileges. In this task of national unification, which the Revolution would bring to completion with considerable brutality, the intendants, enlightened representatives of the central power, men of open minds and bold spirits, showed themselves to be more or less despotic, depending on their personal temperament. A man like Dupré de Saint-Maur, for instance, was perfectly able to reconcile the firmness of his plans with a real understanding of and benevolence toward the Basques. A man like Néville was much more authoritarian.

The instability of administrative divisions was common in the southwest of France from 1716 onward. Previously, Baiona, Lapurdi, and Zuberoa had been dependent on the generality of Bordeaux; Lower Navarre was under the jurisdiction of Béarn. The creation of the new intendance of Auch brought all the lands of the Basque Country under

one person until 1767. The separatist desires of the Baioneses then led to them being given a Pau-Baiona intendance including the whole of the Basque Country, Béarn, Lannes, and Marsan. It lasted until 1775 and was reborn, with a few modifications, between 1784 and 1787. In the intervals, it was again the splitting between Bordeaux and Auch that prevailed, though this incoherence can be explained only if we factor in the lack of geographical unity in Gascony, whose limits could never be fixed permanently.

The main means by which the intendants intervened in the parishes and local assemblies of the Basque Country resulted from the heavy burden of their finances. A cyclical burden of debts and arrears weighed on most of the communities, which, forced to beg for postponements, thereby lost any possibility of independence.

This unwelcome situation was due only partly to the disorder and improvidence prevalent in the management of the municipalities. In fact, the latter were only too happy just to ensure, by fortuitous means that caused little grief to taxpayers (the contracting out of rights to wine or animal slaughter, the cutting-down of common woodlands, and so on), resources that always lagged behind the increase in expenditure. Nonetheless, it was the pecuniary demands of the state that increasingly (and in many different ways) ruined Basque town and village life.

Direct taxation was originally very light, but over the last two centuries of the monarchy, it had been swelled by all sorts of extraordinary forms of taxation that had become, as is only fitting, permanent. One example is the budget of Lapurdi: This area had, ever since Edward II of England in 1301, paid merely an annual quitrent of 253 livres and 10 sols, in recognition of the king's direct overlordship. Until 1789, this modest sum continued to appear in the books, but it was surrounded by so many other entries that the subscription as a whole came to over sixty thousand livres. However, we can agree that this latter figure included various lump sums, which had the advantage of liberating the inhabitants from the need to pay certain indirect taxes. These included the obligatory registration of notarized documents that, since 1699, had been settled by an annual overall sum of 2,600 livres, which was greatly increased after 1768.

Be this as it may, in 1784, the arrears owed by Lapurdi to the Royal Treasury rose to no less than 140,000 livres. A large part of this debt could be imputed to the coastal parishes ruined by the decline in high-seas fishing. In 1750, an alteration in the proportion by which each community

in Lapurdi contributed to the subscription was desperately requested by some of them. A new, fairer land registry was finally created in 1779, thanks to Necker, who was personally advised by the tenacious priest Hiriart, from Bidarte (Bidart), sent to Paris by his flock. Even though the burden was at last more equitably shared, it was still just as heavy, and the Bilçar found itself almost shackled by it. And Zuberoa and Lower Navarre were hardly any better off in this respect.

Another major reason for the debt incurred by Basque towns and villages lay in the constant sacrifices that they had to impose on themselves, either to buy back offices, or to ensure that they continued to depend on the king alone, or, finally, to force themselves to resist, in the most effective way, the redoubtable maneuvers of the Farmers General.

The venality of offices—one of the least laudable institutions of the monarchy—was made worse by the fact that the tax officials, often at the limit of their resources, endeavored to create useful posts. Speculators would immediately buy up these positions, only to resell them at a huge profit to communities who had little desire to see new agents of the king sticking their nose into their business. Thus, to take one example among others, in 1696 Lapurdi found itself obliged to pay four hundred livres to one of these wheeler-dealers so as to get rid of a potential “expert appraiser and seller of movable assets” that the region had managed quite well without hitherto. A similar case—but harsher, since it directly affected each community in one of its dearest liberties—was, after 1692, the transformation of the post of mayor into a venal office. For lack of any vendee, the king kept the choice of this magistrate for himself—a threat that forced the communities to buy it. They were happy if they had not allowed themselves to be forestalled by some undesirable who then clung to his post, as happened in Bastida (Labastide-Clairence) in 1693, or who needed to be paid to relinquish his position, as in Baigorri in 1695.

Another measure—which also cost the taxpayer more than it brought in to the Treasury—consisted in the alienation, subject to the option of repurchase, of the royal estates. These were particularly extensive in Zuberoa and Lapurdi, and less extensive in Lower Navarre, and they represented huge swathes of vacant land and all the rights that the king enjoyed as direct overlord. This kind of sale constituted, in our view, a serious obstacle in the relations between the crown of France and the Basque populations. The Troisvilles affair, which we have already discussed, was the most painful and costly consequence. In Lapurdi, the alert had been just as intense when, following the edict of 1639, Antoine

II de Gramont (despite being a traditional protector of the Basques) announced in 1641 his intention to commit for twenty thousand livres. He was too good a prince, however, to desist from his claim, in exchange for a gift of 9,500 livres. After this, the Bilçar (Biltzar) still needed to acquire the rights to the Lapurdi estate for itself, at a cost of 8,400 livres. This latter expense had at least the advantage that it preserved without too much mishap, until the Revolution, the almost free possession of common property against the sly attempts made by the estate's Farmers General.

The Farmers General, whose exactions had left an often deplorable memory in the history of the eighteenth century, were indeed reluctant to see our allodial lands partly escaping their grasp, for here they were not free, as they were elsewhere, to exert pressure on the local populace. Thanks to the powerful support on which they could draw, they occasionally managed, in spite of everything, to obtain by stealth decrees from the king's council extending their monopolies, in flagrant violation of the liberties of the Basque Country.

Sometimes, the intendants had the merit of being able to put a stop to the excessive ambitions of the Farmers General. In addition, the Basques themselves adopted the habit of maintaining representatives in Paris who intrigued with the various officials or distributed bribes and occasionally managed to obtain useful results. This kind of defense against continual usurpations still had the drawback that it was extremely costly.

Nonetheless, it ultimately proved impossible to establish the *gabelle* or salt tax—the most feared of indirect taxes. The Basques were less lucky with tobacco, of which they were so fond—so that the inhabitants of Arberoa (the Pays d'Arbéroue), in a petition of 1602, gave it “the first place among the objects necessary for men's lives.”

Lapurdi in particular cultivated tobacco in Nicot, and was happy to indulge in large-scale smuggling of it with neighboring areas. On one occasion the Farmers General enforced the uprooting of the plantations, and its officials distinguished themselves by their excess of zeal, searches, forcible entry, and so on, which provoked a quite legitimate hostility.

These uprisings, which official language treated euphemistically as “emotions,” were a characteristic of the Basque Country in the eighteenth century. What is unusual is that these were almost always started by women who, obsessed by the fear of new taxes and especially the salt tax, were very prone to often untimely demonstrations. There is a long list of those explosions of popular discontent, from those in Donazaha-

rre (Saint-Jean-le-Vieux) in 1685, Mugerre (Mouguerre) and Hiriburu in 1696, Ainhoa in 1724, almost the whole of Lapurdi in 1726 (in connection with the tax on the fiftieth), Baiona in 1748, and Donibane Garazi the same year.

The last of these—one of the most curious—was caused by a notice stuck to the church door announcing some new tariffs on tallow, wax, rice powder, paper, and so on. Some prankster had no difficulty in persuading the local women (which incidentally goes to show that none of them could read French) that the use of bread, wine, water, fire, and even the sweeping of houses and the exercise of conjugal rights were going to be taxed! It is easy to imagine the stupor and indignation that this aroused. In a petition from the Estates of Navarre to obtain the king's pardon a little later, there was some amusement at the sight of the husbands of these rebellious women admitting that "they are not even usually the masters, and that it would have been too dangerous for them to wish to appear so on this occasion."

The commercial liberty granted in 1784 to Baiona and that part of Lapurdi situated to the south of the Errobi was also—in spite of its disadvantages—the cause of a serious misunderstanding. Thus Zuberoa, Lower Navarre, and all the parishes of Lapurdi between the Errobi and the Aturri were separated from the free zone by a line of internal customs; the Farmers General, thwarted by the irremediable loss of an important region and fearing, with reason, that the Basques would attempt fraud, kept an even more annoying control over it. This difference in treatment, which the north of Lapurdi saw as a prelude to more serious inroads, caused, when Letters Patent were put up in Hazparne, a tumultuous demonstration of women that spread rapidly into the neighboring parishes. To forestall the outbreak of any more violence, it was found necessary to send several regiments in to occupy the region and confiscate over five thousand rifles. As a sign of his extreme displeasure, the intendant, Mr. de Néville, went so far as to demolish the bell tower of the church of Hazparne—a mortifying punishment. It was not rebuilt until 1816. In the meantime, the Basque Country would suffer much worse upheavals.

The Estates General of 1789 — The Night of August 4 — The Revolutionary Upheaval — Military Operations — The Directoire, the Consulate, the Empire — From 1815 to 1940

The Estates General of 1789

However conservative the Basques might be by nature, the administrative difficulties, financial abuses, and social malaise that we have outlined above made them (like most of the French) wish for a change. Actually, they considered this change, not without a certain candor, as an increase in their status as a privileged country with a general extension of public freedoms. The future was soon to disabuse them. In the meanwhile, everyone was eager to play a part in the renovation that was expected to come from the Estates General. Women, too, became involved. The amusing text of a petition has been found, the *Plaints of the Female Sex of Saint-Jean-de-Luz and Cibour to the King*, in which the “most humble and most obedient women subjects and citizens” of these two towns were already demanding the right to vote!

More interesting than the demands of these suffragettes (probably the work of a few progressive women from the enlightened bourgeoisie), the *Lists of Complaints of the Communes of Soule* touch on ordinary local preoccupations, which put their finger on the period’s vital problems and the moving confidence placed by the Basque people in their king.

The very way of summoning assemblies charged with electing deputies through the seneschal’s court was enough to cast a shadow on the prevailing lofty optimism. For this regulation took no account of the legal existence of the Bilçar (Biltzar), the Estates of Navarre, and the

Court of Order, to which this designation ought normally to have been applied.

However, the Zuberoans accepted without demur the novel practice of gathering in the church of the Capuchins in Maule (Mauléon), so as to draw up their lists of grievances and to appoint the bishop of Oloron for the clergy, the young Marquis d'Uhart for the nobility, and Arraing, the Mayor of Maule, and the notary Descuret-Laborde for the Third Estate.

In Lower Navarre, the situation was less clear-cut, since the Third Estate showed itself, vis-à-vis the other two estates, rather inclined to yield on this question of procedure. But soon, once the king had consented to restore to the Estates of Béarn the power to choose their deputies or even to abstain from sending any at all, he granted a similar measure to Navarre. The meeting set at the seneschal's court of Donapaleu (Saint-Palais) was thus replaced by a session of the Estates, on June 15, 1789, at Donibane Garazi (Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port). Here it was decided, based on the previous agreements, that the little kingdom would depute only "to the king"; if its delegation eventually decided to sit in the Estates General, this would be only with strictly limited powers, so that "its presence would in no manner affect the constitution and individual rights of Navarre." This Navarrese constitution was, indeed, offered as an example: if France were to adopt an equally good one, Navarre would no longer oppose being united with it "by indissoluble links." These candid wishes were entrusted to the safekeeping of the bishop of Baiona (Bayonne), the Marquis d'Olhonce, Arnaud de Vivié, a bourgeois of Garrüze (Garris), and Franchisteguy, a notary in Donibane Garazi. They were accompanied by a syndic, Polverel, a lawyer at the Parlement of Paris, whose various memoranda on the freeholding of property (*franc-alleu*) in Navarre had greatly affected affairs in the Basque Country in previous years.

As for Lapurdi (Labourd), it almost ended up with no representatives of its own. The *pays* was summoned as part of the seneschal's court of Lannes, within which it was to form merely a single constituency with Baiona. Indeed, meetings were being held on this basis, but the unanimous representations of the gentlemen and the Bilçar disclosed the situation to those in power, just in time. On March 25, Louis XVI satisfied their desire to have four Basque deputies appointed in their capital of Uztaritze (Ustaritz). These were the Vicomte de Macaye (Makea), standing in for the Marquis de Caupenne who had refused, and M. de Saint-Esteben, priest of Ziburu (Ciboure), for the nobility and the clergy. The

Bilçar, for its part, had chosen the two Garat brothers, brilliant lawyers from Bordeaux, originally from Uztaritze. Subsequently, they were to be more or less the only ones to play a notable role in the course of events. The younger brother, Dominique-Joseph, would even find in them an opportunity to launch a lively political career: He was appointed Minister of Justice as a replacement for Danton, and it was he who was given the task of informing Louis XVI that he had been sentenced to death. He succeeded Roland in the Ministry of the Interior for a few months in 1793, and this ex-revolutionary ended up, like so many others, as a member of the French Academy, a senator, and a count of the Empire! Finally, the Restoration plunged him back into the penumbra of his native land.

The Night of August 4

The night of August 4 would brutally put an end to the persistent hopes for autonomy evidenced by the incidents related above. In the feverish atmosphere of Versailles, intoxicated by the collective enthusiasm, the Basque deputies deliberately and brazenly betrayed the trust of those who had sent them. They voted, without turning a hair, for article 10, which uniformly abolished the particular privileges of the provinces, principalities, cantons, towns, and communities of inhabitants, both financial and of any other kind, and melded them into the common law of the whole French nation.

When the news of this sacrifice reached the Basque Country, it was greeted with stupor. However, the Zuberoans—following the docile example of their neighbors in Béarn—ratified without complaint the definitive destruction of an independence that went back many centuries, even though it had long since become greatly diminished.

The reaction in Lapurdi was much more heated. The Bilçar proposed stripping the Garat brothers of their office. But who would replace them? They were merely sent a rebuke, and the copy of a message of protest to the president of the National Assembly. The Bilçar met for one last time, on November 18, without any illusions. It is easy to imagine this last gathering of the tenacious survivors of a shattered world. To salve their consciences, it was however decided to entrust the syndic and two commissioners to draw up a memorandum to try and force the legislators in Paris to understand the economic implications of the privileges of Lapurdi. It was no longer in anyone's power to reply.

Nonetheless, the deputation from Lower Navarre, fearing that its presence in the National Assembly (where all imperative mandates had

been proscribed) might appear as endorsement, had refrained from taking part in any meeting. The decree of August 4 would do nothing to encourage it to overturn its prudent abstention. Thus the deputies were refused any hearing with the king, and no oath could be sworn in his presence. A dead-end was reached. So when, a little later, the Assembly discussed replacing the title of “King of France and Navarre” with that of “King of the French,” it was Garat, the elder brother, representing Lapurdi, who made himself the spokesman of the absentees and obtained an adjournment. When the debate resumed, a message from Polverel was read out, requesting that the traditional description be kept. This was a last, vain effort, and it did not prevent the word Navarre from being struck out of the official vocabulary. However, the *pays* gradually rallied to the change, out of weariness, even within the communities as, one after another, they accepted the new regime.

On December 30, 1789, the Assembly heard the reading of an address by which, as the text put it, “Navarre accepts the decree that has made it part of France.”

There was to be one last battle, shortly afterward, on a fall-back position: at stake was the territorial reshaping of France. For lack of any better solution, might it not be possible to obtain an entirely Basque department, without any links to Béarn? On January 12, 1790, the Constituent Assembly ruled on the report of the committee recommending the formation of the Basses-Pyrénées, in the form they have preserved ever since then. The Garat brothers in turn threw their efforts into this, sincerely desirous, it appears, to make up for their previous failings. Seeing that the Assembly had its seat ready, Garat the younger flung down from the podium one last protest, not without a certain dignity: he was called to order. Three days later, France was definitively divided up into ninety-three departments. It was the end of the Basque Country as such. The following July 14, the presence of several Basque delegates, sent to the Champs de Mars for the Fête de la Fédération, endorsed this new situation.

However, it needs to be acknowledged today that, from the administrative and judicial point of view, the fragmentation brought about by the Revolution in the final analysis led to the Basques being brought much more closely together than they had ever been previously. In any case, the creation of the three districts of Maule, Donapaleu, and Uztaritze (the seat of the latter was immediately transferred to Baiona, by an abuse of power on the part of the rulers and would remain there definitively) was based quite closely on traditional subdivisions so as not to cause too

much upheaval in settled habits. From 1800, the outlines of arrondissements and cantons would also, with only few deviations, follow preexisting linguistic and even historical limits. As a result, even today, in the middle of the mountains from which the Biduze (Bidouze) springs, the same worn milestone where the borders of the lands of Zuberoa (Soule), Garazi (Cize), Amikuze (Mixe), and Oztibarre (Ostabarret) met is still used to mark the meeting point of the four current cantons of Maule, Donibane Garazi, Donapaleu, and Iholdi (Iholdy). Finally, while the Basques, as we have seen, came under the jurisdiction of three different dioceses, the Concordat of 1802 would finally ratify their union, from the religious point of view, under the aegis of the bishop of Baiona alone. In the framework of contemporary France, Basque unity is thus more real, in every respect, than it was under the ancien régime.

One other unexpected consequence of the Revolution—in striking contradiction with its own unifying ideology—was that it temporarily gave the Basque language an official role that it had never before enjoyed. Everyone knows that the *Fors* and all public documents were written, if not in French, in Gascon or Béarnais. A Basque register of the commune of Ahetze and several other rare archival papers are the only exception to this rule. But the urgent need to spread new laws and to produce an increasing number of public notices, proclamations, and decrees led both the first members of the Constituent Assembly and the fiercest Jacobins to have a host of bilingual texts printed. The Revolution thus served the Basque language well, in spite of itself, because of the need to spread its propaganda.

The Revolutionary Upheaval

However, disabused by so many bitter disappointments, the Basques, as a whole, did not waver from strict loyalty to France, as one might have expected. They showed some merit in their decision, since the progress of the Revolution was to impose on them serious religious problems, as well as the material sufferings common to the rest of the French. In fact, only the Terror would oblige some of them—especially the priests—to emigrate. Generally speaking, it should also be noted that any resistance to the injunctions of the terrorists was almost entirely passive. Nothing happened in our part of the world that could be compared with the Chouans in the Vendée.

Nonetheless, the consequences of the turmoil of 1789 continued to take their inevitable toll, with the events in Paris having repercussions

in the most distant provinces. The Constituent Assembly, the Legislative Assembly, the Convention, the Committee of Public Safety—these were all stages that then coincided, as far as local life was concerned, with successive purges, to the advantage of ever more extremist elements. The latter—especially in Baiona—were often newcomers in the region: somewhat louche figures, often picturesque characters, such as the Spanish ex-Jesuit Martinez de Ballesteros, the creator of a fighting unit, the “Chasseurs of the Mountains,” who are not to be confused with the “Basque Chasseurs.”

Popular societies came into being, one after the other, in our small towns and even in the larger ones, too. Surveillance committees gave themselves the right to imprison people suspected of lacking patriotism, even though the latter were usually simply revolutionaries from the word go. However, to the extent that compatriots were involved, these arbitrary arrests did not often lead their victims to the guillotine. The Zuberoans seem to have experienced incarceration rather meekly. In Baiona (where there were some sixty victims), and in Donibane Lohizune (Saint-Jean-de-Luz), the sinister machine did however do its work. In the latter town, the guillotine was erected on the Place Louis XIV, and renamed (the inscription can still be read under a turret on the Lohobiague family house) Place de la Liberté! The executed were mainly soldiers, the accomplices of deserters or emigrants, and correspondents with priests who refused to swear loyalty to the new regime. The most touching victim, shot in 1794, was a young girl, Madeleine Larralde, from Sara (Sare), whose only crime, apparently, was that she had crossed the frontier to take communion in Bera (Vera).

While the Republican calendar, although translated into Basque, seems not to have experienced much of a success, at the orders of the Directoire of Uztaritze, most of the municipalities, avid “to wipe out the last traces of fanaticism,” decided to adopt new names more in keeping with the times. Some of them were content to take geographical names: Saint-Palais (Donapaleu in Basque —ed.) became Mont-Bidouze, Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port (Donibane Garazi in Basque —ed.) became Nive-Franche, Luhuso (Louhossoa) became Montagne-sur-Nive. Abstract names flourished, such as Union for Itsasu (Itxassou), Constante for Arbona (Arbonne). There was even an appeal to memories of antiquity: Baigorri (Baïgorry) modestly renamed itself Thermopyles, after Thermopylae. The heroes of the time were also paid similar homage: Uztaritze boldly called itself Marat-sur-Nive; Donibane Lohizune became Chauvin-Dragon (after a young soldier who had just met with a

heroic death on the frontier). Less ridiculous, and more faithful to their native language, Ainhoa and Zuraide (Souraïde) decided to become, simply, Mendiarte (meaning “among the mountains” —ed.) and Mendialde (“by the mountain side” —ed.). Sara gave itself the attractive sobriquet of La Palomière.

Unfortunately, a minority of progressive people (or people who thought they were progressive), supported by the central authorities, gradually seized the levers of power; its zeal was not limited to such childish trifles. The vote on the Civil Constitution of the Clergy (1790) would lead to a serious crisis at the start of the following year.

It was in Zuberoa that the fateful law met with the least opposition; most of the priests, however, did not take the oath of loyalty until the last possible moment, and still reserved certain ecclesiastical rights to themselves. Only a dozen or so priests felt able to accept the new state of things wholesale. All the Capuchins in Maule eagerly did the same, to the great scandal of the populace. A loud-mouthed young woman, Marie Tomieu, publicly insulted one of them, calling him a “*higanaut pig [sic]*” and promised that they would make him “do the donkey run,” an allusion to a noisy form of punishment by the community. Indeed, the threat was actually carried out on priests who had taken the oath in Barkoxe (Barcus) and Eskiula (Esquiule). In Lower Navarre and Lapurdi, the constitutional priests were in a minority, and many of them did not hesitate for long before retracting their oaths.

Among those who waxed obstinate, the priest of Senpere (Saint-Pée-sur-Nivelle) and his curate, as well as the municipality and most of its inhabitants, distinguished themselves by their revolutionary fervor.

In the spring of 1791, the bishop of Baiona, Monsignor de Villevielle, went into exile in Spain, traveling by way of Urdazubi (Urdax). He was to die two years later in the monastery of La Oliva in Navarre. The bishop of Oloron, who was still in Paris as a deputy, fled to England and did not return to his diocese. On May 1, 1791, the former Benedictine monk Dom Sanadon, author of a curious *Essay on the Nobility of the Basques*, was elected in Pau as bishop of the new diocese of the Basses-Pyrénées. This made the break definitive. The great majority of the clergy refused to recognize the intruder who, to replace his opponents, appointed a great number of constitutional priests pretty much everywhere. For a while, the dispossessed priests who had refused to swear loyalty to the regime were generally left alone, and then, little by little, the proscription started to become harsher. Nonetheless, many priests stayed, either

near the frontier—as veritable smugglers of the faith—or in the *pays* themselves, hidden among populations who sheltered them at their peril and who could resort to their ministry alone. This area was the site of many acts of obscure heroism. Dominique Lahetjuzan of Sara managed to escape the “archers” sent to arrest him with a boldness that passed into legend. But Salvat de Sorhainde, a curate of Beskoitze (Brisous), and Gratian Jauretche, a curate of Ainhoa, were less fortunate; arrested in Kanbo (Cambo), their native town, toward the end of 1793, they were immediately executed.

Eventually, religion itself was completely banned, the constitutional bishop imprisoned in his turn, and—as everywhere—the churches were stripped of their treasures, the bell towers of their bells, as a result of measures of dubious legality. The son of the “regent” of Itsasu, Pierre Iharour, distinguished himself by refusing, despite having the soles of his feet roasted, to reveal the hiding place where he had concealed the sacred vessels. The interior of Basque sanctuaries was totally devastated, but not too many acts of vandalism were perpetrated on the monuments themselves; just, here and there, a few fleurs-de-lis or coats of arms scratched onto the stone, as in the bell tower of Azkaine (Ascain) or Donibane Lohizune. The same was unfortunately not the case at Baiona, where a populace spurred on by the Jews of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (the revolutionary name given to Saint-Esprit) savagely destroyed almost all the sculptures in the cathedral.

The cult of Reason seems not to have been much celebrated in the towns, with the exception of the Zuberoan village of Arüe (Aroue). Country municipalities contented themselves with the revolutionary *fêtes décadaires*, performed every ten days around the liberty trees; their success was rather limited.

The high point of the Terror was reached in 1794. It took a more or less hateful shape depending on the locality, as a result, it is said, of threats occasioned by the war with Spain. In Zuberoa, which had remained more or less immune to military operations, Féraud, representing the people in the army of the Pyrenees, demonstrated unusual moderation. The same cannot be said of his colleagues, Pinet, Cavaignac, and Monestier (from the Puy de Dôme) who, in the rest of the region, took inexcusable measures or at least covered them with their authority. Lower Navarre, doubtless as a result of the enthusiasm with which some of the younger generation willingly stepped up to defend the frontier, was treated with relative indulgence. In Lapurdi, conversely, the representatives of the Committee of Public Safety, obsessed by the

fear of possible collusion between the Spanish and a population that showed itself increasingly stubborn about secularization, indulged in a real atrocity. In spring 1794, following the desertion of forty-seven young men of Itsasu, all inhabitants, men, women, and children, of the villages near the frontier—Sara, Azkaine, Itsasu, Ezpeleta (Espelette), Ainhua, and Zuraide, decreed to be “communes of infamy”—were arrested en bloc and deported to Landes and Gers. Several other localities in Lapurdi were also subjected to a partial raid. All in all, several thousand of these unfortunate people were crammed haphazardly into disused churches, badly fed, deprived of all hygiene, and forced to endure sufferings that were often fatal—barely half of them escaped with their lives. When, on September 30, the survivors were allowed to return home, they found that their property had been pillaged or auctioned off; they were able to regain very little of it, and never received compensation. This internment of Basques remains the darkest episode of the Revolution in the southwest of France.

Military Operations

Such harsh measures could be explained—but not justified—by the hostilities that, since the death of Louis XVI, had been opened with Spain. Already, toward the end of summer 1792, concentrations of enemy forces operated on the borders of Navarre and Gipuzkoa (Guipúzcoa). The Basques of Garazi and Baigorri who, from a purely personal point of view, considered themselves to have been virtually in a state of war with their neighbors since the Treaty of Limits in 1785, spontaneously took over the guardianship of their frontiers. The commissioners of the Executive Council, at the head of which Carnot, the future “organizer of victory,” was prominent, were able to make skillful use of these dispositions to give official authorization to the creation of four military companies, whose men chose their own leaders: Iriart, Lassalle, Berindoague, and Harispe. The last would find these circumstances a springboard for his brilliant career. The initial core of these celebrated “Basque Chasseurs,” a body composed entirely of volunteers, was considerably swelled when, on March 7, war was declared by the Convention. It rose to a number sufficient to form ten companies, later grouped into four battalions under the command of Harispe, Lassalle, Darhampé, and La Victoire (the pseudonym of a tailor, Matenotte, from Uharte Garazi [Uhart Cize], who was a brigadier general when he died in 1794). While voluntary enrollment was an outstanding success, attempts at requisitioning proved a complete

failure. The same was true under the Directory and the Empire when obligatory conscription was imposed; the Basques deserted en masse, in spite of all the measures of coercion employed, once it was no longer a matter of defending their own homes.

In the spring of 1793, the military situation appeared grave. Scarcely nine thousand men composed our improvised army of the Western Pyrenees, facing eighteen thousand Spanish soldiers. The latter were commanded by General Ventura Caro, an apparently good choice as leader, since, as a result of his previous role as a boundary negotiator, he was thoroughly familiar with the difficult terrain on which operations had to be performed. Furthermore, a significant legion of emigrants was rapidly formed under the command of the Marquis de Saint-Simon, whose emissaries were so bold as to seek recruits in French territory.

As a result of this numerical disproportion, defensive maneuvers alone were left to us. Thanks to the drive of the Basque Chasseurs, who were always able to contain the enemy or attack and retake positions that had been temporarily lost—and thanks also to the hesitation and the lack of strategic ability of the Spanish command, which suffered from a failure of nerve and was unable to exploit thoroughly their indisputable partial successes, our territory was left practically untouched for fifteen months. This first period was, in fact, nothing but a succession of military thrusts: sometimes in Lapurdi, toward Sara, or between the Urdazuri (Nivelle) and the Bidasoa, the theater of the feats of arms of La Tour d’Auvergne and the grenadiers of his celebrated “Infernal Column”; more frequently on the frontier of Navarre, in Aldude (the Aldudes, whose inhabitants had taken the side of Spain), around the passes of Berdaritz and Izpegi (Ispeguy), in front of the fiercely contested positions of Arrola and Château-Pignon covering Donibane Garazi. On every occasion, the Basque Chasseurs demonstrated exceptional qualities.

The significant time gained by this resistance had not been lost. At the draconian urgings of the Representatives, the army of the Western Pyrenees had—despite countless difficulties in finding food—been put together and adequately trained. When, on July 24, 1794, the whole army set off together, its offensive was crowned by a dazzling success. In the middle of August, not only had the rich valley of the Baztan, its first objective, fallen to the French, but so had the whole of Gipuzkoa. Moncey, who had been mainly responsible for these brilliant results, was made general-in-chief. There were displays of separatist sentiment—the first in a long series—in the occupied provinces; a policy of clumsy persecutions managed to put an end to them. The frontier of Navarre was

freed in turn, in October, but the late arrival of several units allowed the Spanish army to pull back without many losses. The season was already too far advanced to think of besieging Iruñea-Pamplona. Operations were not resumed until June of the following year, with the conquest of Bizkaia (Vizcaya) and Araba (Álava). The Spanish troops, cut in two at Irurtzun (Irurzun), were no longer in any position to defend Navarre effectively. The Peace of Basel (July 4, 1795) forestalled any victorious advance. The Basque Chasseurs were then sent to the Vendée to engage in a difficult and unrewarding exercise of pacification. On the eve of his execution, Charette, the elusive leader of the Chouans, expressed a certain admiration for the Basques who had been chasing him for days at a time, sometimes thirty hours at a stretch, without his being able to shake them off, as he said, “they could travel on foot as quickly as our horses could gallop.”

The Directoire, the Consulate, the Empire

As is well-known, the desire to save the life of a seductive young woman of Baiones origin, Theresia Cabarrus, ever since nicknamed Our Lady of Thermidor, had driven Tallien to strike down the bloody tyranny of Robespierre.

The 9 Thermidor (the fall of Robespierre —ed.) to some extent loosened the grip of terrorism in the Basque Country; yet it was not all that easy to dislodge the extremists from all the positions they had been monopolizing. A troubled period of want and anarchy continued until the day when a more or less normal situation was finally reestablished amid the ruins. Gradually, however, under the Directory and Consulate, the victims of enforced emigration started to request that they be allowed back home, exiled priests returned to their parishes, and churches were finally reopened for worship. In Paris, the celebrated Basque singer Pierre Garat, nephew of the ex-Minister of Justice, had become the idol of the very motley society of the Directory. This former protégé of Queen Marie-Antoinette set the tone for the “Incroyables” or dandies who haunted the salons of the “Merveilleuses” or elaborately adorned women: these men and women even copied the eccentricities of his pronunciation.

On 18 Ventôse of Year 6, the four battalions of Basque Chasseurs were reduced to just one; now that the danger from without had passed, it was proving more difficult to recruit.

The coup d'état of 18 Brumaire of Year 7 did not provoke any reaction. The Basques, loyally incorporated into a "one and indivisible" France, were not much interested in its mode of government. The same would be true throughout the nineteenth century in which each of the numerous changes of regime would be greeted—as many municipal registers show—by statements of support whose enthusiasm, always moderate in tone, barely veiled a prudent indifference. After some isolated episodes of resistance, the Basque clergy agreed without difficulty to the Concordat of 1802. It seemed that, in spite of the various wars—continual but distant—the Empire had brought peace.

Nonetheless, at sea, the Basque corsairs, given a new lease of life during the Revolution under the leadership of one of their number, Dalbarade, continued to fight the English. But privateering was tending to decrease, especially in terms of the tonnage of the ships that were involved. Their range was now limited to (successful) actions just off the coastal areas, sometimes within sight of localities on the Basque coast. The last of the corsairs, Etienne Pellot-Montvieux, from Hendaia (Hendaye; 1766–1856), owed his legendary popularity to his remarkable feats and the picturesque sallies of his very individual character, as well as to his extremely long life. Captured on several occasions, he managed to make the most daring escapes, right from under the noses of his British jailors. In his still sprightly old age, he considered his finest exploit to be his victorious battle on April 4, 1804, on board the *Général Augereau* against two powerful English ships, one of which, armed with twenty-two big cannons, was boarded and captured. In 1830, Pellot had a painting done of this episode and offered it to the Institute of Hydrography of Donibane Lohizune, founded in the eighteenth century by another well-known Basque, the abbot Garra de Salagoïty, from Heleta (Hélette; 1736–1808). This school of navigation is no longer in existence, but the painting offered by the old corsair is still, as far as we know, in the Maritime Registry of Baiona. Pellot died at the age of ninety-one years; only in 1843 had he been awarded the Legion of Honor.

The relative tranquility that allowed the Basque Country time for recuperation lasted just fifteen years. The imperial epic, in its progress across Europe, was initially halted by the Iberian Peninsula. In 1808, Napoleon stayed in Baiona for the first time, with the aim of provoking the abdication of Spanish king Charles IV and the renunciation of his son Ferdinand. The emperor arrived on April 14, took a dislike to the

Hôtel de la Division, and went off to Marracq where he set up in the little château built a century earlier for Maria Anna of Neubourg. By a strange quirk, it was against this background (since ruined by a fire) that the historic scenes of the spoliation of the Bourbons of Spain took place. Napoleon lingered on in Baiona until July 20; he visited part of the country, taking a particular interest in the port of Baiona, La Barre, and the maritime arsenals that had once been so flourishing and whose activities he attempted to rekindle. Soon, more troops than had ever been seen in this part of the world were marching across our region. Baiona was filled with a feverish hubbub of activity.

In Madrid, Murat, ever a lover of display, formed his guard of honor with recruits from the Basque Country—fine men, praised by all who saw them.

From Uztaritze, where he had been resting for a while, the senator Count Garat sent memorandum after memorandum to Napoleon adjuring him to create a protectorate formed from the annexation of the *Provincias Vascongadas* to the French Basque Country, and named *La Nouvelle Phénicie* (The New Phoenicia)!

Nobody could yet imagine that one of the last acts of the great military drama was about to be played out on Basque soil.

Military reverses started to occur: in June 1813, the loss of the battle of Vitoria-Gasteiz obliged the French armies to fall back on our frontier. King Joseph was responsible for the defeat. He took refuge in a house in Senpere—Subastia in the Elbarron (Helbarron) district—where, on July 11, he received the Emperor's emissary bringing him notification that he had been stripped of his command, which was handed over to Marshal Soult, who turned up the very next day and took over straightaway. Soult faced an unenviable task.

For lack of sufficient cohesion, an attempted offensive aimed at relieving Iruñea-Pamplona led to defeat at Sorauren (July 31, 1813). The troops had to be regrouped: in Lapurdi, on a line running along the Bidasoa and the upper course of the Urdazuri; in Lower Navarre, in the region included between Heleta and Donibane Garazi. During the subsequent campaign, Soult—as the best historian of the southwest of France, Paul Courteault, puts it—turned out to be an indecisive leader, hesitant, capable of forming plans but not of carrying them out.

Wellington was able to keep the military initiative in his hands, even without hurrying. After the capitulations of Donostia-San Sebastián and

Iruñea-Pamplona, the first attacks by the allied forces immediately took the summit of Larrun (La Rhune) and the Croix des Bouquets, and at the beginning of November forced the French Army to withdraw its lines of defense to the less favorable heights of Arbona, Arrangoitze (Arcangues), Basusarri (Bassussarry), and the course of the Errobi (Nive). The English set up headquarters in Donibane Lohizune, in the Grangabaita house, rue Mazarin.

On December 9, in the mud and the mist, a new battle was fought. There was fierce fighting around Arrangoitze and La Nègresse, then—once the enemy had succeeded in crossing the Errobi—on the slopes of Hiriburu (Saint-Pierre-d'Irube) and Mugerre (Mouguerre). A monument erected by the Souvenir Français organization near the latter village commemorates the ill-fated courage of our soldiers. Once more, under pressure from an adversary that was superior in numbers, they had to yield ground. In Lower Navarre, the Harispe and Foy divisions, afraid they might lose contact, were obliged in turn to fall back after a bloody fight around Garrüze. The battle of Orthez (February 27, 1814), in spite of heavy English losses, finished off the defeat of an army whose morale had slumped significantly.

Thanks to the iron discipline instilled by Wellington, the occupation of the Basque Country was orderly and the habitants got off very lightly.

Baiona besieged, and remarkably defended by General Thouvenot, was still holding out, although the British had managed, with a fine display of audacity, to throw a bridge of ships across the Aturri (Adour), opposite Saint-Bernard. A little English cemetery, in a fold of the ground on the heights of Saint-Etienne near the Citadel, stands to remind us that the struggle was particularly intense hereabouts. General Hope was even taken prisoner by our troops, in the course of a sortie. Thouvenot was not defeated—though he never surrendered—until April 27, as the entry of the Allies into Paris had made any prolongation of this brilliant resistance useless.

In March of the following year, the shock of the Hundred Days aroused different responses across the country, but there was a new sense of unity when, after the disaster at Waterloo, a small Spanish army, commanded by Count de Labisbal, crossed the Bidasoa and advanced toward Angelu (Anglet) and Uztaritze. The alarm was intense but brief: the Duke d'Angoulême intervened with Ferdinand VII and the troops were peacefully withdrawn.

From 1815 to 1940

From then on, events in the history of the French Basque Country were no longer distinguishable from those of France as a whole.

Visits of great personages? They had never been so numerous but, with the possible exception of that of the Duchesse de Barry in 1828, they were now devoid of any political impact. The Basque coast merely became an asylum of choice for sovereigns on holiday or kings in exile. Under the Second Empire, the annual sojourns of Napoleon III and the Empress Eugénie in Biarritz started this fashion. And it was not confined to crowned heads; the diplomatic corps followed where the sovereigns had led (after all, the name of Prince von Bismarck was linked to that of Biarritz in the negotiations that preceded the war of 1870). Later on, other foreigners came to Biarritz: Russian grand dukes, British and American golfers, Yankee industrial magnates, seriously rich proprietors from Latin America, short-lived magnates of international finance, and so on. The presence of the Imperial Court in the old fishing village that had suddenly been boosted into a famous resort was at the origin of the development of tourism that would, in the twentieth century, so profoundly modify the region's economic balance. There was evident material prosperity; but was there not a risk that it would be bought at the cost of an insidious change for the worst in the personality of the Basques? Would they resist the mediocrity imported by their summer visitors, in the same way that their ancestors had remained unaffected by all the invaders whose comings and goings we have described?

However, we need to remember that the very sense of this individual personality that makes the Basques a small and separate people remains more intense, more widespread, and in particular more self-aware today than it has ever been before. This rather imprecise but still real notion of an ethnic fraternity that crosses borders perhaps originates in the turmoil we experienced during the events in Spanish history known as the Carlist Wars. In both the dynastic conflicts of 1833–40 and 1872–76, and in the national reconquest of 1936–39, the problem was always in one sense the continually arising issue of the assimilation of the Basques into Spain. Each time, the two rival parties naturally sought to establish bases in the French Basque Country from which they could ensure their troops had enough material, as well as unofficial centers for gathering intelligence and directing operations, and refuges if things turned out badly.

War smuggling was hampered or fostered by the changing and secret aspirations of our leaders, and it was regularly rife on a vast scale. The most dubious trafficking was found cheek by jowl with the most romantic exploits. As far as ideas are concerned, the Basques of France, following their political affinities and their individual alliances, waxed passionate for one or other cause, at every period. Thus it was that, in 1837, the eccentric writer from Zuberoa, Augustin Chaho, a precursor of Basque nationalism, declared himself to be a Carlist even though he was probably a Freemason, and expressed the most fervent enthusiasm for the real genius of General Zumalacarre (in modern Basque, Zumalakarregi —ed.)!

Whatever the outcome of these fratricidal struggles, we have always been able, in our part of the world, to welcome with equal generosity both the vanquished and the exiled, many of whom have come to settle on our soil. How many touching and picturesque pages there are in that history that repeated itself three times in one century. There was Don Carlos who, hounded by the troops of Espartero, crossed the frontier at Dantxarinea on September 14, 1839, to be officially welcomed by two Basques, General Harispe and the subprefect Etchats. In 1875 there was the curé Santa-Cruz, the celebrated gang leader and his faithful companions, who took refuge, between two audacious charges, in the peaceful domain of Serres near Azkaine. And there was, only recently, after the fall of Bilbao in 1937, the arrival by plane of the autonomous government of Euzkadi in Baiona, followed by thousands of refugees from Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa.

While the French Basques have always shown sympathy for their brothers and sisters in Spain, we should acknowledge that they have never been tempted to imitate them in the political arena. Autonomy is out of place among us. The noble efforts that have been expended—especially for the past fifty years—on maintaining the traditions, saving the language, enriching the literature and art, and, in a word, developing a properly Basque culture are the result merely of a worthy and perfectly legitimate regionalism. So it would be completely mistaken to see the least anti-French claim in the spread, these days, of symbols such as the Basque cross, the blazon of the three or seven provinces of *Eskual Herri*, and the green, red, and white flag.

This latter sign has, however, led to rather a lot of ink being spilled; so it is of some interest to point out its origin. As far as we know, there was no Basque flag properly speaking before 1894. That year, Sabino de Arana Goiri, the founder of the Basque Nationalist Party, and his brother Luis composed—for the exclusive use of Bizkaia—an emblem

that took from the ancient coat of arms of the Seigniory of Bizkaia the white cross on a red field, and juxtaposed with it a Saint Andrew's cross of green. This latter commemorated the anniversary of September 30, the day of the legendary battle of Arrigorriaga, considered as the point of departure of Bizkaian independence. Don Sabino's intention was apparently to create a different flag, with a wider symbolism, for the whole of an independent Euzkadi of which he dreamed; but as the political movement set up by Arana Goiri long remained confined to the area around Bilbao, it was in fact the Bizkaian flag that was used alone. Subsequently, thanks to its attractive appearance, it was copied, even by French Basques who, unaware of its limited significance, simply wanted to fly an original flag on holidays. Thus it is that, on our pelota courts, you often see (without anyone making any fuss about it) the paradoxical Basque flag of Bizkaia innocently flying next to the tricolor of the French flag.

Part 3

Traditions

Eskuara — Basque Toponymy — The Oldest Basque Texts — Written Literature — Baiones Gascon

Eskuara

Julien Vinson, the eminent specialist in Basque studies, used to enjoy ironically reminding his listeners of a telling anecdote. At a soiree in the sub-prefecture of Baiona (Bayonne) in 1880, he overheard this fragment of dialogue between a decorated and self-important gentleman, and a respectable lady: “So, Madame, you are Basque?”—“Yes, Sir, my husband’s family is one of the leading families in the country.”— “And you speak Basque?”— “Oh, Monsieur, only with the servants.”

It is indeed true that Eskuara must have had considerable powers of resistance to ward off the bad example given, up until quite recently, by the ruling classes of the Basque Country, who always considered it as an inferior language. This disagreeable state of mind is fortunately vanishing slowly but surely; however, in our view, not all the cultivated members of the French Basque Country are still making enough of an effort. The admirable work of the organizers of the *Eskualzaleen Biltzarra* (Association of Basque Studies) in fostering annual competitions to spread the study of Basque in primary schools, secondary schools, and seminars should receive much more extensive support from individuals and groups. But this excellent society of “Bascophiles” never has more than five hundred subscribers, even though it costs only a modest amount. So there has hitherto been only one Basque in two hundred who has felt able to make a very small financial sacrifice for a cause that, if you hear them talking, is closer to their hearts than anything. We have to admit that this is not very much.

Resisting the rising tide of Romance languages that has surrounded it for centuries like an isolated reef, this strange and beautiful language enjoys a well-established reputation for extreme difficulty. The Basques themselves love to repeat that the Devil in person was unable, after seven years' study, to say anything more than *bai eta ez*, "yes and no." He even forgot these two words once he had crossed the Saint-Esprit bridge. More fortunate than the Devil was the famous Austrian philologist Hugo Schuchardt who took just a few months to gain a good knowledge of the Lapurdian dialect, thanks to tutoring from a sandal-maker from Sara (Sare), Augustin Etcheberri. We ourselves have seen people from Les Landes, or Gascony, or even England managing to express themselves fluently in Eskuara. In addition, the results obtained by the abbot Eyheramendi, in the Musée Basque in Baiona, have demonstrated that this language is not as hermetic as was claimed. Its syntax, and in particular its verb conjugations, do however make Basque a difficult language with which to get to grips.

Other obstacles are more intimidating than real. The first resides in the range of dialects. From one village to another, there are variant forms. Prince Louis-Lucien Bonaparte published two fine linguistic maps of the Basque Country in 1872, and reduced all of these nuances to three main groups: (1) Bizkaian; (2) Lapurdian, Gipuzkoan, southern and northern Upper Navarrese; (3) Zuberoan, western and eastern Lower Navarrese. The extent of each of these linguistic subdivisions coincides only approximately with the region from which it derives its name. Thus the people of Uztaritze (Ustaritz), the ancient capital of Lapurdi, speak a sort of western Lower Navarrese, while true Lapurdian extends well beyond, into the Spanish Baztan Valley. Erronkari (Roncal) and Basabürüa (Upper Zuberoa) also use a very similar language, in spite of historical frontiers and geographical obstacles.

In fact, nowadays all these dialects are considered to be more closely akin than they appear at first sight, apart from Bizkaian, which is more different from all the others than they are from each other. On the initiative of Georges Lacombe, linguists have thus decided to agree that the great dialectal varieties of Eskuara can be reduced to two.

In the French Basque Country, Lapurdian is the literary dialect par excellence, the one that has always been used by most writers and orators; it largely allows one to gain access to an understanding of neighboring dialects. Apart from a few grammatical particularities and a vocabulary perhaps more subject to external influences, the special physiognomy of

Zuberoan resides to a great extent in the existence of a tonic accent and a vowel similar to the *u* of French.

The pronunciation of Basque, often rather sing-song, has none of the sonorities that characterize the well-known “accent” of Gascon. The impression it gives is of a clear, definite, quite well-articulated language. This is particularly true of oratorical pronunciation since, apart from Zuberoan, the current articulation is actually really loose; a host of consonants are so weakened that they practically disappear. An expression such as *dударик gabe*, “without doubt” or “probably,” is often reduced to something like *du’aika*. The clarity of Basque pronunciation is still just as real, but it is rather due to the open quality of the timbre of the vowels. There are no mixed and unvoiced sounds like *eu* and *un* in French. Nor are there any false diphthongs, that is sounds pronounced as a single vowel despite being transcribed with the help of two vowel signs, such as the French *ai*, *ei*, *oi*, and so on. Basque also avoids the accumulation of different consonants. The simple *r* is pronounced with extreme gentleness, contrasting with the firmness of the double *rr*. Palatalized sounds, represented by a double letter, are quite frequent—for example, *ttiki*, “little.” French Basque dialects use—sometimes, it is said, to excess—*h* and aspirate consonants.

Certain phonetic particularities are clearly brought out by the treatment given to words borrowed from other languages when they are assimilated with Basque: the absence of an initial *r*, always preceded by a vowel (*regulam*, “rule,” becomes *erregela*); the dropping of a consonant when it is followed by another different consonant (*pluma*, “feather,” becomes *luma*), or separation of the two consonants by a euphonic vowel (*placatum*, “appeased,” is transformed into *balakatu*); the dislike of the letter *f* (*fagus*, “beech,” becomes *pago*), and so on.

Unfortunately, spelling is far from being altogether consistent. There is a gulf between the spelling of our old authors, who—apart from Oiherart, a bold precursor—more or less skillfully adapted to the French graphic system, and the spelling that is too hastily recommended by the Academy of the Basque Language sitting in Bilbao. This latter regulation consists, for instance, in replacing *ç* with *z*, *ch* with *x*, *gn* with *ñ*, *qu* with *k*; in replacing double letters by simple letters with a tilde or an accent; in always giving *g* the hard sound, and *gue*; and in suppressing completely the *c*, *v*, and *y*.

All these methodical simplifications, of varying value, aim in particular—and this attempt must remain futile—to create a writing sys-

tem totally independent of that of neighboring Romance languages. The practice has spread far beyond the mountains from Spain into France, but has been only partly adopted by us, despite the example given by the excellent dictionary of Fr. Lhande. In fact, it is the modern, but much less systematic, spelling of the weekly paper *Eskualduna* that (with a few individual variants) still has the best French Basque writers.

From the grammatical point of view, Basque, like Latin, is a declined language; in other words, a great number of relations that in French, for example, are expressed between words by independent prepositions are expressed in Basque by changes in the ending of the words themselves.

But while Latin possesses the complication of several different declensions, Basque ultimately has only one, which includes a dozen cases that also apply to substantives, adjectives, pronouns, and even verbs. Another noticeable simplification resides in the way that in Basque, with the exception of a few verb forms, there is no distinction of gender. A noun that already has a case suffix can be given several others that are superimposed. For example: *gizon*, “man”; *gizon-a*, “the man”; *gizon-a-ren*, “of the man”; *gizon-a-ren-gatik*, “because of the man.”

In a popular song, a young girl addresses a young man, saying:

Enekilako dembora luze iduritzen zaizu.

“The time you come to spend with me seems long to you.”

The expression *enekilako dembora* (in which, following the almost general usage in Basque, the determinant precedes the determined) is translated literally as: “me-with-to-of-time-the.”

Even more relevantly, the abbot P. Lafitte notes the part of the phrase *etche-ra-dino-ko-a-n*, in which five suffixes are united to the substantive to signify, in a single word, “while going as far as the house.”

These are characteristic examples of the tendency to agglutination that—at least in its current state—is still one of the dominant traits of the language.

Nonetheless, we should not deduce that Basque is able, as has wrongly been claimed, to forge extravagantly long place names, such as *Azpilcuetagaray cosaroyarenberecolarrea* that can be read in certain archival documents. These are a simple piling-up of genitives, united arbitrarily by a defective spelling.

When several distinct words are in the same case, it is the last in the group that alone takes the ending. Hence this lapidary phrase engraved on a war memorial in a Zuberoan (Soule) village:

Goure senhar eta seme gerlan hil maiter.

“To our dear husband and son who died in the war.”

Word by word, this can be analyzed thus: “Of-us husband and son in-the-war dead to-the-dear [plural].” As can be seen, the plural dative *-er* (In modern standard Basque, the plural dative is *-ei* —ed.), added to the final word, commands all the previous words.

Basque declension is remarkable for its elegant simplicity, but the example above shows how much syntax goes completely against the habitual order of thinking in French.

French relative pronouns and adverbs are replaced in Basque by the somewhat unusual procedure of adding the suffix *-n*, incorporated with a verb form: *hemen da gizona*, “here is the man,” becomes *hemen den gizona*, “the man who is here.”

The conjugation of verbs is the most significant stumbling block for those who have not been accustomed to it from childhood. To begin with, a few verbs—there used to be many more of them—still have two different systems of conjugation. The oldest, which is tending to fall into disuse, is found only in simple tenses: this is the so-called strong synthetic conjugation. It consists of the following: the meaning of the verb, the mode, the tense, and the person are (as in the French imperative) all expressed together in a single word, such as *nabila* (today “*nabil*” —ed.), “I walk,” *zioan* (today “*zihoan*” —ed.), “he was going.”

On the other hand, the “weak” conjugation, also called the “periphrastic” conjugation, is, in every tense, formed by a verbal substantive accompanied by an auxiliary verb: *ibiltzen naiz*, “I walk,” *joaiten zen* (today “*joaten zen*” —ed.), “he was going.” The coexistence of a simple form and a compound form of the same verb, when it exists, sometimes implies a significant nuance in meaning. Thus *badakit* means “I know” in the strong conjugation, but its periphrastic equivalent *jakiten dut* means “I learn.” The advantage of weak forms is that one does not need to know as many conjugations as there are different verbs, since in practice only the conjugation of the auxiliaries needs to be known. This is already quite a task, since while there are basically only two tenses, something like a hundred derived and compound tenses can be drawn from them to express quite subtle nuances. It is always worth remarking that there

is no watertight distinction between the strong and weak conjugations. The mere interplay of phonetic variations leads to the constant creation, within the weak conjugation, of new forms in which the constitutive elements no longer appear to be clearly differentiated. Thus, instead of *nahi duzu*, “will you” or “do you want,” people these days tend to say *nauzu*, which is a real synthetic form.

A much more serious complication springs from the fact that the auxiliary can incorporate into its forms elements indicating various persons, up to four: a subject in a certain state, an agent to whom this is due, an object or being to whom this state is destined or related, and an interlocutor who is called to witness. In short, it is the equivalent of incorrect French expressions analogous to “*je te lui ai dit son fait*” (“I told him where to get off, you know”), or “*il nous l’a bien arrangé*” (“he fixed it okay for us”), or “*qu’on me le suspende par les pieds*” (“hang him by his feet for me”), and so on.

One curious feature is that, in familiar (“*tu*”) forms of address (quite rarely used, and implying a much more intimate familiarity than in French), different allocutive forms often indicate the sex of the person being addressed: “*tu l’as*” (“you have it”) is *duk* when speaking to a man, and *dun* when speaking to a woman. “*Je vois ta maison*” (“I see your house”) is, in Basque, *hire etchea* (today “*etxea*” —ed.) *ikhusten diat* or *dinat*, depending on whether the interlocutor is male or female.

Finally, one of the essential characteristics of the Basque verb—and linguists seem to be currently unanimous on this point—is that it is always conceived passively, even when it is transitive in appearance. On this interpretation, in so-called transitive phrases, the logical subject, the author of the action, is not the grammatical subject, but an indirect complement of the passive verb, and conversely it is the logical direct complement that becomes the true grammatical subject. Hence these three lines from a celebrated song by Elissamburu:

Galdegiten dut grazia
Dudan bezala hasia
Akhabatzeko bizia.

“I ask for the grace to finish my life the way I started it.”

A literal translation of which would be: “By me is asked the grace, as it is had by me begun, of being finished life.”

The Basques have a very complex verb system but they do not disdain occasionally to manage completely without it; thus they can draw wonderfully concise effects from their language. A proverb quoted by Oihenart, and translated by him thus: "A gentleman wishes good things for another gentleman" can be expressed in just three words: *Onak onari gorainzi*, literally "By-the-good to-the-good compliments."

Basque vocabulary is much more mixed than appears at first sight. Eskuara, rich in expressive suffixes that enable countless new words to be created by derivation, also (like German) uses compound words formed by simple juxtaposition; thus it has many means at its disposal to form neologisms. Nonetheless, these rarely manage to impose themselves definitively on the popular language—which, conversely, is amazingly prone to assimilate foreign words, usually giving them an unrecognizable twist in the process. Has one not recently seen a worthy peasant ingeniously baptize "the bus for services in the *department*" as a *porte-mantua*. This tendency drives purists to distraction, but nonetheless proves, in one sense, the vitality of a language that refuses to die but can adapt, for better or worse, to new concepts. This is even, we feel, the whole secret of its miraculous preservation. More annoying is the regrettable tendency to drop authentic words and replace them with a kind of pidgin based on French: why say *pentsamendu*, "thought," "opinion," from French "*pensée*," instead of "*uste*"; or *kitatu*, "to leave," "to quit," from French "*quitter*," instead of "*utzi*"? This kind of degradation should be sternly resisted.

Be that as it may, Basque has been borrowing words for a long time. According to philologists, over half the Basque vocabulary, that is 75 percent of simple words, are composed of words drawn from Latin and, later, from its derivatives: Gascon, Béarnais, Aragonese, Castilian, and French. Other languages seem not have been used in this way, though *andere*, "lady," and *maite*, "loved," seem to be Celtic and *zilhar*, "silver," apparently has a Germanic origin.

Certain words borrowed directly from the Romans some two thousand years ago have preserved traces of the authentic old Latin pronunciation, which demonstrates their distant origin: *bake*, *leg(u)e*, *erreg(u)e*, *laket* are just the same as *pacem*, *legem*, *regem*, *placet*.

Phonetic evidence enables us to date many other words from the period in which Romance languages were formed and the Basque Country was Christianized: *gurutze* comes from *crucem*, *zeru* from *coelum*, *gorphutz* from *corpus*, *arima* from *anima*. Many of these terms have a somewhat abstract meaning.

Actually, one of the characteristics that distinguish the irreducible residue of purely Basque words is the relative scarceness of words expressing general concepts. When they do exist, they are vague and imprecise: *gogo* expresses simultaneously thought, will, affection, desire, whim, and so on. Almost all trees and animals have native names, but the idea of tree is expressed as *arbola* and that of animal by *alimale*, whose origins are clear. On the other hand, Basque is full of concrete words, sometimes simple synonyms such as *gakho* (today “*gako*” —ed.) and *giltz*, “key,” *arkume* and *bildots*, “lamb,” *chahal* (today “*txahal*” —ed.) and *aratxe* (today “*aratxe*” —ed.), “calf,” but they often translate quite subtle nuances: *haran* and *ibar* apparently express a contrast between the high, narrow valley and the low, wider valley, while *hortz* and *hedoi* are the dark cloud and the white, light cloud respectively. *Zur* and *egur* are wood for building as opposed to wood for heating; *ur* and *itz* are flowing as opposed to stagnant water. Rather stranger seems the habit of calling *anaie* and *arriba* the brother and sister of a man, and *neba* and *ahizpa* the brother and sister of a woman. The (numerous) terms of kinship are also of great interest when it comes to any attempt at reconstructing the primitive forms of the social organization of the Vascons or their ancestors, but these linguistic traces are tricky to interpret and are the subject of continuing debate.

Basque numbering is both decimal and vigesimal. The names of the numbers do not at present have any meaning that might suggest any relationship with the habit of counting on one’s fingers. Ten is *hamar*, twenty is *hogoi* (or “*hoge*” —ed.), thirty is *hogoi eta hamar* (twenty and ten), forty is *berrogoi* (twice twenty; or “*berroge*” —ed.), and so on, up to one hundred, *ehun*. The word for thousand is taken from Latin; such a big number was not really used in prehistory.

The ancient Basques knew the colors white, black, yellow, and red, *churi* (today “*zuri*,” “*xuri*,” or “*txuri*” —ed.), *beltz*, *hori*, and *gorri*, but they apparently did not distinguish between compound colors—green, orange, and purple—whose names are recent borrowings. As for *urdin*, which now means “blue,” it must originally have meant “the color of water,” being probably derived from *ur*; in ancient times it was, rather, the equivalent of “gray” and was applied particularly to the color of the hair of people going gray.

The calendar demonstrates one remarkably archaic characteristic: for “month” one says *ilabete* (today “*hilabete*” —ed.), meaning “full moon” or “lunar month.” The word *ila*, indeed, is found in almost all the names of the months: *urtarila*, “January”; *otzaila*, “February”; *epaila*,

“March” (or “May” in some dialects), and so on. *Aste* means “week,” and as Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday are *astelehen*, *astearte*, and *asteazken*, that is beginning, middle, and end of the week, it has been suggested that the week originally had only three days. Thursday and Friday, *ortzegun* (or “*ostegun*” —ed.) and *ortzirale* (or “*ostiral*” —ed.), have the same root, with the general meaning of “celestial,” though it also means “thunder” in some dialects. Germanic languages all have, even these days, their day of thunder, probably based, as in Basque, on the *Jovis dies* (“day of Jupiter”) of the Romans.

As might be expected, the vocabulary relating to pastoral life is extremely abundant and nuanced. It seems to be several thousands of years older than most agricultural terms, where there is a predominance of Romance forms.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the wealth of Eskuara in imitative onomatopoeias: *karranka* is the squeaking of the wagon. The whinnying of a horse, and the merry howl of defiance of the Basque himself, is called *irrintzina*, and the sound of cowbells is *tzintzarrotzak*. The cricket probably owes its name *tirritta* (or “*txirrita*” —ed.) to its strident song. Visual images are often translated by expressively repeated sounds: *konkor*, “hunch-backed”; *zirtzil*, “rag”; *biribil*, “rounded” (which tends to be used ingeniously in the sense of bicycle). Onomatopoeias even define modes of action. Boiling can be expressed as *pil-pil* or *gal-gal*. When sowing seeds, you can spread them thinly, *bir-bir-bir*, or generously, *pur-pur-pur*. Work that is done carelessly and haphazardly is *kirri-marra*, and the only excuse for it is that it was cobbled together hastily, *tarrapatakan*.

Basque Toponymy

Although Basque is probably the oldest language in Europe, the only written documents that allow us to study the transformations that it has undergone do not go back—as we shall see—more than a thousand years. This is not much for a language. Luckily, to give us an idea of periods prior to that, we still have the inexhaustible mine of topographic names: names of regions, names of towns, villages, sites, and houses. All these place names preserve, incorporated into their composition, a host of words and suffixes that have evolved or fallen into disuse, and from which we can almost always discover the original meaning by checking it on the spot, as in a living dictionary. More ancient, for instance, than the current plural in *k* are the collective suffixes such as *eta*, *aga*, *egi*, expressing number, abundance, and excess: *harrieta* (today *arrieta* —ed.),

“the stones”; *liçarraga* (today *lizarraga* —ed.), “multitude of ash trees”; *otaegi*, “a place overrun by prickly broom.”

We can draw a distinction in place names between those that, probably no older than the time when the Vascons settled, around the sixth century of our era, have a very clear meaning, or at least, in spite of a few phonetic changes, an etymology that is quite easy to determine. The same does not apply to the very ancient Ibero-Aquitainian names that were probably maintained during the Roman occupation. Although they have a Basque feel to them, they cannot be interpreted with any certitude. This is the case with the names of provinces. In spite of appearances, it is no more satisfactory to explain Lapurdi by *lau-urdi*, “land of the four rivers,” than to see in it the word *laphur*, “thief” or, by extension, “pirate.” If Navarre came from *nava-erri*, “land of the plain,” it would be a particularly poor choice of name. In the name Zuberoa, there might be the root *zu*, which is used to form the names of woody vegetables, but it would be extremely unwise to add the adjective *bero*, “warm.” We are no more certain about the lands of Cize and Mixe, in Basque Garazi and Amikuse. The letter *a* preceding the latter must be the destinative of Romance languages that the Vascons incorporated without grasping its grammatical meaning; similarly, these days, their descendants have forged the pleonasm *alusinarat* for “to go to the factory.” The same detail is found in the name of Tardets, in Basque Atharratze. It would be pleasing if the name of the Baïgorry Valley came from *ibai gorri*, “red river,” since the Errobi (Nive) of Aldude (Aldudes) is often the color of ferrous oxide, but the old texts read only Baiguer or Bigur.

The names of conglomerations are even much less obscure: Sara means “copse” or “timberland”; Bidarte (Bidart) is “between the paths.” The original Basque form still needs to be sought; it is often altered or even entirely translated in the official designation: Ciboure (Ziburu) is actually *zubiburu*, “head of a bridge,” Larceveau (Larزابale) comes from *larrezabal*, “wide moor,” Troisvilles is the equivalent of Iruhiri, and so on. In the Middle Ages, many localities bore the name of the patron saint of their village preceded by *Don* (from the Latin *dominus*). Some have preserved this name: Donapaleu, or Saint-Palais (a deformation of Pelayo), and *Dohozti* (probably a syncope of Donestebiri), or Donoztiri (Saint-Esteben). Sometimes, the ancient name has survived even when the church has been rebuilt with a completely different name: so Saint Mary Magdalene is today the patron saint of the village of Donapaleu, Saint Vincent the patron saint of Saint-Michel of Garazi. One curious case is that of Saint-Jean-le-Vieux, Donazaharre, “old saint.” Here, the

name of the titular saint has been so contracted that it has practically disappeared. Saint-Pée-sur-Nivelle, in Basque Senpere, was previously Saint-Pée-d'Ibarren, "inside the valley," a descriptive term preserved only for the district of Ibarron. The names of districts are even more transparent: Zelhai (Celhay), "plateau"; Sorhueta, "the meadows"; Istilarte (Istilart), "between the ponds"; Lehenbizkai (Lehenbiscay), "first hillside." Many villages have a district some distance away, called *basa buru*, "wild or sylvan head." In Zuberoa, as we have seen, it is all the higher land that takes this name.

As for the countless place names and names of houses, we can generally classify them into four main categories—those indicating the nature of the soil, the vegetation, and the crops, either with a single word or with quantitative endings: *larrea*, "the moor"; *iratzea*, "the fern patch"; *amez-keta*, "place planted with Pyrenean oaks."

Then there are those formed out of two nouns, or one noun and an adjective. The most ancient do not have any article and the determinant precedes the determined: Oihanzelhay (today Oihanzelai —ed.), "wooded plateau"; Agorreka, "dried ravine"; Goroztarzu, "stony place planted with holly"; Buztingorri, "red clay"; and Larrun, "good pasture land," the name of the mountain that whimsical French spelling has transformed into La Rhune.

Then come those whose suffixes mark a relative position: Uhart, Urarte, "between the waters"; Ithur-bide (today Iturribide —ed.), "path to the fountain"; Hegoburu, "southern extremity"; Etchegoyen (today Etxegoien —ed.), "house above"; Elizabehere, "down from the church."

And finally there are those—more recent—made up from the name of a trade, a name, a surname, the name of an animal, and the locative suffixes *enea* or *baïta*, "in the house of" or "among," and the words *etche* (today *etxe* —ed.), *tegi*, *ola*: Harginenea, "at the mason's house"; Ahuntza-enea, "among the goats"; Apheçeteche (today Apezetxe —ed.) or Apeztegui (today Apeztegi —ed.), "the house of the priest"; Alechandra-baïta, "at Alexander's house"; Haroztegyu (today Aroztegi —ed.), "the place where the blacksmith lives"; Behola, "the shelter of the mares."

A detailed study of toponymy can enrich our understanding of Basque vocabulary considerably, but not everyone can interpret place names. A detailed knowledge of phonetics is necessary, too. The fad for facile etymologies has often done Basque a disservice.

The Oldest Basque Texts

Ancient Basque texts are both short and scarce before the sixteenth century. Before we say a few words about them, we need to eliminate the fakes. During the first half of the nineteenth century, it was believed that we possessed three epic songs in Eskuara: one contemporary with the Roman conquest, the other with the Punic Wars, and the third with the defeat of Charlemagne at Orreaga (Roncesvalles/Roncevaux). However, in 1866, Bladé was able to demonstrate the apocryphal nature of these poems for intrinsic reasons, a thesis that was later amply confirmed.

The *Song of the Cantabrians*, which Humboldt had revealed to the scholarly community in 1812, is a curious piece—a relatively ancient scholarly fabrication, since the original figures in the voluminous manuscript chronicle of Ibarguën-Cachopin, a sixteenth-century work conserved in Markina (Marquina) and acquired in 1920 by the Diputación of Bizkaia. The first verse:

leo, yl, lelo
lelo, yl, lelo
leloa çarac
yl leloa

has caused a lot of ink to flow, but it is merely a refrain without meaning, like “fa la la la, tra la.” It is found in other Basque poetry of various periods. The forger had twisted it a bit to serve as the pretext to an implausible fictional story designed to look like a commentary. The Basque word *lelo* has never meant anything other than “refrain”; this, after all, is the meaning given to it in this proverb of Oihenart: *Gueroa alferraren leloa*, “‘Later on’ is the layabout’s refrain.”

We will pass over the *Song of a Zuberoan from the Army of Hannibal*, which Chaho, in his *Histoire primitive des Euskariens-Basques* (1847), had refrained—and with good reason—from presenting other than in what appeared to be—a French translation. He framed it—to add to the verisimilitude—between two very well-known popular Basque stanzas—but these dated from the eighteenth century! The hoax miscarried.

The fake *Song of Altabiscar* had enjoyed a more dazzling and enduring success. In order to disabuse certain scholars, who should have been put on their guard by obvious anachronisms, the authors of the hoax themselves had to confess openly: they were the Baiones Garay de Montglave, an energetic literary adventurer, and his Basque collaborator Louis Duhalde, from Ezpeleta (Espelette). In 1835, the golden age of Romanti-

cism, the revelation of this cantilena, apparently earlier than the *Song of Roland*, seemed capable of explaining the origin of the epic legends (which people had imagined grew spontaneously). For lack of any other merit, the *Song of Altabiscar* did inspire Victor Hugo with a marvelous paraphrase:

*Le laboureur des monts, qui vit sous la ramée,
Est rentré chez lui, grave et calme, avec son chien.
Il a baisé sa femme au front et dit: C'est bien.
Il a lavé sa trompe et son arc aux fontaines,
Et les os des héros blanchissent dans les plaines.*

The plowman of the mountains, who lives under the Greenwood tree,
Went home, solemn and composed, with his dog.
He kissed his wife on her brow and said: All is well.
He washed his horn and his bow in the springs,
And the bones of heroes grow white in the plains.

This is a fine example of the transfiguration that genius can bring about in the most flat-footed rhapsody. But let us leave these imitators of Macpherson and return to Eskuara.

One of the first pieces of written evidence of the old language can be read in a Latin charter of Sanchez the Noble of Navarre (1054–1076) confirming the sanctuary of San Miguel de Excelsis in its estate: *In soto uno, qui dicitur a rusticis “aker çaltua,” et possumus dicere, de vero saltus hircorum*. Simple words, glossed toponymic expressions—such is the meager (but still valuable) spoils revealed by the archives over the next few centuries. We are far from the “epics” that had been claimed to exist!

The *Codex of Compostella* itself (1139) adds a mere fifteen or so terms to the Basque vocabulary. However, this is enough to demonstrate that Eskuara had undergone little in the way of transformation over eight centuries. It was a pilgrim to Santiago, the Rhineland knight Arnold von Harff, who in 1493 gathered a few Basque words and short phrases (which were actually rather clumsily transcribed). The chroniclers of feudal conflicts of the fifteenth century in Navarre and Gipuzkoa (Guipúzcoa) preserved several fragments of Basque songs relating to these obscure events. All that we ourselves can point to from the same period is a very widespread French song: *La mousse de Bisquaye* (where “mousse” from the Spanish *moza*, “maiden”); in it, every stanza ends with the words *Soaz, soaz ordonarekin*, “Go away, go away soon.” To which the impatient lover retorts, in the third stanza:

*Par mon serment vecy rage!
C'est ni françois ni latin;
Parlez un autre languaige,
Laissez votre bisquiayn.*

By my oath, what a rage!
That is neither French nor Latin;
Speak some other language,
Give up your Bizkaian.

In the sixteenth century the first printed texts appeared. In his book *De las cosas memorables de España*, published in Alcalá de Henares in 1530, Marineo Siculo inserts a whole list of words, verbs, and the number system up to a hundred in the Bizkaian dialect. Finally, let us salute Rabelais, that doyen of French Bascologists: in 1535, in chapter 5 of book 1 of *Gargantua*, he wrote the words *lagona edatera*, “come drink, friend!” But it was in chapter 9 of book 2 of *Pantagruel*, as published in 1542, that we can read an entire little speech in Basque, uttered by Panurge. This is a celebrated piece that has given translators no end of trouble, even though the general meaning is quite clear. Somewhat earlier is the delightful lover’s plaint of the ostler Perucho, in the tragicomedy (fifty acts!) called *La Tercera Celestina*, printed in Toledo in 1536. It is a very popular song, adorned with the refrain *lelo lirelo çaray leroba*, and it speaks of the woodpigeon and the sparrowhawk, just like the songs improvised by the Basques these days.

There is no point in quoting other brief fragments; in the year of grace 1545, with a Latin title, the Basque language would make its decisive entry into the world of letters.

Written Literature

It needed a poet, at that date right in the middle of the sixteenth century, to endeavor to print a book in the age-old language of a people who were barely accustomed to reading. And it was indeed a true poet, Bernard Dechepare, rector of Eiheralarre (Saint-Michel-le-Vieux) in Lower Navarre, who—with touching patriotic enthusiasm—gave the name *Linguae Vasconum Primitiae* to a short book of Basque poetry, the sole surviving example of which belongs to our Bibliothèque Nationale (recently recovered by Euskaltzaindia —ed.). Unfortunately, we know little—apart from what he himself has told us—about this attractive precursor, who was not afraid to mingle together the pious outpourings of a robust faith

in his poetic oeuvre, the love songs of his stormy youth, diatribes against his political enemies, and exhortations to his dear *heuskara* (Euskara in modern Basque—ed.) to rise to glory! But he was too early on the scene, and found few followers.

However, it is worth noting the Navarrese catechism of Sancius de Elso, apparently printed in Iruñea-Pamplona in 1561; no trace of it remains.

Only Isasti, in a 1625 manuscript that was not published until 1850, shows that he knew and valued Dechepare; his name seems to have been unknown to all other Bascophiles—even the most erudite—in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In our own day, admirable new editions have meant that this great ancestor has been paid the homage that he deserves.

The second known Basque book is completely different. This is the *Jesus Christ Gure Jaunaren Testamentu berria* by Liçarrague, published at the expense of, and on the orders of, Jeanne d'Albret in 1571. This is a considerable work from every point of view, in spite of the archaisms in it that these days make it somewhat difficult to read. Liçarrague also printed a Protestant calendar and catechism that are equally rare bibliographical items, but do not have the same literary importance.

Dechepare and Liçarrague: a pamphlet of fifty or so pages, and a substantial book of over five hundred, these two highly significant works fill the entire Basque-French sixteenth century by themselves. The difference between them is already a curious symbol of the general aspect that Basque literature was to maintain throughout its development. There were two currents. First, that of profane literature, as inaugurated by Dechepare, a rivulet that flowed only intermittently—just a few names would mark its path until our own time. In parallel, a torrent of religious works, which continued—albeit within the framework of Catholic doctrine—the tradition begun by the Huguenot Liçarrague. One cannot fail to admire the abundance of this pious production (of which, admittedly, the bulk comprises mere translations) if we remember above all that, in France, it was addressed to a readership of fewer than one hundred thousand Basques.

From the start of the seventeenth century onward, the Basque religious bibliography was enriched by the names of various versifiers—Joannes Etcheberri, Argaignarats, and the Jesuit Gazteluçar, all three from Ziburu as well as Harizmendi from Sara—and prose writers such as Haramburu, Arambillague, the translator of the *Imitation of Christ*,

Tartas and Belapeyre who used the Zuberoan dialect, Materre and Silvain Pouvreau, and so on. The latter two were, unusually enough, foreigners who had learned Basque. The second, a priest from the diocese of Bourges, had been brought to our part of the world by Saint-Cyran as his secretary: he even became a Bascologist of the first order. He was for a while a priest at Bidarte. Apart from the three works of devotion in Basque that he had printed in Paris, he left many manuscripts, the main one of which is a Basque dictionary of the greatest value.

The name that far outshines that of all these theologians, moralists, and preachers is that of Pedro de Axular, a native of Urdazubi (Urdax) in Navarre (1556–1644), but a priest of Sara in Lapurdi, who gave the title of *Guero*, that is “*After*,” to a substantial treatise against delays in conversion. In spite of the subject, and in spite of the somewhat “Renaissance” erudition that weighs it down, this is a truly original work, in places full of verve and flavor. As the priest Fr. Lafitte, one of our best current connoisseurs of Basque literature, has written: “Axular is an altogether Basque figure, in his adaptation to the manners of the region, wit, syntax, and the torrential wealth of his vocabulary. He is the first who knew how to elevate Basque to a conceptual level it had never reached before—without torturing, forcing, or making faces at it.”

In the eighteenth century, none of the successors of this great classic came close to him. This was a period of decline, especially evident given that, at just the same time, Basque religious literature was rising to new heights on the Spanish side of the Pyrenees. The main names to be mentioned from our French side are those of Chourio from Ascain (without doubt a descendent of the notorious agitator from Lapurdi during the reign of Louis XIV), Haraneder, Larreguy, the translator of the Bible of Royaumont, and Baratciart.

The nineteenth century would see the spread of books of piety, already making clear progress before the Revolution. It was not just that books were coming onto the market in increasing numbers: they were being reprinted. The taste for devout literature was starting to fade. The best ecclesiastical prose writers in this period were Duhalde, Lapitze, Joannateguy, Diharassarry, Inchauspé, and, in particular, Arbelbide. In their hands, Eskuara, naturally resistant to the expression of metaphysical concepts, grew amazingly supple. At the request of Prince Louis-Lucien Bonaparte, Captain Duvoisin translated the whole of the Bible. Other partial translations—some of them, in fact, Protestant—also appeared. The canon Adema wrote some very fine canticles. For more than twenty

years the abbot Landerretche would translate the *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*. With these last names, we are in fact practically in the twentieth century, and we prefer not to talk about our contemporaries: it is still too early.

Let us return to the secular branch of literature. Over a century after Dechepare we come across the name of the Zuberoan Arnaud d'Oihenart. He was the first historian and the first folklorist of the Basque Country thanks to his very learned *Notitia Utriusque Vasconiae* and his collection *Basque Proverbs*, but in addition he himself produced original work in Basque when in 1657 he published several elegies that he had composed in his youth. These were hardly more than imitations of short-lived classic poetry, not exempt from a certain preciousness—but the purity of language and the concision of style demonstrate, as Oihenart wished, the literary possibilities of Eskuara.

We should also briefly mention three linguistic curiosities: *L'Interprect*, the first manual of French-Spanish-Basque conversation, the work of a certain Voltoire, printed at Lyon in 1620. Until the middle of the eighteenth century, it was reprinted several times in Baiona, with revisions, under the title of *Thrésor des trois langues*.

In 1632, a short travel tract was published in Rouen, under the title *Les voyages aventureux du capitaine Martin de Hoyarsabal, habitant de Çubiburu*. Its Basque translation, the work of a certain Piarres Detcheverry, was published in Baiona, though not until 1677. There is another utilitarian book, though it remained in manuscript form: a collection of recipes, dated 1692, by the veterinarian from Donibane Lohizune (Saint-Jean-de-Luz), Mongongo Dassança.

It is greatly to be regretted that apart from a short work entitled *Laurdiri* (1718), the works of the doctor Johannes d'Etcheberri, from Sara (1668–1749), have remained unpublished for lack of funds. An attempt was made to interest the Bilçar (Biltzar) of Lapurdi in the project, but it had—quite wrongly—turned a deaf ear. They were lost for a long time and then found and magisterially published by Don Julio de Urquijo in 1908. Etcheberri appears to have been a man of broad capabilities. Apart from his works as a grammarian and lexicographer, he had written a magnificent apology for the Basque language entitled *Eskuararen hatsapenak*, in which he showed his powers as a writer, the equal of the great Axular, the master of sacred literature.

From the first half of the nineteenth century, there was an increase in the quantity and diversity of publications, if not (at least to begin with)

in their quality. Together with practical works on, for example, agriculture, or political pamphlets, literature, properly speaking is represented by translations of the *Fables* of La Fontaine: that by Goyetche into Lapurdian, and that by Archu into Zuberoan. Abbot Hiribarren published his long poem *Eskaldunak* in 1853—this was valued more for its anecdotal and documentary aspects than for its lyrical inspiration. Real poetry was found elsewhere, in the widely known work of a few songwriters to whom we shall return later. In prose, the *Télémaque* translated by Captain Duvoisin has not been published, but the collective translation of the novel by Dasconaguerre, *Les Echos du Pas de Roland*, appeared in 1870 under the title of *Atheka gaitzeko oiharzunak*; Vinson devoted a long section to its genesis in his *Bibliographie de la Langue basque*. The masterpiece of the nineteenth century would no doubt remain *Piarres Adame*, a short rustic novel, an original work by Captain Elissamburu, from Sara.

It should be remembered that Basque almanacs started to appear in 1848. In the sphere of the weekly press, the only one to succeed in the Basque Country was *Eskualduna*, launched in 1887. This newspaper, which was given a new lease on life after the German occupation under the title *Herria* (still alive and kicking and a great favorite among the Basques of France), contributed greatly to reading and writing in the old language. In its columns the newspaper revealed an entire new generation of remarkable writers who, without falling into excessive neologism, successfully managed to expand their means of expression. From 1921, another publication, the review *Gure Herria*, offered Basque writers, always in increasing numbers, a framework for more long-term original works; it greatly served the cause of Basque literature, which is now more flourishing than ever before. We should not, however, hide the fact that it has not hitherto brought forth the equivalent of a Mistral.

We have not yet said anything about a highly interesting series of productions, both ancient and contemporary: the texts of Zuberoan *pastorales*. These plays, popular works that were not meant to be published, differ from ordinary folklore in that they are neither anonymous, nor transmitted by oral tradition. Some two hundred extremely long manuscripts of these works are known, the oldest of which, *Joan of Arc*, is written on paper with a 1723 watermark. But there is no doubt that many of these texts are often revised copies, whose lost origins could go back to the fifteenth century. The *pastorales*, even the recent ones, such as the one entitled *Guillaume II*, are always written in “verses” that, at

the whim of the transcriber, can appear as a brief quatrain, or a long distich, types of free verse lacking any exact metrical scheme but with a strong use of rhythm and assonance. Every verse is preceded by the word *mintza*, “he speaks,” or its abbreviation, following the characteristic medieval custom. Hérelle, who has studied the fine details of Basque drama, has shown how this original prosody first came from liturgical verses; the first playwrights or *pastoraliers*, who were probably priests and clerics, borrowed their dramatic recitative from church songs. Only the techniques of composition and direction—to which we shall return below, when we describe the performances themselves—can give a vivid idea of the “Mysteries” of the Middle Ages, now that all other rural theaters have disappeared.



The repertoire of *pastorales* is divided into seven cycles: Old Testament, New Testament, the lives of the saints, classical antiquity, Chansons de Geste, romances, and history. Authors, or simply adaptors and transcribers of these “*tragédies*,” the *pastoraliers* never failed to put their names on their manuscripts, and often their trade and the dates of the performances they organized as well. Thus we know of some seventy of these modest and original playwrights since the eighteenth century, almost all of them farmers or artisans, some belonging to the same family—the Saffores, for example, or the Heguiaphals.

The texts of the stories that they are content to put into dialogues, without bothering about unity of place or unity of time, are in general short, popularized booklets that used to be distributed in the countryside by peddlers. From this raw material, the *pastoraliers* were not interested in tracing psychological complexities. On the contrary, each of the roles is outlined as rigidly as a figure in a stained glass window. And it is indeed a glowing medieval window of which we are reminded by these hieratic stage personages, the “good” and the “bad,” with their immutable characters. Once this conception is accepted, it lacks neither force nor grandeur.

The language of the dramatic manuscripts is not greatly esteemed by Basque speakers, who tend to pride themselves on their purism. Admittedly, the innocent pedantry of most of the *pastoraliers*, their desire to sway their audience by an out-of-the-ordinary grandiloquence, inclines them to exaggerate the unfortunate tendency of the Zuberoan dialect to allow itself to be contaminated by an influx of French words. Spanish and Béarnais can also be found in the plays, but this is always done with a burlesque intention. The Basque is of better quality, more direct and lively in the comic repertory, which includes three or four tragicomedies for carnival time and some twenty short and anarchic farces written in a very realist, and indeed risqué style, although they follow the same traditional procedures and the same moralizing intentions as the *pastorales* with their tragic subjects.

The attempts made to modernize this rustic theater have been quite damaging. It is not possible to breathe new life into relics. It is better to strike out on new paths. This is what happens in the remarkable essays in Basque-language lyrical drama in verse, written by Decrept and set to music by Charles Colin. The success of *Maitena* (1909) did not give rise to many imitators. *Perkain*, taken from a play by Pierre Harispe, was played at the Opéra de Paris (1934)—but this was (and with good reason) to a French libretto. Contemporary Basque theater has mainly led to sig-

nificant productions on the Spanish side of the frontier. On our side, it has long been part of the mere guild comedy, but more ambitious works are starting to flourish; among these pioneers of dramatic art, the names of Monzon and Larzabal are worth mentioning.

Baiones Gascon

It is not out of place, even in a book on the Basques, to mention the Gascon language, which for many centuries was the official language in our part of the world. Without maintaining as much robust vitality as Eskuara, it remains popular in Baiona and the surrounding area. In bygone days, it extended farther. Its use in administrative documents even influenced the toponymy of certain Basque localities. For example, right in the middle of Lower Navarre, people say Ostabat and Lantabat (*bat* means “vale” in Gascon) rather than Ostibarre (Izura in current Basque —ed.) and Landibarre. Even more curious is the way it spread along the coasts of the Gulf of Biscay. From the Middle Ages onward, Gascon colonies appear to have swarmed along the seafront to Hondarribia (Fuentarabía), Pasaia (Pasajes), Donostia-San Sebastián (where their language was still enjoying a fitful life less than a century ago), and perhaps even farther, if it is true that the port of Bayona in Galicia owes its distant origin to emigrants from the banks of the Aturri (Adour).

On the evidence of witnesses at a witchcraft trial in 1611 in Hondarribia, the Devil resorted to Gascon to summon the witches of Donostia-San Sebastián and Pasaia to the Sabbath, and then used Basque to summon those of Irun and Hendaia (Hendaye)!

The Baiones dialect, which has its own peculiarities of phonetics and vocabulary, is (like its neighbor Béarnais) part of the vast group of Langue d’Oc (Occitan —ed.) languages covering an area between the Pyrenees, the Atlantic, and the Garonne. Montaigne (a good judge of these things, being a co-lord of Lahontan in Chalosse) wrote: “There is above us, toward the mountains, a Gascon which I find singularly attractive, dry, brief, weighty, and, in truth, a male and military language more than any that I know; it is sinewy, powerful and pertinent where French is gracious, delicate, and abundant.”

In Baiona, the especially vivid, imagistic genius of the dialect has given birth to and fostered—albeit rather belatedly—a picturesque literature of versifiers and sensitive songsters, as cheerful as they are witty. The masterpiece here, from the point of language as well as of typography, is the book of *Fables Causides* by La Fontaine. This translation, full

of savor, is attributed to a certain Darretche (of whom we know nothing) and was published in a magnificent edition in 1776, with a double frontispiece engraved by Moreau the Younger, by the publishing house of Fauvet-Duhard, a well-known Baiones printer. In the eighteenth century we also find Lesca (1730–1808), the author of the celebrated song *Lous Tilholès*; in the nineteenth, Deldreuil, Lagravère, Jusin Larrebat, and Isidore Salles have left charming works whose tenderness and spirit brings back to life for us the familiar images of old Baiona and its inhabitants. The names of these attractive local poets are unlikely to be forgotten, thanks to the zeal and talent of their current successors grouped in a very active Académie Gascoune.

Oral Literature — Popular Songs — Proverbs and Sayings — Folktales and Legends

Oral Literature

Whether religious or secular, written Basque literature has—at least hitherto—drawn relatively little of its inspiration from the region itself. The case of oral literature is quite different: a reflection of the customs of everyday life, a direct expression of popular mentality and an old traditional culture. Although they started their task somewhat belatedly, folklorists have already garnered a rich harvest from the Basque Country. They will still be able to find new material, since this literature, far from appearing moribund, is not limited to being preserved and transmitted by the latest minds, still unburdened by the ramblings of the press and the radio; on the contrary, in our view it is in many respects a continual creation.

As long as there are still peasants to sing their hearts out in lively taverns on rainy Sunday afternoons, old men sitting *supazter chokoan*, “at the fireside,” to tell the children folktales, sayings, and riddles, and whole families and their neighbors to gather on winter evenings to carry out the *arho churitzea*, the “stripping of the maize,” this production of the Basque spirit will continue to live; for while the basis of folklore is eternal, its details are constantly being renewed, like life itself.

So let us say a few words about poetry (*koblak*), sayings (*zahar-hitzak*), riddles (*papaitak*), and folktales and legends (*ichtorio-michterioak*).

Popular Songs

Through its limpid sonorities, its clearly detached syllables, its case endings and its suffixes of derivation that create rich assonances, the Basque

language is a good language for versification that is not particularly rigorous or subject to the demands of a metrical scheme, since it is usually limited to modeling its rhythm on that of a musical melody. This can be a rather nondescript, though often delightful tune that the singer himself considers to be quite subordinate to the words. In the Basque Country, everyone sings, to a greater or lesser extent, but only those who compose *kobla* enjoy any prestige. However, there are quite a number of these *bertsulari* (or *bertsolari* —ed.) or *koblakari*, creators of verses or stanzas, gifted with such ease of composition that, whenever they meet, they enjoy teasing each other, firing off quatrains like a pelota ball without a second's hesitation.

Poetic tournaments are a particularly Basque spectacle: in bygone days it was people such as Mattin, from Senpere (Saint-Pée), Larralde, from Luhuso (Louhossoa), and Larramendi, from Eihalarre (Saint-Michel); these days, their successors constitute a talented circle of new improvisers.

They are presented, point-blank, with a subject for debate: the man who stays at home and the emigrant, the life of the sailor compared to that of the plowman, celibacy and marriage, pimento and saccharine, and so on. On these (often desperately insipid) themes, it is marvelous to watch them assailing an audience with their verve and ingenuity for hours at a stretch; and it is just as marvelous to see how much the public enjoys this display. However, it has to be admitted that, in these almost professional jousts, humor and the witty repartee hold a higher place than pure poetry does. For the latter to come into being, one needs a little more leisure, as well as the emotion of a moment, the tender or mocking inspiration aroused by a personal or collective event. Even when this is not much in evidence, it can be said that every Basque song was originally a piece of occasional verse, from those improvised by the drunkard staggering home, the lover thwarted by his beloved's parents, the man who bet on the winning side in a memorable game of pelota, or even the malicious verses that, in the course of a mock serenade, disclose to all and sundry the ups and downs of some village scandal.

Every aspect of local, daily life flows to the surface in this inexhaustible repertoire. Three quarters of it is almost immediately scattered to the winds, but the best survived for a long time, repeated, maintained, sometimes distorted, lengthened, filled out in countless different ways, more rarely fixed in faded handwriting on some old notebook passed from hand to hand. History itself finds an echo here: it is in songs composed against the constitutional priests that we can catch a glimpse of

the face of the Revolution in certain villages of Lapurdi (Labourd). The Carlist Wars enabled endless *berso-berri* or “new verses” to flourish even in our part of the world—for this was the name given to the loose sheets of printed paper that appeared at the start of the nineteenth century. After all, it was one of these poems, the work of the romantic bard from Gipuzkoa (Guipúzcoa), Iparraguire, that became the national anthem of the Basques, “*Gernikako arbola*.”

To what extent did certain songs, still on every lip, go back to a distant past? A great Basque scholar has managed to shed light on this question. Guided by slim but clear evidence, Jean de Jaurgain did manage to identify, in Zuberoa (Soule) itself, the authentic heroes of several laments that might have been thought to be legendary: “*Maitia nun zira . . .*” seems to recall the marriage (long countered by paternal opposition) of the noble lady Jeanne d’Undurein, from Hauze (Haux), in 1727. “*Urzo lüma gris gaichua . . .*” is the story of an amorous misfortune suffered by a certain Jean-Pierre de Sarry-Troisvilles, priest of Bithiriña (Beyrie), who died in 1768 and was buried under the porch of the church of Barkoxe (Barcus), where his epitaph can still be read. “*Goizian goizik jeiki munduzun ezkuntu nintzan goizian . . .*” as we hear in the rather strange story of Gabrielle de Lohiteguy, a lady of Zaro (Çaro), whose husband died of poisoning on the very day of his wedding, July 8, 1633. The song insinuates that she refused to leave his corpse for seven years!

The admirable “*Atharratzen jauregian bi zitroin doratu . . .*” may have been changed by the replacement of the baron Charles de Luxe by an imaginary king of Hungary, but it refers to the second marriage of the lord of Atharratze (Tardets), in 1584, with Marie de Jaurgain, from Ozaze (Ossas), thirty-two years younger than her groom. One of the last lines in the song alludes very clearly to the way this ill-matched couple was exiled to Spanish Navarre, when, in 1587, Jean de Belzunce returned to take by storm the royal castle of Maule (Mauléon) that the couple were occupying.

But the oldest and also most moving of these plaints is that of “*Berteretch*,” (today “*Bereteretxeren khantoria*” —ed.) an episode—as we said above—of the civil wars in Navarre between 1434 and 1449. Even translated, this work, five centuries old, is not lacking—in its rather enigmatic concision—in authentic epic grandeur. Let us hear some of it:

The alder has no pith
 Nor the cheese any bones.
 I did not think that noblemen told lies.

The Valley of Andoce,
Oh what a long valley!
Though weaponless three times it has pierced my heart.

Berteretch from his bed murmurs
To the servant girl,
“Go and see if there are any men in sight.”

Straightaway the servant girl told him what,
She had seen:
Three dozen men coming and going from one door to the other.

From his window Berteretch
Greets his lordship the count:
He offers him a hundred cows and their bull.

His lordship the count spoke
Like a traitor:
“Berteretch, come to the door, you shall return forthwith.

“Mother, give me my shirt,
Perhaps the one I shall never cast off.
Those who live will remember the dawn of Easter!”

Oh, the haste of Mari-Santz
As she sped past Bostmendieta!
Dragging herself on her two knees she entered the house of Bustanoby
at Lacarry.

“Young master Bustanoby,
My beloved brother,
Without your aid, my son is lost.”

“My sister, be silent.
I beg you, do not weep.
If your son is alive, he has gone to Maule.”

Oh, the haste of Mari-Santz,
To the door of his lordship the count!
“Alas, my lord, where have you all hidden my gallant son?”

Have you any other sons
 Apart from Berteretch?
 He lies dead over by Espeldoy; you who live, go and tend him.”

The people in the house of Espeldoy,
 Ah! People of little understanding
 Who had a dead man so near but knew nothing of it!

The daughter of Espeldoy
 Whose name is Marguerite,
 Gathers up the blood of Berteretch in hand fulls.

The linens of Espeldoy,
 Ah, what fine linens to be washed!
 The shirts of Berteretch—they say there are three dozen . . .

The old poet, who is still able to touch us with this dramatic tale, remained anonymous like all his successors. Only from the start of the nineteenth century onward do we know the names of the Basques who distinguished themselves in the art of poetry, such as: the customs official Oxalde of Bidarraï (Bidarray), the shoemaker Dibarrart of Baigorri (Baïgorry), and the captain Elissamburu of Sara (Sare). The latter was a cultivated man but managed, with unusual ease, to express in remarkably natural language everyday poetry and the most intimate feelings of the Basque soul. Everyone in the Basque Country knows *Nere Etchea*:

<i>Ikhusten duzu goizean</i>	Do you see, in the morning,
<i>Argia asten denean</i>	At the first light of dawn
<i>Menditto baten gainean</i>	At the summit of a hill
<i>Etche ttikitto aintzin churi bat</i>	A small house with a white façade
<i>Lau haitz handiren artean?</i>	In the midst of four great oak trees?
<i>Ithurrito bat aldean,</i>	A little fountain to the side,
<i>Chakhur churi bat athean</i>	A white dog in the doorway,
<i>Han bizi naiz ni bakean.</i>	That's where I dwell in peace.

The mordant and despairing work of Pierre Topet Etchahoun of Barkoxe (1786–1862) is completely different; thanks to its bitter irony shot through with profound sensibility it makes more of an impact than the writings of his colleagues. This Bohemian, an unhappy child, a thwarted lover, a cuckolded husband, a criminal out of jealousy, denied and ruined by his own family—an unwitting follower of Villon—sang with an accent that belongs to him alone with the bitterness and spite

of his sad life. His many pitiless songs have been only partly collected as part of the oral tradition, as his family quite shamelessly burned all his manuscripts after his death.

The Basques' poetic repertoire is composed of a great number of lullabies and nursery rhymes, a mere handful of songs for different trades, and countless love songs and satires. Finally, a few songs of religious and moral inspiration seem to be in a less directly popular vein. One interesting category from a folkloric point of view—one that has its own flavor—is that of the *aubades* or “daybreak songs,” a tradition that has not been entirely lost. This genre is still performed in Donibane Lohizune (Saint-Jean-de-Luz), Ziburu (Ciboure), and Urruña (Urrugne) during the nights of Christmas and New Year's Eve; in Larraine (Larrau) in Zuberoa on the last Saturday in January; and in many other villages for Candlemas. The theme is always developed in a similar way. There are a few traditional season's greetings, such as:

<i>Dios te salbe: ongi ethorri.</i>	God save you: welcome.
<i>Gabon Jainkoak digula eta</i>	May God grant us good night and
<i>Urte onean sar gaizela.</i>	Grant us a good year.

Then, extravagant compliments are paid: the mistress of this house is sitting on a silver seat, the master has a golden mustache, when he speaks to the king he keeps his hat on his head, and so on. The door is not always opened quickly; then, the poem voices an ironic insistence:

<i>Emango baduzu, emazu;</i>	Give, if you intend to give;
<i>Edo bertzenaz errazu</i>	Or if not, say so.
<i>Etche huntako gazitejitan</i>	In the food cupboards of this house
<i>Saguak umiak egitentu</i>	The mice rear their young.

If misers turn a deaf ear to this sly allusion, the stanzas change tone, becoming increasingly Rabelaisian. If, on the other hand, they are met with a hospitable welcome, gratitude can be nicely expressed; the good “woman of the house” (*etcheko-andere*; in standardized Basque, *etxeakoandre* —ed.) hears that she will enter heaven escorted by twelve angels!

We should also note, in the field of improvised humor, a familiar form of rhymed and rhythmic dialogue that is very much in favor with Zuberoan shepherds: the *chikito* (or *xikito* —ed.) consists of a cordial Homeric exchange of insults, which grow in malice. Here is a sample—

one of the less virulent (we are quoting the translation of our friend the abbot Lafitte):

On the apple-tree, a pretty apple;
 On the rose-tree, a flowering branch;
 On your mouth, a thousand stupidities,
 Chikito!

To this, the adversary retorts without losing his smile:

For a nice horse, a nice stroke;
 For sensible folk, words of wisdom;
 My stupidities addressed to you,
 Chikito!

Are there any characteristic particularities about the form of Basque songs, from the literary point of view? It would not be easy to make this claim in an area where individualism is the rule. However, among the usual techniques of our popular poets, a few dominant trends can be pointed out. First, brevity is really not their thing. Only lullabies and nursery rhymes are restricted to two or three stanzas. In every other case, there may be extreme concision in the expression of detail, but none in the development of the theme. This is often lengthened at whim from stanza to stanza, without any great regard for overall composition. The absence of any refrain is noteworthy; it appears only in the most recent creations, and even here it is rather rare. There is a very frequent use of dialogue, especially when it is a matter of love songs or satires. The improviser likes to get his characters to talk themselves, as much as he likes using indirect narrative. The two techniques are closely interwoven.

The language of the *koblakari*, of course, often uses unusual comparisons—flowers, birds, stars are all too often roped in—but next to these conventional and insipid features the real, concrete, sometimes almost brutal image suddenly slips in and assumes all the more prominence. At the end of the rather bleating romance, “*Urzo churia errazu . . .*,” the lover, addressing his lady, declares to her without beating around the bush: “The woodpigeon is beautiful in the sky, and she is even more beautiful on the table”—an allusion whose naïve raciness heightens, quite charmingly, the rest of the piece.

What strikes us as more original is the frequent juxtaposition within one stanza of an impression taken from nature—a brief tableau that creates an atmosphere—and an almost independent reflection that stands

out against the transparent background of the image. Just as in the most quintessential symbolist poets, the comparison is here barely stated, being often merely suggested:

<i>Mertchikaren loriaren ederra</i>	The peach whose flower is so lovely
<i>Barnean du hezurra gogorra.</i>	Has a very hard stone inside.
<i>Maitatu dut izanen ez dudana</i>	I have loved what I will not have;
<i>Horrek baitaut bihotzean pena.</i>	This is what makes me heartsick.

Or, in a rather more deliberate vein:

<i>Othea lili denean</i>	When the broom is in flower
<i>Choria haren gainean</i>	The bird settles on it.
<i>Hura joaiten da airean</i>	He flies through the air,
<i>Berak plazer duenian:</i>	Whenever he wishes:
<i>Zur' et' ene amodioa</i>	Our love, yours and mine
<i>Hola dabila munduan.</i>	Walks the same way through the world.

The relation is even more impalpable in the following stanza:

<i>Mendian zoinen eder</i>	In the mountain how lovely
<i>Epher zango gorri</i>	Is the partridge with red claws.
<i>Ene maiteak ere</i>	My beloved too
<i>Bertzeak iduri . . .</i>	Resembles the others.

And in these four lines of a lullaby that contain an entire landscape:

<i>Itsasoetan laño dago</i>	On the sea the fog extends
<i>Baionako barraraino</i>	As far as the sandbar of Baiona.
<i>Nik zu zaitut maitiago</i>	I love you much more
<i>Choriak beren umeak baño</i>	Than the birds love their young.

Such evocations (which are far from exceptional), when isolated from a somewhat lackluster context, attain, by their very sobriety, the status of the most authentic poetry.

Admittedly, melody adds an exquisite spell to the words. However, it only rarely offers an outline, a musical coloration that reflects the actual meaning of the words. This stems from the fact that most songwriters improvise *aire zahar batean kantore berria*, “a new song on an old tune.” Chance alone sometimes brings together words and notes that reinforce each other’s expressiveness; more often, the lack of fit between them is all too evident.

Basque music, long the object of rather imprecise evaluations, is now starting to be properly known. The music of dances—lively and rhythmic, but not very original—draws its main charm from the rustic instruments that play it. It has nothing in common with the slow melody, joyfully serene or peacefully contemplative, of Basque songs.

The $5/8$ rhythm, called *zortziko*, was until not long ago thought to be the most typical, but it actually seems to be quite recent. Just a few examples are known from the eighteenth century, but it was mainly in the nineteenth century (and almost solely in the Basque territories of Spain) that the *zortziko*—of which “*Gernikako arbola*” is a good example—developed with the fertility of a parasitic plant. In spite of the vogue it has enjoyed, it has luckily not stifled older and more fundamental tendencies. The rhythm of real Basque songs is in particular characterized by a relatively unaccented metrical scheme. The supple, plastic, and bold musical phrase develops outside the frame of any regular cadence. It can hardly ever be faithfully taken down in musical notes, unless the beat is frequently modified in the course of one and the same stanza.

Like the dream figures in the *Fêtes galantes* of Verlaine, the Basques express themselves,

. . . By singing in the minor mode
Love victorious and the opportune life.

The major scales are not completely absent from Basque songs, but they occupy only a secondary place in them. The melody rises or falls within rather narrow limits that rarely extend beyond an octave, sometimes less. The imprecise tonality sometimes floats, rather attractively, between tone and semitone. According to our friend R. Gallop, the use of this quarter tone, a characteristic of Basque song, “seems to stem from an unconscious hesitation between ancient church modes and modern tonality.”

It is indeed doubtful whether Basque music owes much to plainchant. Some melodies—the most archaic—still belong clearly to the ancient Gregorian modes; others constitute a sort of transition between plainsong and diatonic music; however, most of it is composed in modern scales. So it is more in the actual style of singing that the persistent influence of medieval ecclesiastical music is seen. Basque songs take quite diverse forms, from the mere repetition of a single motif to the interweaving of many different motifs. Nonetheless, the type that is normally the most frequent corresponds to the ternary form: a first musical idea is repeated

twice, then one phrase, sometimes rising to a higher register, sometimes contrasting by a difference of rhythm or tonality, breaks the monotony of the theme; the initial motif then makes a final appearance.

There has been copious discussion of the musical borrowings of the Basque song, but this is an area full of surprises. Many over-hasty and superficial judgments have already had to be revised. The only certain thing is that the Basques—who probably invented a good number of their melodies by themselves—adopted the music of other countries only when it was in harmony with their own temperament. It is quite remarkable that they had no sustained relations with Spanish and Hispano-Moorish music. Quite the contrary: there is a kinship of tendency between the songs of the Basques and those of Celtic and Nordic peoples—Bretons, Flemish, Anglo-Saxons—with whom they had come into contact with in the past. French song, that of the eighteenth century in particular, naturally left several clear traces in our music. However, whatever the significance and the nature of such borrowings, it is certain that they have been particularly reshaped and marked by the personalities of the singers and their traditional tastes, the accumulated legacies of different periods. The Basque soul, perhaps better than in any other domain, has depicted itself at its fullest in them.

Proverbs and Sayings

Proverbs and sayings constitute a more down-to-earth domain of Basque folklore. It is also the one that was explored first. Already, towards the end of the sixteenth century, the Gipuzkoan historian Garibay compiled a collection of these adages, and the same scholar is said to have been responsible for another very valuable collection, published anonymously in Iruñea-Pamplona in 1596. The only known copy of this short book came, by an unknown route, to the library of the Landgrave of Hesse in Darmstadt. In the Basque Country, three Zuberoans were the first to give themselves over to paremiology. The manuscript of proverbs by Bertrand de Sauguis dates from 1600. In his *Tablettes*, a huge compilation written around 1615 and unpublished, noted some fifty or so proverbs in his turn. Arnauld d'Oihenart far outstripped his predecessors with a volume published in Paris in 1657, containing no fewer than 537 adages, to which he subsequently added a supplement of 170 further sayings. But this did not stop the Bascophiles of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries from gathering rich harvests. *Zahar hitzak, zuhur hitzak*, “old words, wise words,” as the Basques themselves still like to put it.

Unfortunately, Basque proverbs are no exception to the rule that the wisdom of nations is more or less international. The patient, scholarly research of Don Julio de Urquijo has brought out this fact: there are few Basque adages that are not also found in other languages. So their content (quite prosaic, often with an edge of jovial cynicism) is less revealing than their form (concise, and almost always rhymed) is pleasing. One example is this saying—attributed to the Chevalier de Béla, but widespread throughout the Basque Country—in which a somewhat disabused and fatalistic philosopher expresses himself in lapidary style:

<i>Lehen hala</i>	Formerly like this,
<i>Orai hola</i>	Now like that,
<i>Gero ez jakin nola . . .</i>	Afterward, we know not how . . .

In this book we have quoted enough Basque proverbs for it to be superfluous to dwell on it. Still, there is some interest in seeing, in the light of these sayings, how the Basques represent themselves in opposition to other peoples, and how they maliciously depict themselves to each other.

As for the others, they are short and sweet:

<i>Atzerri</i>	Land of foreigners,
<i>Otzerri</i>	Land of wolves!

And another even less flattering adage states that “a fish and a foreigner smell bad after three days and should be chucked out.” As for themselves, what they affirm above all is their faith: *eskualdun fededun*, “Who speaks Basque is a believer.” And what they enjoy bringing out is their physical and moral demeanor:

<i>Bethi aintzina</i>	Always onward,
<i>Zuzen zuzena</i>	Straight onward,
<i>Dabil Eskualduna.</i>	Marches the Basque.

But the Basques are extremely particular. From village to village, their narrow-mindedness inspires in them mocking remarks that become and remain proverbial. There is no locality whose inhabitants lack their traditional nickname, either physical or moral. So they say:

Zoko-moko, Azkaingo, “nooks and crannies of Azkaine [Ascaín].”—*Sara, astia*, “Sara, land of leisure.”—*Motto zikhin Ziburuko*, “dirty headscarves of Ziburu.”—*Sempertarrak, belhaun buru handiak*,

“People of Senpere, big kneecaps.”—*Heletarrak, saindu mokborrak*,
 “People of Heleta [Hélette], sullen saints.”—*Obore nahi, Urruñako*,
 “Desirous of the honors of Urruña.” And so on.

Some of these sayings can be really old, as is shown by this one, found in Zuberoa: *Hauzetarrak, Agaramuntes ürgüllütziak*, “People of Hauze, proud Agramontais,” which without the slightest doubt goes back to the feudal wars of the fifteenth century.

One last category of proverbs, a fruit of local observation, comprises those that—with a certain accuracy—are used to predict the weather, to characterize the relations between the seasons and the climate of the Basque Country. Here we find an entire rustic meteorology, which is not often found wanting:

<i>Goiz gorriak dakarke uri</i>	The red morning brings rain,
<i>Arrats gorriak eguraldi.</i>	The red evening brings fine weather.

<i>Goiz ortzadar, arrats ithurri</i>	Morning rainbow, evening fountain.
<i>Hur urthe, negu hotz.</i>	Year of hazelnuts, cold winter.

Other sayings include:

<i>Ganderailuz bero</i>	Warm Candlemas,
<i>Negua Pazkoz gero.</i>	Winter after Easter.

<i>Mayatz hotz, urthe botz.</i>	Cold May, a bright year.
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<i>Abendoan, elhurra burdinez</i>	In December, the snow is of iron,
<i>Urharrilan, altzairuz</i>	In January of steel,
<i>Otsailean, surez,</i>	In February of wood,
<i>Martchoan, urez.</i>	In March, of water.

<i>Jon done Justik</i>	Saint Just (August 6)
<i>Hegalak busti.</i>	Has wet wings.

<i>San Simon eta Judaetan</i>	At Saint Simon and Saint Jude’s
<i>Ontziak ankoraetan</i>	Ships at anchor.

It may be that this latter saying has nothing to do with the seasons, but commemorates the opening of the Bocau-Neuf in Baiona (Bayonne) in 1578, which took place on October 28, the feast day of the saints mentioned.

No less traditional than the adages are the riddles (*papaitak*), which are often traditional little images that evoke, with a lively realism, the everyday background of rustic life. Here are a few examples:

Atcho zahar bat ezpain makhur batekin?—Lahatza. “A little old woman with a curled lip?—The pot-hook.”

Ithurriratekoan khantaz eta etcheratekoan nigarrez?—Pegarra. “What sings when it goes to the fountain and weeps on returning to the house?—The pitcher.”

Haragia kampoan, larrua barnean?—Arrochina. “The flesh outside, the skin inside?—The resin candle.”

Egunaz haragi yaten eta gabaz athe chokoan?—Akhiloa. “What spends the day eating meat, and the night in the corner of the door?—The goad.

When such bright ideas strike the listeners with their exceptional ingenuity, the latter exclaim: *Hori phensatu zuenak, ongi afaldu zuen*, “this one thought that one ate well.”

Folktales and Legends

Fireside stories can be divided into three different categories that are sometimes quite bizarrely confused in the storyteller’s mind. On the one hand are *fabliaux* (medieval short stories —ed.), funny or true (or at least likely) stories. On the other hand we have a whole cycle of short apologues, simultaneously moral and humorous in character, in which Jesus and Saint Peter are the protagonists. Finally there are the purely marvelous legends—*lege zaharreko ichtorioak*, “stories of the old law”—which sometimes predate Christianity and at other times bring into real, contemporary life (with minutely detailed indications of place) mythical creatures in whose existence the Basque peasant has never entirely ceased to believe. Needless to say, these latter stories are the ones of greatest interest, since they can give us an idea of the primitive mythology of the Basques. Stories about sorcerers and evil spirits are part of this same cycle, since these days the Basque word *sorgin* applies both to wizards and to legendary beings such as nocturnal washerwomen.

Indeed, in their outlines, the themes of the folktales (frequently) and the themes of the legends (always) belong to the classic repertory of uni-

versal folklore; only in their concrete details and their local color do they form a specific part of Basque tradition.

The tellers of folktales do not use any systematic procedure; their dominant tendency consists merely in allowing the ingenuity and ready wit of Christians to triumph over mysterious powers. When the adventures have a completely unlikely character, going back to a period both distant and ill-defined, when human protagonists are not clearly localized here or there, the story almost always begins with the same traditional words: "As often happens in this world . . . ," and ends with the words: ". . . and if they lived well, they died well also."

There is also a tried and trusted formula for refusing to tell a story: "Once upon a time there was a crow. One of his wings was much longer than the other and if the short wing had been as long as the other, my story would have been longer . . ."

Simpletons are the favorite subjects of comic folktales, but malice often has an easy time of it, as can be seen in the following sample, which is quite representative of Basque humor:

A landowner went to cut ferns on the moor with his domestic servant Manech. A hare passed by them, trailing one leg as it had just been shot and wounded by hunters nearby. The master and the servant immediately ran after this hare, caught it and hid it in a neighboring tree. Then they went back to work, and the master said to the servant, "Ah! Manech, how we'll feast on this hare—at least I will, that's for sure!" Just then the hunters arrived, asking whether they had seen the hare. The master said no; but Manech signaled to them to indicate where their prey was to be found. The hunters seized it and gave a sound thrashing to the master. Then they went away, and Manech said to his master, "Ah! Sir, what a good hiding we have been given—at least you have, that's for sure!"

In the naïve apocryphal story that presents Jesus and Saint Peter, the latter is always depicted as a rather farcical crony. He appears to be, in succession, grouchy, angry, secretive, lazy, or selfish—in a word, human—when compared to his divine companion:

One day, as they were walking through the Basque Country, the Lord Jesus and Saint Peter saw a woman and a devil who were quarrelling at the tops of their voices. The impetuous Saint Peter ran over to them and cut off both their heads. Jesus told him off in no uncertain terms. Then he ordered him straightaway to put their heads back in place. But,

though he greatly regretted the error of his ways, poor Saint Peter got mixed up: on the woman he put the devil's head, while on the devil he put the woman's head. And ever since that day, people have said, "A woman's head . . . a devil's head!"

On another day, the Lord Jesus said to Saint Peter, "I will give you a horse if you can recite the Lord's Prayer without getting distracted." So Saint Peter began, "*Pater noster qui es in coelis* . . . but, Lord, do you mean a horse with or without a saddle?" And Jesus replied, "Now you're never going to get a horse!"

Among the marvelous stories, that of *Chaindia* (today *Xaindia*, *Saindia*, or *Saindua* —ed.) has the peculiar feature of being localized, so that the heroine, although she is not the object of any cult properly speaking, has a little chapel with her effigy armed with her legendary pick-axe, next to the church of Saint Savior's in the Irati forest (Saint-Sauveur-d'Iraty, or *Salvatore kapera* —ed.). From time immemorial, the people of the village of Bithiriña have apparently sent a small annual collection to the priest of Mendibe (Mendive) for the upkeep of this small edifice. Here is the story:

One evening, a long time ago, in the Inhurria house in Bithiriña (which still exists), they were stripping the maize. All of a sudden, the servant realized that, in the fields, he had left his double-toothed pick-axe; and since he really needed this instrument to divide the maize, he said aloud that he "would gladly give ten sous to anyone who would bring him his pick-axe." The servant girl in the house—a very young girl—was inspired by her love of money to say to him there and then, "that she would be glad to go and fetch it," and off she went.

No sooner had the girl stepped outside than the servant was already starting to regret giving away ten sous and changed his mind. He fell into a sulk and started to swear, saying "If only the devil could carry her off!" Just then, a heart-rending scream was heard in the distance, and almost immediately, right near the chimney of Inhurria—but no higher—the poor unfortunate girl was seized and swept away into the air. And as she passed, she flung the pick-axe into the hallway, saying, "There's your pick-axe! As for me, thanks to my greed, I've been seized and swept away into the air by the evil spirit . . ."

The people of Inhurria and all their neighbors had set off, with many a shout, in pursuit of this poor girl. They were soon out of breath, but carried on as far as Larzabale [*Larceveau*], where they halted, since they were exhausted. But at Larzabale, the inhabitants of this village too decided it was their duty to chase after the little girl. As for Chain-

dia, on and on she flew, still swept away in the air, and thus she came beyond Mendibe, opposite Saint-Sauveur. She recognized the sanctuary and started to shout, “*Jon Doni Salbatore*, have mercy on me!” And no sooner had she spoken these words than she floated gently down to earth, saved from the evil spirit.

In other versions, when Chaindia uttered her plea, a voice replied, “Have you observed the fast?” To which she replied, “No, I haven’t, since I’m not old enough yet, but my mother always observes it.” “That will be a lot of help,” replied the voice, and—so the story goes—the young girl was set down, dead, at the church door.

There is a vague analogy between the theme of this story and the widespread legend that people often quote when, at night, they hear various mysterious noises in the mountains: King Chalumun (Solomon) was such a passionate hunter that he had left mass right in the middle to go and chase after a hare. As a punishment, he was swept up into the air; it is he and his dogs who, for all eternity, make that dreadful din in the shadows.

The cycle of legends that could be described as mythological is quite vast. So, rather than giving any in full, it seems preferable to bring together the characteristics scattered in numerous variants to define, if possible, the concepts that the Basques entertain of the various mysterious beings of their folklore.

Thus the *Tartaro* (or *Tartalo* —ed.) is merely a kind of giant, sometimes a Cyclops and often a cannibal, who is as stupid as he is gluttonous. It seems doubtful—first and foremost because his very name cannot date back before the middle of the Middle Ages—that he was ever the object of a real belief. These days, at all events, he is considered with no more credibility than the *Mamu*, also a kind of ogre, with which people scare children. In the stories in which he appears, the tricks of a simpleton or a madman are enough, most of the time, to overcome the stupidity of the *Tartaro*. It often possesses, as a household dog, a fierce, indefinable animal that the storyteller calls an *Alano*.

In the category of fantastic animals, we should also include the *Tchalggorri* (today “*txalggorri*” —ed.) or young red bull, which is said to haunt certain caves, that of Otzibarre in Gamue-Amikuze (Camou-Mixe) for example. Some legends also refer to the *Heresuge* or *Edaan-suge*, a snake with three or seven heads, which dwells in worlds below the earth’s surface. There is even a semi-historical legend according to which, in 1407, Gaston de Belzunce—the son of Antoine de Belzunce,

mayor of Baiona in the time of the English—was killed while fighting a dragon near the fountain of Lissague at Hiriburu (Saint-Pierre-d’Irube). It may be that an unusually big snake gave birth to this tradition—unless the story was forged, as sometimes happens, to explain retrospectively the three-headed dragon that appeared on a quarter of the blazon of the Belzunces in memory of a matrimonial alliance with the lords of Hiriburu-Lissague.

The legendary creatures we have just been discussing seem somewhat pallid in comparison with the *Basa-jaun*, the *Basa-andere*, and the *lamina* (or *lamia*—ed.), which are still all supposed to exist. The first two, the wild Lord and Lady, are very hairy, but they have human faces, and a much bigger size and strength. They are forest dwellers, as their name indicates (*basa*, “sylvan”). They are almost never mentioned in the plural; it seems that at least in every place where they are supposed to be present, only one couple is found. The *Basa-andere* sometimes offers her favors to shepherds who surprise her combing her hair with a golden comb, but her companion—known as Ancho—is greatly to be feared, especially if he is found “fasting” when encountered. Luckily, the sound of church bells makes them both flee.

It seems that, sometimes, the word *lamina* covers fantastic creatures as a whole, including those we mentioned earlier. However, in a more restricted and doubtless more primitive sense, they are merely imps, a kind of hairy and extremely nimble homunculus, who live sometimes under riverbeds and sometimes in caves. The celebrated prehistoric grottoes of Arberoa (the Pays d’Arbéroue) between Donamartiri (Saint-Martin) and Izturitze (Isturits), as well as the ruins of the old *Gaztelu* that rises on the hill above, are reputed to be one of their magical dwelling-places. There are innumerable *lamina*, and they belong to both sexes. In certain spots, female *lamina* are apparently designated as *Maide*. Between themselves, they are all known as *Gilen*. These familiar little spirits are not immortal; they have bodies that endure the same needs and sufferings as ours. They go to draw water from the springs: from the fountain of Uhaldai (Uhalday) where the river Arebora (Arbéroue) arises, a grassier and more verdant path leads up the arid limestone mountain of Aatzeluze; in the neighborhood of Donoztiri (Saint-Esteben) it is known as *Laminabidea*, “the path of the *lamina*.”

Although the *lamina* are naturally pagan and sometimes rather hostile to Christianity, they are (with rare exceptions) quite benevolent toward human beings, and are not averse to seeking their company at night. It used to be claimed that, if in the evening you left some food

on the edge of ground to be cultivated, the grateful *lamina* would come before dawn and hoe the maize or carry out similar tasks.

One of the three most common themes of the stories about the *lamina* is that of the *etcheko andere* who is requested to make her way down into their underground hideaway to pray over one of them when he is dying, or to give assistance at childbirth. She is treated well, fed, and paid, then led outside; but the cave has no exit, and the waters do not open for her, until she leaves behind a hunk of white bread hidden in her pocket as evidence of her marvelous adventure. Her visit is sometimes located in the *laminen-zilo*, “hole of the *lamina*,” in Donamartiri, sometimes under the bridge of Utsalea at Senpere, and in many other places.

The familiarity of Basque gnomes sometimes becomes downright unwelcome—witness the folktale in which a *lamina* comes every evening to ask a female spinner for *urinbuchtia*, or “bread with a coating of fat.” One day, the spinner’s husband, disguised in his wife’s clothes, sits down in her place to receive the beggar. When the latter starts to ask him, he says he is called *Ni nihaur*, which means “I myself.” The *lamina* thinks this is a little unusual, and mistrustfully observes, *Barda hi aintzan piun-piun eta gaur purdun-purdun*, “Yesterday you were working delicately and this evening coarsely.” The only reply the supposedly female spinner gives is to throw a pan of boiling butter into the *lamina*’s face. When the other *lamina* want to find out who has done this deed so as to punish them, the victim innocently says it was *Ni nihaur*. “Since you are responsible for hurting yourself, you need to put up with the pain yourself,” her companions then reply to her, and they abandon her with no further consolation.

In several legends, the name of the *lamina* is associated with that of the *Mairu* or *Jentile* (Moors or Gentiles), a self-styled race of men who lived in the Basque Country before the Christians, and are supposedly buried in dolmens and cromlechs. This curious detail proves beyond a doubt that the Basques have preserved some obscure notion of the funerary nature of megalithic monuments.

Finally, even more widespread is the custom of crediting the *lamina* with the building of old castles, bridges, and even certain churches. In return for an agreed wage—sometimes the right to take away a pretty girl—a crowd of the little genies came along and accomplished their task in a single night. But just as they are laying the last stone, the crow—real or imitated—of a cock makes them think day is breaking. And they disappear in a rage, leaving their work forever incomplete, and crying

Martchoko ollar gorria, madarikaikala mihia!, “Red cock of March, may your tongue be cursed!” Thus they are said to be the architects and masons of the bridges of Ligi (Licq) and Ezpeize (Espès) in Zuberoa, of the castle of Laustania of which a few traces are left near Izpura (Ispoure) at the start of the Errobi (Nive) pass, of the church of Arrosa (Saint-Martin-d’Arrossa), of the Larramendi houses at Jutsi (Juxue) and Latsa at Izura (Ostabat), and so on. To enumerate all of their presumed creations would take forever.

God's Part — Churches, Chapels, and Oratories — Processions and Pilgrimages — The Devil's Part

God's Part

Jinkoa or *Jainkoa*, or, without contraction, *Jaun-goikoa*, meaning “the Lord on high”—this is the name that the Basques give to the Creator. The naïve scholars of the theological age viewed this expression as the formal proof that the Basques had practiced monotheism since the dawn of time. This opinion is now completely outmoded; for linguistic reasons, we are now certain that the periphrasis *Jaun-goikoa* was definitely formed at a late period. So there is no further reason for supporting the ingenious hypothesis of Prince Louis-Lucien Bonaparte who, basing his opinion on a rather vague passage in Strabo, and on the more positive fact of the name for the moon, *goiko*, in the Erronkari (Roncal) dialect, suggested that it be translated as “the Lord Moon.”

In fact, in the twelfth century—as we know from the *Codex of Compostella*—the Basques called God by a very old name, *Urcia*, which probably goes back to the time in the Aeneolithic period when the Indo-European myths were introduced to their part of the world. *Urcia* is probably attached to the root *ortz*, “heavenly,” which is now found in the compound form *ortz-adar*, “rainbow,” from *ortzantz* and *ihortzuri*, the name for thunder in various dialects. The Basques—as their folklore and their ethnographic customs tend to confirm—seem to have followed the example of the Aryan peoples and for a long period worshipped as deities all the forces of nature in their various aspects: the sun, the moon, the lightning bolt, high places, rocks, waters, and the mysterious powers of animal and vegetable reproduction.

Once they had converted to Christianity—though they still preserved curious vestiges of their ancestral beliefs—they brought an extreme zeal to the practice of their religious devotions. At a time when, admittedly, faith had not yet profoundly softened their customs, they were, as Aymeric Picaud depicts them, “regular in the payment of tithes, and used to making offerings for the altar; indeed, every day, when he goes to church, the Navarrese makes to God an offering of bread, wine, wheat or other things.”

They show no less assiduity these days: so as not to miss out on their Sunday services during the month of October, the dove hunters of Sara (Sare) have mass said in the middle of the night, at three in the morning; women are not allowed to be present. The celebrant receives in return, as an associate, half the spoils of the hunt—in the form of live doves, of course.

However, what appears more striking than this laudable scrupulousness in fulfilling their religious obligations is the constant manner in which the faith of the Basques suffuses the most humble acts of everyday life. It is not unusual for men to wear a scapular or medals on their chests. In Zuberoa (Soule), in the entrance hall of many houses, a big font of holy water in sculptured stone is built into the wall. The Basque is always making the sign of the cross; any act of the slightest importance thus becomes a form of homage to God: the first sweep of the scythe into the ripe harvest, the sticking of the knife into the pig that is to be slain, the first slice cut from a loaf of bread. It is in the name of the “Lord on high” that a new arrival greets everyone when he joins a throng. On going to bed, nobody says just “Good night,” but *Jainkoak dizula gabon*, “God grant you a good night.” Is there any other country in the world in which the thirty-three chimes of the angelus bell bring even the movements of the *pilotari* (pelota player —ed.) to a standstill?

Many pious ceremonies go beyond the threshold of the church to become intimately associated with the labor and material preoccupations of the Basques. Every self-respecting household keeps a candle blessed at Candlemas in a drawer. It has several uses: it is lit in front of the Virgin when the storm is brewing; on Saint Blaise’s day, the sign of the cross is made on the back of every animal and a few drops of hot wax are scattered on it; and three pinches of hair are burned off the tails of all the cattle. Holy Week sees other familiar rites being performed. In several villages, until recently, the peasants would go out during the Passion of Good Friday to check the wind direction; if it was blowing from the south, it promised a good harvest, but if from the west, a bad

one. On the next day, Holy Saturday, one symbolic act is still carried out: from the church, the new fire is brought to the house, in the form of a glowing touchwood or embers on a bed of ashes; it will be maintained throughout the year. On Easter Sunday, before daybreak, on the roof of the small farms where the ewes are kept, one or two branches of flowering hawthorn are hung. On Palm Sunday, it is the sailors from the coastal areas who, while the Gospel is read during High Mass, glance furtively outside: the wind that is sweeping the clouds just then will blow for forty days in succession and will be predominant for the rest of the year. Everyone takes the blessed laurel home with them, one of the most effective protections—among others—against the fire from heaven. And what happens to the dried branch from the year before? It cannot be just thrown away with the rubbish, so it is burned in the Midsummer's Day fire. In fact, countless customs that were not all Christian but subsequently became so gravitate around this mysterious night of June 23 to 24 that, we should not forget, almost coincides with the summer solstice. It is believed that herbs and waters reach their supreme degree of efficacy at this time. In front of the white facades, as the evening falls, the bundles of wood that flare up are far more than a source of pleasure for the young people who leap through the flames; we have seen those present walking gravely round the fire, reciting their rosaries. Sometimes, a great stone is laid in the middle of the hot ashes; perhaps Saint John the Baptist will come in person and lay his head on it during the night, and leave a few hairs behind. At Donibane Lohizune (Saint-Jean-de-Luz) the bonfire is not a family ritual but an authentic ceremony, at once civic and religious. The municipal officials and the clergy gather in great pomp at the foot of the pyre erected outside the old church, to light and bless the flaming brazier. For a while, the merry throng that is about to make a mad dash toward the pleasures of the party, senses passing over it—as it half bows in prayer—the burning breath of an age-old tradition.

The blessing of the air happens pretty much right across the country, every Sunday in summer. But only on the feast of the Holy Trinity is the blessing of the sea performed, in Sokoia (Socoa). This is a real procession over the waves of all the fishing vessels, escorting the little steamship, at the prow of which stands the priest of Ziburu (Ciboure).

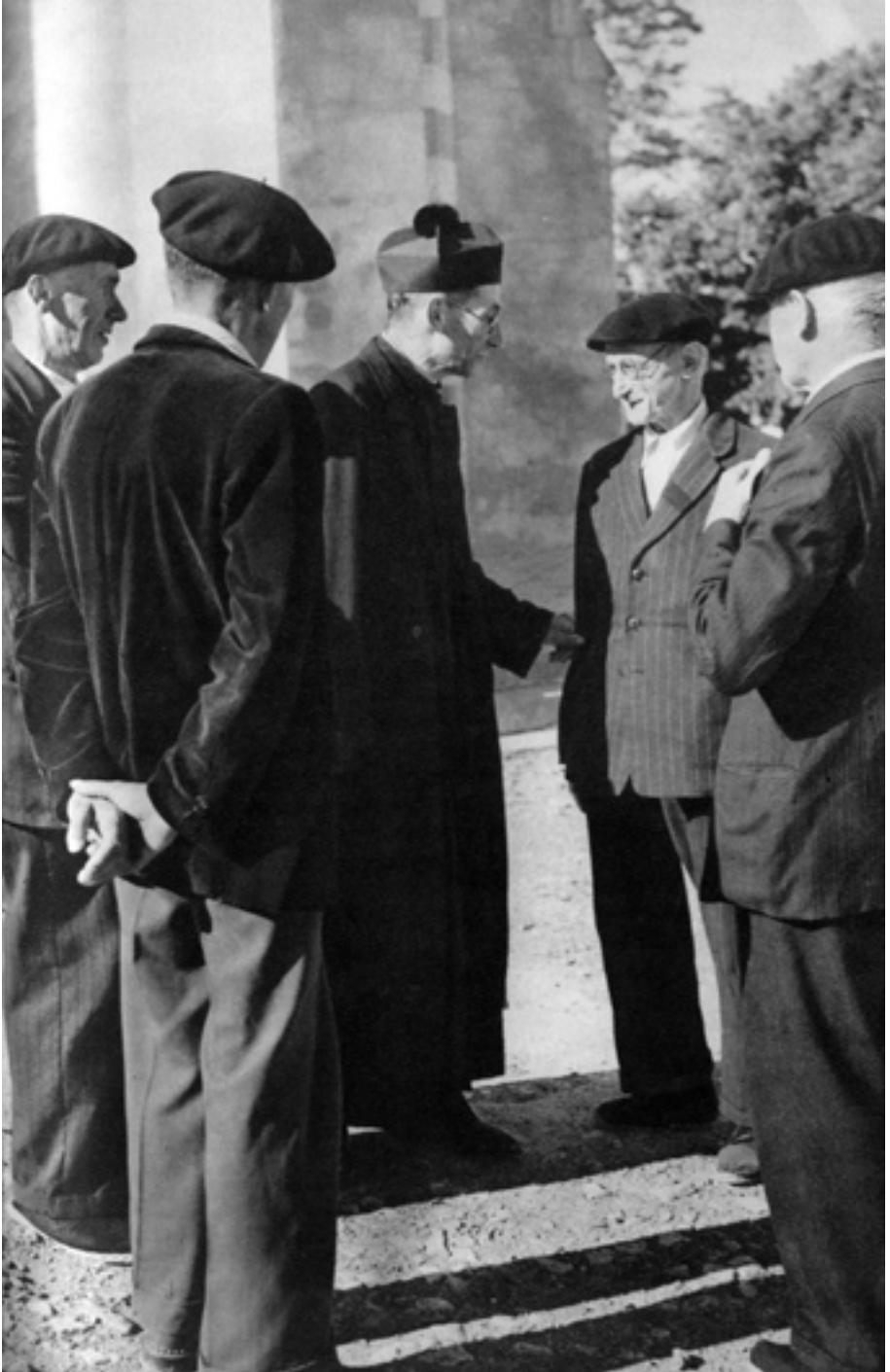
Other dates in the calendar are distinguished by their special processions and pilgrimages; we will talk about it again later. The Basques' piety is not satisfied with church solemnities alone. They also gather in bigger or smaller groups, in order to demonstrate their particular attachment to this or that saint. These "confraternities" are still very common.

There are seven in Urruña (Urrugne), for a population of three thousand. Alongside those that bring together artisans of the same trade, a survival from the old corporations, other confraternities are purely agricultural—in the form of small mutual insurance societies that provide protection against illness and the death of livestock. But there is also no lack of confraternities whose aim is purely spiritual, even though commensality at a sumptuous meal generally brings to an end their pious exercises on the day of their annual gathering. Whenever a member dies, the confraternity has a mass said for the repose of his soul, and the survivors fulfill their duty to attend in great numbers. In bygone days, one's presence at the burial was indeed obligatory.

In this environment, where the Basque earth and the sky seem to be linked together in a permanent and trusting way, it comes as no surprise that religious vocations are easily fostered. Within these large families that are the glory of *Eskual Herri*, it is almost the rule to find a boy or a girl—sometimes both—taking up religious orders.

It is not the contemplative orders that prove the most attractive. Like their great ancestors Ignatius of Loyola (Loiola in current Basque orthography—ed.) and Francis Xavier, from Jatsu (Jaxu), or like a saint closer to us in time, the Blessed Michel Garicoïts, from Donaixti-Ibarre (Saint-Just-Ibarre; 1797–1863), the Basques' robust faith remains more deeply directed toward action and the winning of souls than toward mysticism and the individual inner life. Basque nuns find a huge area for their devotions in their own region, but it is not unusual for some of them to cross the ocean and provide moral and spiritual assistance for their compatriots who have emigrated to Latin America. In the Basque Country itself, as well as the Dominican sisters of Maule (Mauléon) and the Daughters of the Cross of Uztaritze (Ustaritz), the most significant female institution is still that of the "Refuge" of Angelu (Anglet), a huge enterprise set up in the middle of the nineteenth century by a Baiona (Bayonne) priest, the abbé Cestac (1801–1868). The Servants of Mary, the Orphans, the Penitents, the cloistered Bernardines who live amid the sands of a pine forest next to the sea—a whole miniature world of women lives on this vast domain that no barrier (apart from the peaceful fields) separates from the nearby worldly agitation of the urban conglomeration of Baiona and Biarritz.

The men—apart from a few who become Jesuits or Betharramites—are usually inclined to enter the secular clergy. The Basque priest, who possesses great authority over his flock, is a transcendental element in the physiognomy of the country. Among these priests, who are not above



playing pelota, there has never been any lack of strong personalities, but the real eccentrics, such as Iharce of Bidassouet, Hasparren, or Haritchabalet, the legendary priest of Santa Grazi (Saint-Engrâce), a man with a taste for smuggling, are still the exception rather than the rule. The reputation for good behavior among the Basque clergy is exemplary. There are many instances. Among several other Basque prelates there are the two Zuberoans, Henri and his nephew Jean de Sponde who were both bishops of Pamiers in the seventeenth century and erudite scholars. The former (1568–1643), born a Protestant and godson of Henry IV, became a celebrated champion of the Counter-Reformation. A Capuchin, Friar Clément Duhalde, from Azkaine (Ascain), enjoyed the reputation of being one of the most celebrated preachers in eighteenth-century France. In addition, the propagation of the faith among the heathen never ceased to attract the mettlesome spirit of the Basques: Francis Xavier, apostle of



the Indies and of Japan, was succeeded by many missionaries to those distant lands. Some of them, such as Dominique Iribarne, from Ortzaize (Ossès), were martyred. In the second half of the eighteenth century, the Superior of the Foreign Missions department in Paris, Mr. de Hody, was a Basque from Donibane Lohizune; more recently, the Seminary of Missions in Paris was being directed by another Basque, M. Chambagno, from Aldude (Aldudes). In the Far East, Jean Labartette, from Ainhoa (1746–1823) died as Bishop of Veran in Cochinchina, and we ourselves, while still in our childhood, saw the venerable Archbishop of Tokyo, Monsignor Mugabure, from Getaria (Guéthary; 1850–1910) during one of his return visits to his native land.

Churches, Chapels, and Oratories

These are a material flowering of this intense religious life, and they play a large part in the Basque landscape. Apart from a few rare churches that fall within the purview of general archeology, and that we have already discussed, these are essentially built by local people, carpenters and masons from the neighborhood. Most underwent profound transformations in the course of the seventeenth century. Apart from a few more ancient vestiges—a porch or a window, preserved here and there—none of these constructions follows any particular style, but all of them have common typical characteristics.

The Basque church (the largest of which are found in Lapurdi [Labourd]) has just a single narrow and lengthy nave, simply covered by a robust framework with huge beams and a ceiling of painted wood, sometimes mimicking a false vault. There is no transept—or, as in Donibane Lohizune, it is hardly marked on the outside. The very high walls, often whitewashed both outside and inside, are pierced by narrow, irregular openings, propped up by massive buttresses, are evidence almost everywhere of successive reworkings that have brought them to their present level. At the level of the choir there is often a little lateral door with a font; there used to be a lean-to on the outside. This was where all the pariahs, outcasts, or Gypsies used to gather. The chevet, sometimes more narrow than the nave (in Azkaine, Luhuso [Louhossoa], Ahetze) can be right-angled as in Sara, in cut sections as in Itsasu (Itxassou), or semi-circular as in Ahetze or Ainhoa. The squat bell tower, on a square or rectangular base, is crowned with flat tiles in Ezpeleta (Espelette) and Luhuso, with round tiles in Irisarri (Irissarry) and Biriatsu (Biriattou), and with a pointed slate gable in Ainhoa and Baigorri (Baïgorry). The bell towers

of Lower Navarre and Zuberoa are rather more slender; but, whatever region they belong to, most of them—even though they are not dated—were built later than the nave, and one can often find a visible trace of the original bell tower pediment in cut stone that they have replaced. This latter and more ancient type, preserved in Arbona (Arbonne), Bidarte (Bidart), Haltsu (Halsou), Milafranga (Villefranque), Makea (Macaye), Iholdi (Iholdy), Ibarre, and so on, assumes a variety of shapes: rectangular, trapezoidal, curved, or rounded endings, with balls or pinnacles on top. But in Zuberoa we find the most original version: the crest of the wall, pierced with bays where the bells are rung, is completed by three great points of almost equal height, which are said to represent the Trinity. This theological demonstration in gray stone has considerable grace. It is also found in Gotaine (Gotein), Altzürükü (Aussurucq), Ezpeize-Ündüreine (Espès-Undurein), and Idauze-Mendi (Idaux-Mendy). Under the bell tower, or near it when it is reduced to a mere pediment, the porch is always really large, sometimes furnished with pews, and often includes a story with a room in it: this was used as a town hall in days gone by; here were kept the communal archives and a basic set of administrative documents. In fact, this still happens in the smallest villages—Zuraide (Souraïde) for example—which have not had a *herriko etche* built. Sometimes, it is the home of the *benoîte* (blessed woman—see below) that is next to the sanctuary.

The cemetery completely surrounds the church: pretentious funerary monuments, due to contemporary bad taste, are starting to clutter it these days, and following the example of big cities, the larger townships—Kanbo (Cambo), Senpere (Saint-Pée), Urruña, and Baigorri—are creating new ones, a little farther away. This leads to the progressive abandonment of the old enclosure. The familiar proximity of the dead is another reassuring and appealing tradition that risks being lost.

Inside a Basque church, the eye is drawn to the altar, set high up, and generally concealing a sacristy situated beyond it, at a lower level. A gilded retable stands above it, similar to those of Spanish churches thanks to its superimposed profusion of niches, statues, and twisted and garlanded columns, albeit conceived with greater architectural balance than the analogous scaffoldings from the other side of the Pyrenees. The sumptuous retable of Donibane Lohizune—the work of one Martin de Bidache—is the most accomplished example of this grandiose and somewhat theatrical seventeenth-century ornamentation. And one is surely reminded of a theater by the monumental galleries of sculpted oak, the balusters of hand-turned wood, which on three sides overlook the

perimeter of the nave and give their characteristic appearance to Basque churches. The pews with which they are furnished are reserved for men alone; however, the separation of the sexes during services does not seem to have been the main reason behind this architectural arrangement. It should, rather, be seen as a convenient way of increasing the space, adaptable to the increase in Basque population, probably from the middle of the sixteenth century onward. It has been claimed that a renewal of fervor following the big witchcraft trials made these transformations necessary. This hypothesis is belied by a passage written by Pierre de Lancre himself, indicating that when he came to Lapurdi in 1609, "all the beautiful and large churches" already had "two or three levels of galleries." In their original state, it is evident that most rural churches—those of Ainhoa, Sara, or Baigorri, for example—could not contain more than a single story, whereas these days they possess two or three superimposed galleries; they were thus visibly raised at very different periods. The current galleries of Ainhoa bear the date of 1649.

The ground of all the churches was once paved with large funerary stones, adorned with a majestic epigraph in enamelwork (*champlevé*). Unfortunately, they have all too often been scattered or covered over by a new floor; however, they are still partly in existence in a few spots: Arbona, Azkaine, Senpere, Irisarri. Each of these *hil harri*, "burial places," corresponded to the *yar leku*, a place where the female head of household (*etchekeo andere*—ed.) of each house kneels. This traditional place, a real little piece of property, follows the fate of the estate—it is passed on, sold, or bought with it. These days it is always marked by a praying stool (*prie-dieu*) with initials: nobody has the right to move it. It is marked also by a square of black drape on which is placed the small basket in which lie the wax candles that are burned for the dead. Basque women are very possessive about their ancestral place in the dwelling of *Jaun-goikoa*; nobody should try and wrest this place from them. Strange trials, inconceivable anywhere but in Eskual Herri, are motivated by these sentiments alone; sentence in the appeal court on the most recent of them, after judicial proceedings lasting three years, has just been passed before the courts in Baiona—this was just a few years ago. The litigants were from Ainhoa.

The priests also had their burial places in the church: that of Axular, the great Basque writer, can still be seen in the nave of Saint-Martin of Sara. Later on, the priests preferred to be buried under the porch. Inside the church there used to be the common tomb and the traditional place of the *benoïtes*; in Sara, it is still indicated by an inscription:







*Orai Den Seroraren
Eta Izanen Direnen
Jar Lekua Eta Hobia.*

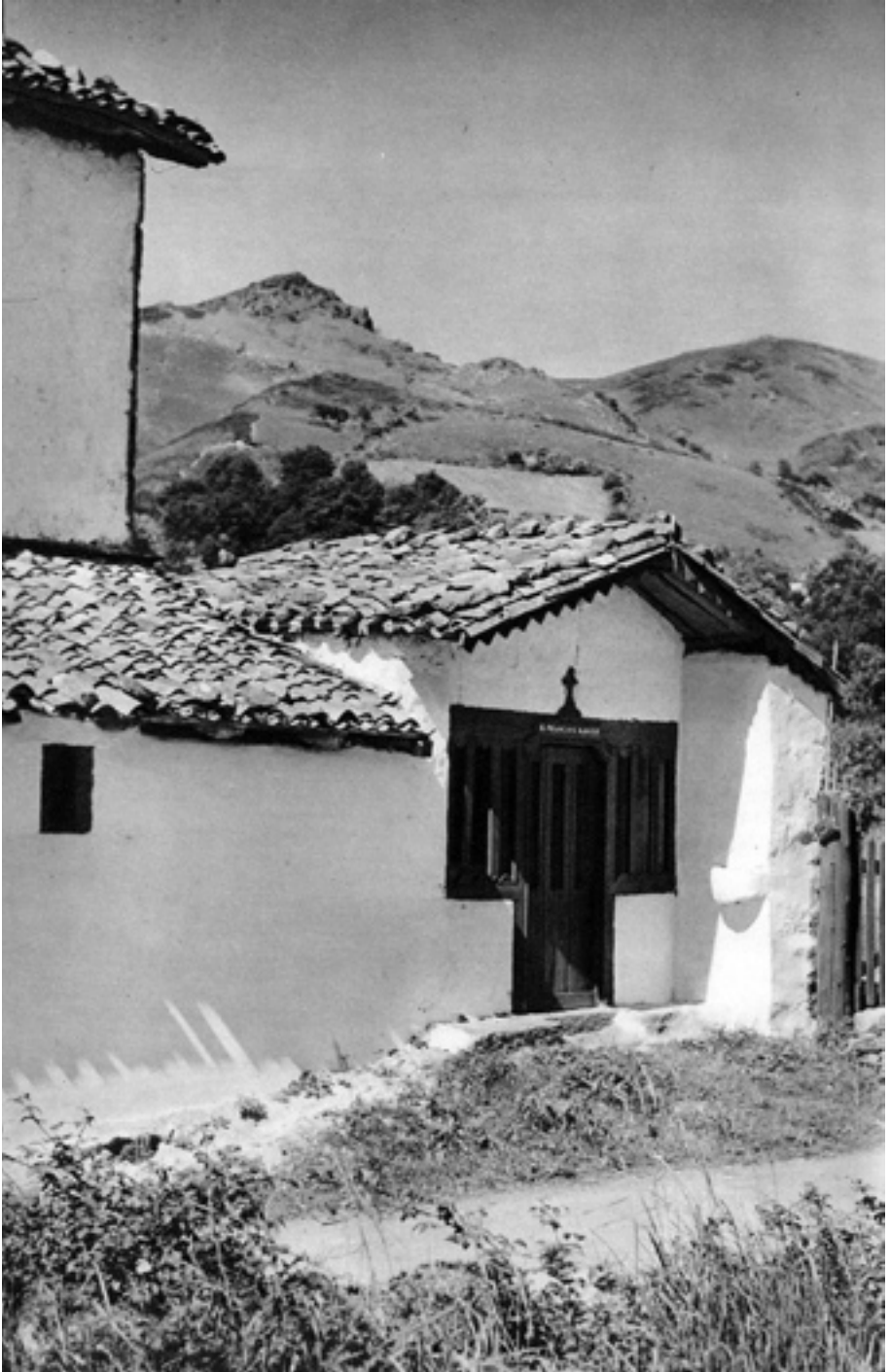
“This is the seat and the sepulchral vault of the current *benoîte* and of those yet to come.”

So who were these *benoîtes*, or *andere serora*, as the Basques put it? Ever since the organization of private schools brought nuns to practically every parish, the institution seems to be dying out; but it certainly goes back a long way. At the start of the seventeenth century, Pierre de Lancre describes them as a current custom, and his habitual malevolence deemed them—quite mistakenly—to be cause for scandal. The *benoîte* keeps the keys to the church, cleans the sanctuary, washes the sacred linen, and maintains the altars, the priestly vestments, and the lighting. Previously, they would also ring the bells, not only for the services, but also to keep storms at bay. This role always falls to an unmarried woman or a widow. She has contractually committed herself to serve the Church all her life long, in return for accommodation, certain dues in kind, plus a modest sum paid on the occasion of baptisms, weddings, and funerals in which she plays a part. In order to be approved, the *serora* used to pay the church council a variable—but relatively costly—dowry, since the post was sought after to such an extent that it could sometimes be auctioned off. According to Webster, the functions of the *benoîte* are a survival of those of deaconesses in the primitive Church.

It is unusual for any Basque parish not to possess one or several rustic chapels on its territory. Some parishes, such as Sainte-Catherine of Eihalar (Eyhalar) and Sainte-Madeleine of Amotz between Sara and Senpere, and the chapels of Okoze (Occos), Urdoze (Urdos), and Germieta (Guermiette) in Baigorri, are, or were, mere annexes, proper little churches for remoter districts. Others, built on hilltops, far from any urban conglomeration, are visited (or at least, mass is celebrated there) only on certain days or months of the year: these include Our Lady of Socorri, in Urruñia, Our Lady of Arantzaz, in Ainhoa, and Saint-Antoine of Muskildi (Musculdy), in Zuberoa. Several have disappeared, destroyed by storms or wars: Sainte-Barbe of Uztaritze and of Donibane Lohizune, Sainte-Croix of Olhain, in Sara, and the celebrated hermitage of the Holy Spirit at the summit of Larrune (La Rhune), whose existence is attested since 1578. And some, finally, have been reborn from their ruins—such as that of Oillarandoi (Oillarandoy) above Baigorri, which has just recently been

rebuilt—thus demonstrating that worship in such favorite venues is still alive among the Basques. This is an extremely ancient tradition. Indeed, it is noteworthy how these mountain sanctuaries are almost always found next to dolmens, cromlechs, tumuli, or Roman remains—proof that Christianity merely took over from the pagan cults. This is the case, for example, of Saint Savior's in the Irati (Iraty) forest (where a tumulus filled with large bones was unfortunately destroyed not long ago), and of Madeleine of Atharratze (Tardets), with its Gallo-Roman lapidary inscription. Until the Revolution, most of the chapels we have just mentioned were furnished with a dwelling place where, for much of the year, a chaplain lived. Tolerated more than approved by the ecclesiastical authorities, these hermits had a main function—one the Basques were very keen to see performed—that consisted in warding off tempests and hailstorms. For the success of their exorcisms, popular belief demanded that, as well as being men of deep piety, they should have strong arms. Indeed, they were considered to wage real battles against the Evil Spirit. The story is told how, one day, the hermit of Larrun managed to ward off a hurricane only by abandoning one of his shoes to the Devil! The last hermit in the Basque Country seems to have been Jean Beherecotche, from Ainhoa, who, from the age of seventeen, lived in the chapel of Atzulai (Atsulay), which was twice destroyed but rebuilt on his initiative, during the revolutionary and imperial wars. He died in 1825 at the age of eighty.

If we turn now to oratories, we find that the Basques built many of them, especially in Lapurdi. They are no longer set in lonely places but right on the edge of the old roads, often next to a crossroads, and sometimes in proximity to some fountain endowed with mysterious virtues. The village of Sara—the richest, we think, in this kind of small building—has no fewer than thirteen of them. Apart from that on the bridge of Ibarron, they are not substantial stone niches built into a masonry pillar like those found in Provence, Savoy, or the north of France. The Basque oratory looks more like a little house whose door, sheltered by a deep awning, allows one to glimpse the image of a sculpted and illuminated saint through its bars of painted wood. A few coins, the offerings of passersby, often lie scattered across the flagstones. It has been claimed that these tiny chapels had a votive origin; nothing could be less certain. They are usually too small for a service to be held in them, and their role is mainly limited to acting as a destination (or stage on the way) of the principal collective manifestations of popular devotion, about which we shall now say a few words.



Processions and Pilgrimages

Processions and pilgrimages are often one and the same, for while the Basques—at least these days—have stopped going to Santiago de Compostela, and go no farther than Lourdes, they do, on the other hand, always enjoy long pious marches at home, across their own countryside.

For the feast of Saint Mark and on the three days of Rogation, they limited themselves, by the muddy paths lined with blossoming hedges, and the morning chill of the nippy Basque spring, to walking round the borders of their commune, district by district, setting off at dawn. In Zuberoa, under the ancien régime, these Rogation Day processions had a more unpredictable mood. Following an ordinance laid by Monsignor de Révol in 1708, up to fifteen or twenty parishes would all make their way together to a single church—one that was already too cramped for its own parishioners. Such a throng caused “great disorder in the marching order of the processions—they keep colliding into each other, and quarrelling over who has right of way, so that in these sorts of encounters, whole parishes rise in rebellion against each other, come to blows, and even shed blood.” It was probably so as to avoid similar collisions that Urruña, Bera (Vera), Azkaine, and Sara, who shared the possession of the Chapel of the Holy Spirit and the Trinity at the summit of Larrun, would process there on different Sundays and in different months. At Donibane Lohizune, on the day before Ascension Day, a similar procession would go at least as far as Azkaine (some seven or eight miles there and back) but probably also climbed the three thousand feet to the top of the mountain. Since 1720, the inhabitants of Donibane Lohizune have been content with a smaller circuit, on their own territory, as far as the Chapel of Saint-Joseph in the Akotz (Acotz) district; the cross that is borne before the pious procession is carried in turn by each of the farmers or tenants whose fields are crossed or skirted.

These days, such interminable countryside processions from village to village have all but disappeared, but those organized, on various days of the year, by the parishes that possess a celebrated pilgrim site are still visited by throngs of people. In Lapurdi, it is mainly the vogue for the chapel of Ainhoa on Mount Atzulai—a cult apparently based closely on that of Our Lady of Arantzazu in Gipuzkoa (Giupúzcoa)—that draws crowds every Whit Monday. On the hillside, Our Lady of Uronea at Bidarte (close, as the name indicates, to a spring with famed virtues) shares the favors of the faithful on the same day. In Lower Navarre, the most popular pilgrimage—among several of lesser importance—seems to be the

one that sets out from Mendibe (Mendive) to the very old church of Saint Savior's in the Irati forest, the cradle of many a legend. It is ascended by steep paths on the very day of Corpus Christi. The Zuberoans climb just as high when, on June 13 and 24, as well as August 24, they go to Saint-Antoine of Muskildi. They also visit Sainte-Madeleine of Atharratze on Passion Sunday and July 22, the Romanesque sanctuary of Santa Grazi on Whit Sunday, and so on.

One of the most curious rural pilgrimages is that which is carried out over three consecutive days at the start of February, to the venerable Hispano-Moorish church of Ospitalepea (L'Hôpital-Saint-Blaise). Only the men go there; everyone puts himself down for as many "gospels" as he possesses heads of cattle in his barn. They all bring big handfuls of hairs cut from the tails of their animals. When evening falls, outside the sanctuary, the hair is piled high and set on fire. All the pilgrims dance around the burning mass, which, as it is consumed, spreads the odor of incense, which is supposed to be pleasing to the patron saint of cattle farmers. In addition, it is said that the bell of Ospitalepea is miraculous. You need to put the part of your body that is hurting inside it—your head if you have toothache—while the bell ringer gently rings it! Admittedly, faith here borders on superstition, as in the rather unorthodox, but very popular, cult of *Harpeko saindua*, in Bidarra (Bidarray). This saint, nameless as well as headless, and unknown—with reason—to the ecclesiastical authorities, is none other but a stalagmite with a vaguely human form, in the depths of a cave in the mountains.

Apart from these local devotions, which are almost always—even the most respectable of them—tinged with a hint of pagan exoticism, the great festivals of the Church in Eskual Herri produce solemn open-air displays. Among them, Corpus Christi (which, ever since it was established in 1264, the Basques have continued to call *Phesta-Berri*, "the New Feast") takes first place. The Corpus Christi procession and the one that corresponds to it on the Sunday seven days later constitute, practically everywhere, an exceptionally picturesque spectacle. In a few villages in Lapurdi, but also in Lower Navarre and especially among the rather remote parishes of Arberoa (the Pays of Arbéroue)—Heleta (Hélette), Donoztiri (Saint-Esteben), Armendaritze (Armendarits), and so on—the tradition has been best maintained in its typical details.

The essential theme is that of a "national guard" (a relatively modern expression for a much more archaic institution) formed by the young people in the parish, armed with sabers and rifles, dressed in red jackets and white trousers, and wearing gleaming berets covered with gilded



foliage. Sappers, in white aprons and bearskin caps adorned with a mirror, carry enormous axes on their shoulders. A drum-major throws his beribboned stick into the air throughout the journey. When he disappears into the church, the procession does not break up; during the service, the young men draw up on both sides in the middle of the nave. One of them stands immobile at attention on the highest step of the altar, just behind the incumbent. Now and again, as the ceremony unfolds, the colorful troop presents its arms, and brief commands echo out, punctuated with bugle calls and drum rolls, alternating with lines of the *Magnificat*. Big tricolor flags, waved rhythmically, unfold their quivering wings over the attentive crowd. There is sometimes even dancing at this magnificent popular feast, although these days a narrow formalism tends to eliminate this. However, in several communes, young people still honor the Holy Sacrament with rhythmic dances, just as David danced before the Ark.

In bygone days, the sailors of Donibane Lohizune had all set off before Corpus Christi to go fishing on the open seas faraway. This is doubtless the reason why they had received, in compensation, the right to celebrate Epiphany with particular ceremony. This procession of the Three Wise Men was for long abandoned, then brought back into use, but unfortunately in a watered-down version. Many people still turn up to attend, but it is just a pale reflection of the male spectacle of bygone days. This is doubtless the reason why the Wise Men were apparently represented not by toddlers dressed up but by three robust sailors dressed in scarlet and riding on horseback. Preceded by an adult angel who carried a heavy gilded star, these splendid riders gravely knocked on the very door of the church; this opened, and they were admitted to the procession, which they now led through the streets of the old city, strewn with fronds.

In Ziburu, another procession of the Holy Sacrament takes place for the same reason toward the beginning of January, at the time of the *Bichincho* (today *Bixintxo* —ed.; the feast of the patron saint, Saint Vincent). In days gone by, a boat carried on the sailors' shoulders was also part of the procession.

The Devil's Part

How can it be that the Basques, who these days display a fervent but serene piety, sensible and well-balanced, and free of any pathological enthusiasm, were once considered as real fiends from hell?

This is a historical enigma that remains unexplained.

However, the facts are there. In 1450, one isolated case appeared: the bailiff of Oztibarre (Ostabarret) brought before the Court of Amikuze (Mixe), sitting at the gate of the castle of Garrüze (Garris), a witch who was convicted of her crimes and sentenced to death. But it was mainly in the following century that a real epidemic of collective hysteria seems to have broken out in our unhappy country. We should note, in passing, that although this spread of occult practices seems to have been particularly in evidence in our part of the world, it seems to have been generally widespread throughout more or less the whole of Europe during the Renaissance. All the great treatises of demonology date from that time. The sudden advance in the sciences, the religious controversies, the political, social, and moral turmoil, the extreme misery caused by the Wars of Religion, were all factors that contributed to the momentary creation of a climate propitious to the eruption of these aberrations that had hitherto generally remained latent. Indeed, everywhere in our own days (which resemble, at least in its worse aspects, that tumultuous and fertile sixteenth century), we also observe analogous features: an extravagant flourishing of fakirs, clairvoyant women, fortune-tellers, astrologers, and faith healers, whose success is evidence that scientific skepticism can easily go together with the most naïve credulity. In any case, we can hardly blame the Basques for having believed in witches and wizards—if not actually practicing witchcraft—at a time when the most highly cultivated magistrates were themselves convinced of the effectiveness of diabolical maneuvers.

Be this as it may, we know that, in 1587, the inhabitants of Amendüze (Amendeuix), in Amikuze, complained about having been the victims of spells whose principal effect was to make them bark. The subsequent repression must have been ineffectual, since in 1594 the prosecutors of Amikuze, Arberoa, Oztibarre, Irisarri, Ortzaize, Baigorri, and Bastida (Labastide-Clairence) addressed a remonstrance to the Estates of Lower Navarre; they complained that legal action was inadequate and demanded that each city or *pays* of Lower Navarre elect “two respectable men, persons above suspicion, to seek out and punish those guilty of these crimes of witchcraft, apostasy and magic; these men would be associates of the King’s officers; all this at the expense of the sentenced, or, in case of insolvency, of those *pays* and places where the preliminary inquiry is held.” If we turn to Zuberoa, we find that the Court of Lextarre (Licharre) was equally troubled by the question and interrogated two alleged witches in 1599. But it was in Lapurdi that people’s anxieties seem to have been the most serious. Already, in 1576, Boniface de Lasse,

the lieutenant of the bailiff of Lapurdi—a rather dubious person, it must be said—had mercilessly executed Marie de Chorropique, the daughter of the house of Janetabaita, and some forty other witches. However, thirty years later, the problem had worsened considerably. In December 1608, Henry IV, informed that for the past four years the region had been infested by “a great and almost countless multitude of wizards and witches,” entrusted the councilor de Lancre, of the Parlement of Bordeaux, with full powers to pass judgment on the “delinquents” as a last resort. This magistrate, Basque in origin since he was directly descended from a certain Bernard de Rosteguy, from Jutsi (Juxue) in Lower Navarre, had settled in Saint-Macaire in the Gironde in 1510. He held his compatriots in the lowest possible esteem. He clearly demonstrated this during his mission, which lasted from July 2 to November 1, 1609. He had been given the Président d’Espaignet as an assistant, a somewhat more talented character, but who, charged at the same time with looking into matters concerning the frontier along the Bidasoa, actually had to leave all the judicial aspects of the case to his colleague. The latter, considering that “it is only fair that those who have been burdened with performing exorcisms or judicial proceedings should also have the glory of composing very fine books so that, one day, posterity might be enlightened,” left us a *Tableau of the Inconstancy of Wicked Angels and Demons*, published in 1612. This is the stupefying relation of his exploits: between sixty and eighty “notorious witches” and five hundred witnesses “marked by the character of the Devil” had been heard. The judges were often obliged to “leave those accused of casting spells and put the witnesses themselves on trial.” As well as persons “of a good age,” five hundred children were also interrogated. They stated, giving identical details, that they went to Sabbaths every night, where, as de Lancre estimated, there were two thousand gathered. The number of executions, which some authors put at six hundred, seems exaggerated, but it was perhaps even higher, if we include the many female accused who—as the preliminary investigations had not yet been carried out when the commission came to an end—were sent to fill the prisons of Bordeaux. The priest of Azkaine, and the priest of Ziburu and his curate, had been degraded and burned at stake; five other priests owed their lives to the intervention of the bishop of Baiona, Bernard d’Echoux. The premature return of five or six thousand Basque sailors from Newfoundland, and the fury they displayed, also mitigated the excessive zeal of the inquisitors as the investigation reached its end. Indeed, in order to be charged, one merely had to be denounced, even by a child. It is easy to imagine that, initially, many personal vendettas were

settled in this way, and later, many victims—thanks to torture—named other alleged witches, in the hope of saving their own skins. To verify his case, de Lancre ensured that they had “the Devil’s mark” engraved in the shape of a toad’s claw in the white of their eyes, or that their bodies were at certain points insensible to the prick of a long needle. A seventeen-year-old girl, Morguy by name, was particularly expert in this kind of investigation. She assisted the court, and it is suspected that she succeeded in having several innocent people sent to the stake, at her own whim.

According to the personal revelations vouchsafed to de Lancre, entire parishes would take themselves off to the *akhelarre*, the “goat’s field,” a term that designated the Sabbath itself as well as the place in which it occurred. This sometimes involved quite distant spots such as the summit of Larrun or the cave of Zugarramurdi. Four times a year, larger assemblies, sometimes as many as twelve thousand people, would gather on the hillside where, these days, the Hendaia (Hendaye) beach is situated. In any case, distance was no obstacle to the witches, since it was apparently enough for them to anoint their bodies with a mysterious unguent, repeating the words *emen hetan* or rather *emen eta han*, “here and there,” to fly up through the chimney! The descriptions of the Sabbath itself: the adoration of *Jaun gorri*, “the red Lord,” a mass said backwards, banquets of delicious food (but no salt), dances and orgies, children dedicated to Satan and entrusted with the task of keeping herds of toads sometimes dressed in velvet, and the preparation of venoms and evil spells are merely taken—for all the abundance and precision of details—from what might be called the classic traditions of witchcraft. There was nothing specifically Basque in all this, apart from the names of the participants: Marie Dindarte of Sara, Saubadine of Subiette, and Petri Daguerre of Uztaritze, Ansuperomin of Donibane Lohizune and Ansgarto of Hendaia, the Devil’s tambourine players, Marie of Azpilcoueta, the lady of Martiabelsarena.

So what are we to believe from these fantastical stories? Doubtless the convictions of the credulous magistrate and his assessors, and the unconsciously tendentious way in which they interrogated their victims—subjected, we must not forget, to the torments of the question—had a very marked influence on the corresponding form of the confessions. However, it does seem that there was a basis in reality here; but perhaps the witches themselves were also to a great extent suggestible as to the influence of their philters, just about good enough to poison crops, animals, and humans, of course, but quite incapable—except by illusion—

of transporting them into the air or to cause tempests! The fact remains that—whether they were effective poisons or purely imaginary marvels—magical expertise had spread among the Basques. There is some reason for believing that Gypsies, who had started to enter our part of the world precisely during the abovementioned period, were no strangers to this pernicious import. Even these days, after all, Gypsy women often boast of supernatural powers that make the local peasants fear them. As for the Sabbath, properly speaking, it has been suggested that its vile ceremonial had been grafted (while completely disfiguring them) onto the vestiges of pre-Christian rites, nocturnal meetings at certain times of the year, in which dancing originally constituted the main attraction. Something that might give a certain consistency to this hypothesis is the fact that today's Basques do not seem to draw any clear-cut distinction between their traditional myths (*lamina*, etc.) and individual witches and wizards (*belhagileak*); they lump together all forms of the pre-Christian supernatural in one single imprecise term of disapproval.

In order to protect themselves, they can always “do the fig,” that is, make a gesture of contempt at someone by closing their right hand around their thumb, which they stick between the index and middle fingers, saying “*puyes, puyes*.” In de Lancre's period, they preferred to wear, either constantly or hanging from their necks, a *higo* of jade, copper, or metal, an amulet that depicted this same gesture of the fingers. Such a survival raises the question of the current preservation of occult beliefs by the Basques, if not of occult practices. Francisque Michel, a writer of the Second Empire, albeit a library-based scholar rather than a direct observer, oversimplifies when he says: “All Basque peasants are completely skilled at the art of witchcraft, most of them on the pretext that they have the ability to outsmart evil spells since, as they say, the priests won't have anything to do with them; some of them, I am convinced, to employ magic recipes in the service of their hatreds and their passions.” It seems to us that there is a lot of exaggeration in all this.

The memory of the Sabbath, for example, is perpetuated in legends decked out with quite precise descriptions, but the style in which they are told is almost always ironic and implies no more than a clearly nuanced credulity. See, for instance, the story of the two hunchbacks who, having uttered the word *igande* (“Sunday”) at the *akbelarre*, find that one of them has his hump pulled out by the devil and added to the hump of his companion. See also the story of the young man who, taken to the Sabbath by his fiancée, makes a mistake when reciting for the last time the cabbalistic formula on the way home:

<i>Oren bat harako,</i>	One hour to go,
<i>Oren bat hanko,</i>	One hour to stay,
<i>Oren bat hounako;</i>	One hour to return;
<i>Odeyen petik,</i>	Below the clouds,
<i>Khaparen gainetik</i>	Above the bushes,
<i>Eta frist . . .</i>	And frist . . .

He gets confused and switches the “above” and the “below,” with the result that our muddled friend finds himself suddenly swung up to a prodigious height, and then plunged into the midst of thorn thickets through which he is dragged home, all torn and bleeding!

As far as we can determine from the remarks we have been able to pick up from various people in the countryside around Donibane Lohizune, what remains relatively intact is the defensive side of the doctrine: the fear of the evil eye, the spell cast on animals and people, diabolical possession, and so on. It is far from out of the question that this ill-fated gift is attributed to some elderly woman, to the red eye (*begi gorri*), but more often than not the evil spirits are not necessarily embodied. They can act by themselves. People protect themselves from such spirits—for lack of any priest’s blessing, which is called upon in extreme cases—by throwing salt into the fire when a cock’s crow in the middle of the night reveals the presence of the *sorgin*, by burning the bedding of a dead man at a crossroads, particularly the bolsters whose crumpled feathers appear as a fearful sign, and so on. Epidemics among cattle or poultry, invasions of caterpillars, chronic illnesses and, a fortiori, nervous complaints in humans are thus all attributed to a malign influence (*gaitz emana*). And so, to get rid of it, people used to resort to an *azti*, a “soothsayer,” or, as they also say, using a word taken from the Spanish, to a *salutadore*, a faith healer who is more or less a charlatan, the last incarnation of the wizard, but in the other sense, as he is deemed to be solely beneficent. The latter belongs, by definition, to a family of seven brothers and is distinguished from them by the imprint of a cross on his tongue or palate, the evident sign of his supernatural powers. Since everything that comes from far away has more prestige, the miracle workers of Gipuzkoa enjoyed a larger clientele in the Basque Country. De Lancre mentions a *salutadore* who had settled in Itsasu, in 1610, with the consent of the priest, to exorcise the inhabitants; he is not afraid to scorn him as an impostor, a skepticism that—coming from him—is more than a little ironic! The main vogue for these faith healers came, for a long time, from the fact that they were considered able to keep rabies at bay; around 1830–40, one of them

was the reason behind considerable tumult at Azkaine and Sara, between the local authorities who wanted him expelled and the populations who placed blind trust in him. In the time of Francisque Michel, the most celebrated *azti* of Lower Navarre was an old man of eighty years living in Donazahare (Saint-Jean-le-Vieux); but he was the son and brother of country doctors, and although he obviously did not clear up the mystery with which he was surrounded, he was clearly just exercising medicine without holding a diploma.

These days, we ourselves have been acquainted with the famous faith healer from Arruntz (Arraunts), near Uztaritze, whom the Basques called—without laughing—*Jainko ttipia*, “the little God,” and we can attest that this good man, who prescribed treatments on the basis of simples (a herb used medicinally—ed.), in no way affected the demeanor of a magician.

So it seems that authentic *salutadore* have seen their time come and go, like the witches and wizards. The Devil’s part has been greatly reduced over the past three centuries. If Pierre de Lancre were to return to the Basque Country in person, he would find few people to burn at the stake.

Family and Social Life — Neighbors — Birth and Baptism — Marriage — Death

Family and Social Life

In the Basque Country family and social life were and largely remain based on the “house,” a veritable moral entity, exercising rights and imposing duties that go far beyond the fleeting personalities of its possessors. The individual nature of the dwelling takes priority over that of the family to which it gives its name. Pierre de Lancre had already remarked on this in 1612:

Now none of these houses are lined along the village street. Some are a little way off, without rank or order: they have a few small plots and land for plowing nearby, and thus the inhabitants usually give up their surnames and the names of their families (and women even abandon the names of their husbands), and adopt the names of their houses, however poor these may be . . .

His observation was accurate, and, in spite of one’s civil status, it is still valid, even these days, in everyday practice. Whatever his real name may be, a Basque is known to his compatriots only as master or mistress, son or daughter of this or that house. Does anyone suspect that the Don-gaitz brothers, the famous pelota players, are legally named Sorzabal? But nobody would dream of designating them by anything other than their natal house in Urruña (Urrugne).

The ancestral house (*maison-souche* —ed.) or “family house” (*etxelar*, or *etche ondo*; today *etxelar* and *etxe ondo* —ed.) is more than just a dwelling place. The term includes all the dependencies that form one indivisible whole: the estate (*etxalde*; today *etxalde* —ed.), in other words the arable lands, grasslands, timberlands, acres of fields, and *bordas* (shepherd’s mountain huts) in the mountains; the *yar leku*

in the church, the traditional space occupied by women that has become a symbolic sepulture; and finally, in the cemetery, the real burial place (*hil-harri*), that used to be attached to the *hil-bide* (literally “the road of the dead” —ed.), the right of passage along a certain path that led the deceased to their final resting place.

The attributes of the house as a moral personage are obviously not as extensive as those given it by the *Fors* in the ancien régime, when—as we have already seen—the *foyer*, the “hearth and home” (the *feu* or “fire,” as they called it) served as the basis for the social hierarchy, for political and administrative organization, and for dividing up the tax burden. However, we still find something of this preeminent role played by the house in the municipal framework, in connection with the regulation and use of vacant land, woods, and pasturelands, where they have not been divided up. In the village of Ainhoa, for example, which possesses a huge communal forest, every year several portions of uncut firewood are marked out, with one portion for each “fire.” Then these portions are divided out freely, and lots are drawn for them by each household. The benefits of such collective arrangements used to be very strictly linked to the granting of the “right of neighborhood,” to which we shall return.

It is, above all, from the private point of view that the house, the social cell of the region, preserves its full importance in Basque life.

Chori bakhoitzari eder bere ohantzea

“Every bird finds its own beautiful nest”

as the proverb puts it. Every child always keeps his place in this nest. He is entitled to return at any age, to share in the labor and the common resources. But if such a refuge is to resist all the vicissitudes of time and to be perpetuated across the centuries, its transmission must be ensured so that the continuity of shepherding and farming can be safeguarded.

This significant problem had been solved by Basque customary law, the fruit of experience founded on the nature of the soil and on local ways of life—and the solution lay in addressing a twofold preoccupation: “safeguarding the unity of the family heritage” on the one hand, and “setting up in the ancestral home, as soon as possible, the young couple who will take over its government without any interregnum.”

With this aim in view, all the movable and immovable goods that had come down from the grandfather formed a permanently intangible block that could be passed on to only one heir. These were the goods known as

biens avitins or *biens papoaux*, in opposition to later *acquêts* or marital property (savings, dowries, enlargements of real estate), which could be disposed of and shared out entirely freely. *Biens avitins*—and the whole estate was presumed to be such until proved otherwise—could be neither alienated, nor mortgaged, nor bequeathed, without the express consent of the heir. The latter had a year and a day to voice his opposition to any sale of assets that he had not approved.

Even if bad business deals had forced the family estate to be sold, the heir and his immediate successors still enjoyed an exorbitant privilege: the *retrait linager* gave them, for a period of forty-one years, the absolute right to buy back the lost estate at the same price whenever they wished.

Unlike primogeniture, which was reserved for males, and which governed succession in noble or *infançon* houses alone, the type of majorate (right of primogeniture —ed.) that constituted the *avitin* of rural property devolved first and foremost on the oldest child, whether boy or girl, in other words, without consideration of sex, on the child best placed by age to found a new household rapidly. In the event of the firstborn being incapable, or owing to any serious misunderstanding, the *etcheko-jaun* also had the right to “make a firstborn” by designating any other child of his, generally the second-born.

Marriage between a male and a female heir, though theoretically permitted, never actually occurred, since each of them were responsible for perpetuating a different house and for ensuring, if need be, the subsistence of his or her siblings still at home—an honor and a duty that nobody would have dreamt of evading.

On the contrary: the constant rule was that a male heir (*etcheko premu*) should marry a young woman who had not inherited her natal property (a *cadette* —ed.), or, conversely, that a female heir should marry a young man in a similar situation. The man or woman who thus entered an ancestral home contributed a small dowry and all their labor. It was not long before these “adventitious spouses,” to use the term of the *Fors*, had completely melded their individual persons into the houses whose names they assumed. Even in the case of a man, his situation, vis-à-vis Basque customs and manners, was not in the least imbued with any idea of inferiority.

The dowry of the adventitious husband or wife was handed over to the house in its entirety, in exchange for which the young couple really became co-owners of the estate and its dependencies. Indeed, several lap-

idary inscriptions on the facades of different houses explicitly mention the “old masters” and the “young masters.” Completely and definitively associated together for farming purposes (which was the essential aim of the custom), the two couples did, however, sometimes run separate households. This explains why it is not unusual, in the Basque Country, to find two kitchens under one and the same roof.

One of the great advantages of this system of succession, based on the absolute equality of the sexes, lay in the way it avoided estates being merged, and tended to maintain, on a permanent and unalterable footing, the original social and economic balance. The number of ancestral houses could grow somewhat as a result of new ground being cleared (which happened rarely), but it could never lessen to the advantage of a small number. Its main drawback, in a region of big families, was that it almost inevitably required that several offspring remain unmarried, or else leave to seek their fortune elsewhere. But even this was in perfect conformity with the spirit that had inspired the custom. On the one hand, the house found a cheap supply of as many workers as it needed to prosper from among its unmarried, younger children. On the other hand, it was not desirable that the countryside, which was relatively poor, should become more populous; the exodus of superfluous young people avoided this danger.

The civil code that emerged from the French Revolution of 1789 established equal division, apart from a small disposable portion, and thus completely abolished this patriarchal system. Since then, the attachment of the Basques to their ancestral houses has frequently led them to get round the law so as to conform to their ancient customs. The greatest possible advantage is given to the *etchekeo premu* (still often a girl, whose husband reigns without governing), and all the available money is used to buy back from the younger members their portions of the divisible estate. This tactic is made all the easier, in many cases, by the abnegation of the children who—when they stay unmarried, or go into the Church, or head off to try their luck “in America”—consent of their own free will to receive only a fictitious portion. Even if these voluntary sacrifices are taken into account, the fact remains that such cash drains, renewed with each generation, deplete people’s savings and sometimes lead to enforced mortgaging, and have all too often undermined a number of rural houses so severely that they have had to be sold off. These cases of financial ruin are generally held to be the reason for the high level of emigration in the nineteenth century. In a village like Ainhoa where, under the ancien régime, everyone (or almost) owned property, very nearly half of the

houses are now in the hands of two families and occupied by lodgers or sharecroppers. This seems to be the consequence of dividing things out on an egalitarian basis.

Some timid attempts were made to alter the inheritance system for transmitting real estate a few years ago, but they came too late to the Basque Country. In most cases, they were not enough to put the clock back: increasingly, the tiny farms off the beaten track, up in the mountains, on unproductive, laboriously cleared land, have been definitively deserted by the younger generation. The Basque land is being depopulated from its summits down.

Neighbors

The link between family collectivities, represented by houses, within the broader collectivity of the parish was assured by rights of neighborhood. There is nothing specifically Basque about this institution, but it has preserved pretty much all of its force amongst us.

In days gone by, to become a neighbor meant, to some extent, to acquire your letters of naturalization within a community. For the newcomer, the easiest way was to marry a local heiress. If this was not possible, the collective consent of the other neighbors was required, and often, too, the payment of a small sum of money for some generally useful aim. It was also possible to lose the right of neighborhood if you committed some grave misdemeanor. This meant you were outlawed. For—subject to participating in collective tasks—only neighbors had the right to perform all trades, to make full use of and profit from communal property, to enjoy commercial privileges (especially in Baiona [Bayonne] and Donibane Lohizune [Saint-Jean-de-Luz]), and, finally, to play a part in parish administration.

In compensation, each neighbor was closely linked, in all of life's actions, by obligations to others and more particularly to his immediate neighbors.

Even today, *lehen auzoa*, “the first neighbor,” plays a predominant role in the life of each family: he is a surety, a guarantor, and a protector in all the events of everyday life—at engagements, at weddings, at the drawing up of a will, at its opening after a death—acting as a legal witness, and above all presiding at funerals. Basque customs continue to make this kind of solemn brotherhood more indefeasible than any laws would. Even when they have quarreled bitterly—as we have seen—neighbors do not dream of shrugging off their reciprocal duties, and this

momentary truce in their enmity has a certain grandeur to it. And in any case, any other attitude would cause a scandal.

The first neighbor's house is not necessarily the closest; it was so in earliest times, but in those days neighbors still lived a long way away. After all, in Senpere (Saint-Pée-sur-Nivelle), they claim that when the forest—now a shadow of its former self—covered five sixths of the village territory, the first neighbor of the master of the Laputsagaraya house, situated almost on the Spanish frontier near Dantxarinea (Dancharie-nea), was the owner of Ostolapea, an estate that stretches to the borders of Getaria (Guéthary) and Ahetze—a good eleven miles away on paths through the woods! This is pure legend, but in its exaggeration it is a wonderful symbol of the force of neighborhood links in bygone days. We will come across these links frequently, in our brief survey of what remains of the old customs that surround the great stages of human life: birth, marriage, and death.

Birth and Baptism

Signs, if not in heaven at least on earth, foretell, so it is said, the future birth of a Basque child. In particular, when a woman is about to discover that she is pregnant, but is still unaware of the fact, the owl's hooting in the woods apparently announces the event to all the gossips around. The news causes no great disturbance, for Basque women make little fuss about giving birth to their children; they carry on working, as though nothing were amiss, right up to the final moment.

Some untrustworthy authors claimed, in the nineteenth century, without providing the least proof, that as soon as the child was born, the father occupied his wife's place in bed, and, in this curious position, received the compliments of the neighborhood. In Béarnais dialect—as there was no Basque term that could be applied—this would be called “to do the *couvade*.” No question relative to the Basques has roused as much debate as this. Let us try and summarize the situation.

The existence of the *couvade* as an ancient and universal custom is not a myth. Strabo (book 3) attributed it to the Iberians. The medieval *fabliau*, *Aucassin et Nicolette* (thirteenth century) described it with mocking precision. Between 1271 and 1295, Marco Polo mentioned that it was practiced by the Tartars. Explorers of our own age have come across it in Africa and the Americas. Indeed, it seems not to be unknown in certain regions of Spain. There is nothing shocking about such a custom, if we try to interpret its meaning without preconceptions. It may be

either an outward show in which paternity is acknowledged, or a superstitious belief in the transmission, by contact with the newborn, of the strength and virile qualities of his progenitor. We have heard many similar tales since the vogue for divining came into being.

But we still need to know whether the Basques themselves practiced *couvade*. No author mentions it among us before the frivolous Chaho, who seems merely to have lifted the idea from Strabo. The authority of the English philosopher Herbert Spencer played a great part in the subsequent spread of this unfounded assertion, which periodically resurfaces and has even slipped into the latest edition of the *Encyclopédie Larousse*. And yet—if we except the evidence of a joker from Aiherra (Ayherre), in 1874, now acknowledged to be worthless—the most painstaking investigations carried out since around 1860 by scrupulous researchers such as Webster have never managed to unearth, anywhere in the Basque Country, a single case of *couvade*. So while the Basques may have practiced this singular custom, something which a priori is far from impossible, it seems certain that they have long since lost even the memory of it.

Quite indisputable, on the other hand, is the following gracious custom in which the attachment of the Basques for tradition is attested even in the way they get around its prescriptions. It is not acceptable for a woman who has just given birth to pass the threshold of her house before first going to church for the churching ceremony. In such a case, when an *etcheko andere* (today *etxeakoandre* —ed.) needs to go into the garden or to the fountain, she places a tile from the house onto her head and goes out, her conscience clear, considering that she is still under her own roof, given that she is carrying part of it over her head.

In the Basque Country, baptism is considered as an urgent business; people perform it, in whatever the circumstances, as quickly as possible. It used to be the case that, among the people accompanying the newborn to the church, there was always either a child of the house, or a child from the “first neighbor’s,” entrusted with a pitcher containing a flask of eau de cologne covered by a fine folded napkin. All of this was for the use of the priest who used it after the unctions. In Lapurdi (Labourd), and only on such special occasions, they used one of those fine pitchers in bronzed English earthenware that Basque sailors in bygone times used to bring back from Newfoundland, and which can still be found in almost all good homes. The baptismal rites are attentively followed; indeed, it is believed that if, in the course of the ceremony, a few words have been left out, the child runs a real risk later on in life of becoming a wizard.

Up until now, certain first names have been the object of a clear predilection. In the fifteenth century, some of those that were still being used had nothing Christian about them: *Ochoa* (today *otsoa* —ed.), “wolf,” *Usoa*, “migratory dove,” and so on. They have long since fallen into abeyance, as have certain archaic forms such as: *Domenjon*, *Eneco*, *Marticot*, *Marisantz*, *Bettirisantz*, and so forth. The latter, the equivalent of Peter, survives allegorically in folklore; poverty is always personified under the name *Bettirisantz*.

None of the first names still in use is taken from outside the list of saints in the calendar, but Basque pronunciation has given them a quite particular twist. For Bernard, Raymond, Etienne, Samson, Martin, Arnould, Bertrand, Ogier, and Sauveur, they say: *Beñat*, *Erremun*, *Ichtebe*, *Tchantcho* or *Chanchin*, *Mattin* or *Chemartin*, *Eñaut*, *Pettan*, *Oyer*, and *Saubat* or *Chalbat*. This latter name even has a feminine form, *Saubadine* or *Chaadin*, practically untranslatable into French.

The same applies to the names of women, with Joséphine, Françoise, Etiennette, Catherine, Gracianne, Madeleine, Marianne, and Jeanne becoming *Kochepa*, *Panchika*, *Estebeni* or *Estefana*, *Kattalin* or *Katicha*, *Gachucha* or *Gachina*, *Mayalen*, *Mañaña*, and *Gaña*.

Some of the most widespread first names have many different variants, probably following the Latin, Gascon, Spanish, or French form that served as their point of departure. So Jean produces *Iban*, *Joannès*, *Guanès*, *Ganich*, and even *Manech*.

Children are almost all given the first names of their godmothers and godfathers. So it used to happen—quite often, in fact—that several brothers and sisters all had the same names. They were distinguished from each other by really attractive diminutives, that have now almost all fallen into disuse: Jeanne, for instance, was turned into *Ganhaurra* or *Ganachume*; Marie became *Mayttipi* or *Haurra-Marie*. The diminutives in *tcho* or *tchu* (*Ramuntcho*, *Maritchu*; today *txo* and *txu* —ed.) are quite recent Spanish imports.

Marriage

People are often engaged for a long time in the Basque Country and their engagement does not entail any conspicuous ceremonial. Since social inequalities were and still are relatively little in evidence, and it frequently happens that young couples become engaged on their own initiative and fairly early, following their inclination. Their parents give (or withhold) their consent, and sometimes intervene to impose a union more to their

taste. The advice of priests has a significant weight in matrimonial negotiations. In addition, for all their fiery temperament, Basques almost always bring quite a positive attitude to their conjugal intentions; so, from the material point of view at least, unsuitable unions are rare. On both sides, marriage is taken equally seriously. Adultery remains practically unknown. If it were to happen, a fearful moral sanction is ready and waiting to punish it: a swath of greenery, mysteriously scattered at night between the houses of the two guilty persons, is revealed by the daylight, attesting their misdemeanor to the eyes of all.

It is on a Saturday evening that a *gizongai* (literally “husband material, a bachelor” —ed.) goes to court the young girl he is seeing. Hence, or so it is claimed, the Zuberoan name for Saturday, *neskanegun*, “the day of girls,” but this popular etymology should apparently be treated with caution. The liberties granted to suitors are quite large, but they are far beyond the much larger liberties granted to suitors of the days of yore. According to the learned canon Veillet, a bishop of Baiona, Monsignor Fouquet (the brother of Louis XIV’s famous superintendent of finances) had the greatest difficulty in eradicating from Lapurdi the inveterate habit of trial marriages. This fact is confirmed by the following passage from a manuscript by Lespès du Hureauux, dating from 1718:

Among the same people, an abuse authorized by widespread usage that had become, as it were, a sort of law, had long since inveigled itself; it consisted in the fact that, once the young couple had promised the faith of homage to each other, they lived together and usually married only after they had produced several children. Monsignor Fouquet, the bishop of this diocese around the end of the past century, found it most difficult to correct this abuse and was obliged to resort to excommunication. Nonetheless, this ancient usage is still remembered and to some extent practiced in the area.

Ezkont eguna aise izanaren biharamuna.

“The wedding day is the day after the good times finish.”

as an impertinent Basque proverb puts it, but at least that day is made the most of. Indeed, in the best houses, the rejoicing can sometimes last for two or three twenty-four-hour stretches; but while gastronomic traditions worthy of Gargantua are still flourishing, many other attractive customs are gradually being lost. While they used to be practiced everywhere, there is little chance of seeing them these days outside the mountains of Zuberoa (Soule).

Once the date of the wedding has been fixed (usually a Tuesday), everyone proceeds, a few days beforehand (generally two), to perform what is called *hatiika*. This is a matter of transporting to the house where the future couple will live the furniture and the trousseau brought by the newly arrived spouse, male or female. The father leads the first wagon harnessed with oxen in full livery: bells, thick fleeces to conceal the yoke, cloth mantles with wide blue or red stripes embroidered with giant initials. The artfully arranged trousseau is covered with a counterpane with a cushion on top. On a chair tied behind the wagon are placed clogs decorated with copper nails in the shape of an ace of hearts or of spades; there are also a broom, a pick-axe, and a rake. Previously, in the case of the bride, the distaff, the spindles, and the reels were prominently displayed, and these symbolic objects were often finely carved and decorated. On other wagons, more or less numerous depending on the wealth of the bridegroom, pride of place was given to the mattresses and the furnishings, all displayed to their greatest advantage. The seamstress and the joiner, the authors of all these treasures, formed part of the procession; it was they who, on arrival, arranged the bedroom of the newlyweds. Often in the same parade, but sometimes separately, the godfather led a magnificent plump sheep with ribbons and gilded horns to be eaten at the wedding feast—escorted by a whole crowd of ewes with tinkling bells, the *tzintzarrada*. Not long ago, the procession also included several girls carrying on their heads big baskets furnished with napkins and filled with chicken, loaves of bread, bottles of wine and liqueur, big “spit-baked cakes” decorated with flowers, and so on—all food provided by the guests themselves. A good meal is of course given to all these visitors, and it can be said that the wedding really begins on that day. Two days later, everyone gathers at the square once more: the best men will go to fetch the bride, who gives each of them a fine cambric handkerchief. And, to the sound of a merry *zinkha* or *irrintzina*, everyone jostles and bustles to the town hall, and then, with more ceremony, to the church.

It is at this moment that there happens, if one of the newlyweds comes from outside the village, the old custom of “placing the bramble” (*khaparra*). At the entrance to the cemetery, and sometimes at several points the procession is due to pass, the young people (boys or girls, depending on the sex of the newcomer being admitted to the community) set up an arch formed by a long piece of beribboned bramble. A colored belt beneath it bars the way to the wedding guests; it is lifted in exchange for small tributes exacted from each couple. A few gunshots—these have sometimes erroneously been seen as the symbol of some primitive abduc-

tion—ring out just as the newlyweds themselves cross the barrier. Those who are collecting the toll gallantly offer their victims wine or cigarettes and bouquets of flowers.

Usually, the ceremony at church is not marked by any special custom, though the priest sometimes has just one ring to bless—the married man often abstains from wearing a wedding ring. However, it is worth noting that in certain localities such as Donibane Lohizune, during the mass, the *benoîte* drapes on the shoulders of the newlyweds a white satin scarf that unites the young couple. A few superstitions, now vanished, used to be in evidence at the nuptial blessing. This was supposed to have the power to sanctify the clothes worn on that particular day; so the bride would apparently cover herself in several dresses, one on top of the other—later, these would be very useful for her, affording her long-term shelter from spells. On his side, if the bridegroom feared the evil spell known as *esteka*, “physical deficiency,” he had to keep a fold of his future wife’s dress on his knees during the mass.

In several villages, there is a touching custom: after the wedding mass, the newlyweds, slipping away for a few moments from their entourage, go alone to the cemetery and pray at the tomb of the house that they will perpetuate. Husband or wife—whichever of the couple was until then a stranger to the estate—is thus, so to speak, solemnly associated on that day with the cult of the dead of the new family.

There is nothing particular to note in the subsequent secular part of the festivities. Even though the wedding feast lasts for several hours, a supper is served late in the evening, since the party breaks up only at dawn. This time, it is the bride herself who serves her guests, thus marking the start of her apprenticeship as the *etcheko-andere* (“woman of the house” —ed.).

From now on, she will be able to say: *Senhar duenak, yaun badu*, “Who has a husband has a lord.” This—quite accurate—adage expresses less a state of affairs (for Basque women are far from being, as they are in other countries, slaves forced to undertake the hardest labors, but partners living on terms of real equality with their husbands) than a characteristic state of mind against which nobody would ever dream of rebelling.

In fact, in her own domain—housework and children, the farmyard, the garden, sometimes a small business—a woman in the Basque Country enjoys as much independence as absolute authority. Given this, she can perfectly well accept that, in private life, and even more in the relations between the household and the world outside, the man always quite

naturally comes first. An old saying expresses this unquestioned masculine preeminence: *Gizon gizona, saski petitik ere*, “The man is always a man, even in a basket.”

Another very evident characteristic of married life, one that is partly a corollary of the previous one, is the extreme reserve shown by the couple in public. In Eskual Herri, there is really little chance of seeing a man offer his wife his arm, even less his addressing her familiarly, or even using her first name. Such familiarities are considered as contrary to the dignity of the *etcheke jaun* (“man of the house” —ed.). Whether going to mass, to market, or to a festivity, he will tend to set off alone, and the woman will go her own way. In the Basque Country, the different places occupied by both sexes in church are merely the symbol of an equally complete separation in all the manifestations of collective life.

Marriage and its social repercussions cannot be discussed without mention being made of the background presence, still very much in favor, of the *charivari* or hurly-burly. The Basques jealously preserve this custom, even though it has almost disappeared everywhere else. This punishment, which in any case can be avoided by the payment of a ransom (a little bit of blackmail that morality condemns but customs tolerate) can be applied to any kind of local scandal. In 1828, a memorable *charivari* perpetrated at Ezpeleta (Espelette) was caused by the marriage between a local girl—Catholic, of course—and a Protestant Justice of the Peace. Usually, the most frequent causes are the satire on a husband who allows himself to be henpecked, the wedding of a lecherous old man, or—and this is the subject of even greater indignation—a widower who simply wishes to remarry.

The current form assumed by the *charivari* is that of the nocturnal serenade (*galarrrotza* or *tzintzarrotza*; today *galarrotsa* and *zintzarrotsa* —ed.): these are bawdy songs interspersed with a hideous racket of cow bells, goat’s horns, and pots and kettles (*thipinautsi*) that, when rubbed with a piece of string coated in wax, make a shrill din. Unless the victims surrender, this concert is repeated from the first banns until the day after the wedding.

Previously, even worse things were done: in broad daylight, during the journey between the town hall and the church, the newlyweds would be subjected to an outrageous assault, described by Francisque Michel: “A procession of honor, with musicians and poet at its head, accompanies the young couple to church; the older choirboys get them to smell the perfume of red pimentoss, which they burn in earthenware pots used

as censors; finally, at least in Lower Navarre, they carry at the end of a pole a cat surrounded by straw which they have set on fire.” The horror of this last detail suggests that this was a very ancient custom.

At a more distant period, there was also *asto lasterko*, “the race on the donkey,” where the guilty party was forced to sit backward on his or her mount and was slowly paraded in this humiliating posture. This was mainly the punishment reserved for badly behaved women, but, in 1793, twenty-five inhabitants of Jeztaze (Gestas) in Zuberoa, unhappy with their mayor, the citizen Etchebarne, seized him and jeered at him as they led him around like this, wearing his official mayor’s sash.

Later on, this barbaric procedure was relatively toned down, under the name *asto lasterrak*, “donkey races,” a farcical cavalcade of fifty or sixty donkeys ridden by young men decked out in tawdry rags. They would stir the whole village with their din and eventually came to a halt outside the house of the “subjects” to serenade them and mimic their alleged misdeeds. In spite of the severity of official justice, which does not usually tolerate displays of this other, more popular justice, such processions still occasionally seem to take place.

It is from this last custom that are derived the *charivarique* parades and comedies, real spectacles, much more picturesque, which we shall be describing in the next chapter. Even the way they are tolerated as public amusements gives them a less brutally aggressive character.

Death

The courage, patient waiting, and resignation that the Basques show in the face of death have always been remarked on as a noticeable characteristic of their psychology. In vain would anyone seek romantic images—the graveyard worm, the skeleton and the funerary mask of the Grim Reaper—in their part of the world. Even ghost stories hold but a restricted place in their folklore.

On the contrary, it is a serene face, without anguish—the face of eternal rest after a life of hard labor—that constantly presents itself to their minds. It is a familiar idea that they do not attempt to ward off, but which is present on every occasion, like a constant leitmotif, on the web of everyday life. It is not just the bell towers—those of Urruña and Sara (Sare)—which, in Latin or Basque, proclaim to the passerby: “All hours wound, the last hour kills.” On ordinary rural dwellings, found next to the names of the master founders in the stone of the sculpted lintel, we can often read such grave sentences as these:

Memorare Novissima Tua Et In Aeternum Non Peccabis.

“Remember your last ends and you will never sin.”

Or, more gripping in its Basque laconism, the very common apostrophe:

Biciac, Orhoit Hilciac.

“Living creature, remember death.”

Prepared from early on for his final hour, conscious of having done as much as possible for the life to come, the Basque also sees his end approaching with the consoling assurance that he will not be forgotten. Buried in the very heart of his village, a few feet away from the square with its clatter of pelotas, at the foot of the church where the songs and prayers of the living echo, he knows that every Sunday, after the church services, he will be visited by the “people of the house” (*etchekoak*) who, from generation to generation, will come to pray for a few moments at the tomb of their dead.

There is nothing less gloomy than Basque cemeteries with their very low walls, running along the main road, and sometimes acting as a short cut for pedestrians attending to their ordinary business. Large grids laid flat over a ditch in front of every entry are there to keep out animals. Sometimes, a few tall cypresses barely cast a shadow imbued with oriental melancholy across this merry, mossy little garden, where plain tombs are scattered like a flock of sheep among the weeds, the carnations, and the climbing roses. The tombs themselves—at least up until today—were only rarely covered by a heavy stone slab. More often, a mere swelling in the soil indicates the place of the dead body. At its head rises the *hil harri*, the tombstone. There are three sorts of these.

Firstly, those in the shape of the cross are not found before the beginning of the seventeenth century and started to invade cemeteries only toward the end of the eighteenth. They are generally quite high and very flat, with a broad base. In Lower Navarre, the outline of their feet is cut into notches and festoons whose luxuriance is somewhat reminiscent of Baroque art: ornaments and inscriptions painted black on white give them the quite typical appearance of “death notices.”

Only in the middle of Lapurdi, within an area of some ten miles around Kanbo (Cambo), one finds tabular steles whose sober and elegant shape appears to be copied from that of Roman *cippi*. This should

probably be seen as an influence from the Renaissance since these little monuments date from neither before the seventeenth century nor after the second half of the eighteenth century. There are sometimes individual epitaphs on crosses and tabular steles, but sometimes—more often, in fact—we find the collective note “the burial place of this or that house.”

Conversely, most disc-shaped steles are anonymous and distinguished only by their different ornamentation. From the sixteenth century onward, they start to bear dates, but there are many others, visibly older, that may be seven or eight centuries old. With these strange works of funerary art we come to one of the most ancient traditions in the Basque Country. Similar, albeit less numerous, steles have been discovered here and there in the Landes, along the Pyrenees and throughout the Hispano-Portuguese peninsula. This vast area of expansion suggests that the disc form in Aquitania represents a contribution of so-called Iberian civilization; this opinion is confirmed by the discovery of certain steles—such as the one exhumed in Clunia, Spain—bearing inscriptions in the indecipherable characters of the Iberian alphabet. In relation with this distant origin, various signs suggest that the disc form might be an anthropomorphic derivative of the menhir, the standing stone of megalithic funerary cults. In fact, the disc itself reminds one, in its outline shape, of the silhouette of a head; sometimes, too, the profile of the rest of the stele vaguely suggests the image of the neck and shoulders of a human being.

The disc shapes of Basque cemeteries are very different in size. The most archaic are small in diameter and, half buried thanks to the continuous raising in soil level, they seem laid flat on the ground. Others, especially in the north of Lower Navarre, have imposing dimensions, with a somewhat raised base, and an extremely thick cross section. We will be discussing their (remarkable) decoration below.

It is not easy to give an overall picture of the very significant funerary rites, which vary from one part of the Basque Country to another, and sometimes from village to village, depending on whether they are more or less completely maintained.

The ringing of the *sagara*, that is, the Elevation of the host, is considered to be the certain omen of an imminent death if it should by chance coincide with the chiming of the hours on the church clock. Previously, when the death agony began, a tile of the house roof was removed to let the soul through as it rose up to heaven. In many places, the bell is still tolled during the death agony. In Donibane Lohizune, at the end of the



nineteenth century, when the priest went in the evening to take the last sacraments to a dying person, every decent household would still send a female servant carrying a lantern to escort him as he went by. Apparently, it was thus often possible to see a score of lights forming a procession through the dark streets of the town.

As soon as the dying person has breathed his last, they close all the windows and veil all the mirrors, if there are any in the bedroom of the departed. The first neighbor is alerted before anyone else—it would be for him, as for the nearest relatives of the deceased, really insulting to learn of the death indirectly, from the knell. The first neighbor and his family come and take over all the preparations and work that needs to be done in the house, so as to leave the family to concentrate on their grief.

The custom of telling bees about a death still exists; otherwise, it is claimed, they will die or desert their hives. In Zuberoa, when death strikes during the night, nobody in the house or within the premises is supposed to sleep. Then they go and shake the hives that are filled with humming, and in the barn they wake the animals.

They place the rosary between the fingers of the corpse; previously, the body was covered by a *bil mihise*, a sort of cloth hiding the whole body, except at the level of the head where a band pierced with holes allowed the face to show. On the eve of the burial two of the neighbors fetch the parish cross to bear it, to the sound of the tolling bell, to the house of the deceased where it will remain during the wake.

In days gone by, the body was taken by the clergy, in the case of a master's house, from the actual home of the deceased, however far away in the mountains it might be. These days, generally speaking, the body is brought in front of one or other house at the entrance to the town, a halt determined by the district in which the bier arrives. For this first stage, the crucifer is a neighbor (the nearest one in the direction of the church). The deceased is carried without a stretcher on the shoulders of four or six men of the neighborhood. In bygone days (and even today, in Zuberoa), the coffin was placed on long strips of fabric (*lunjerak*), woven especially for this purpose; in the church, the bier was laid upon the ground and lifted only when the gospel was read. For the funeral of a young child, it is his godfather who bears the little coffin under his arm and the men do not accompany the procession.

Those attending almost always walk in line. The nearest relative who conducts the mourning, called the *minduri*, follows the first neighbor. Both of them often carry a sort of cape (which in bygone days, with a

top hat, was the obligatory dress code for all male participants). The mourning of the women took part separately, a mysterious single file of black silhouettes with invisible faces, hermetically ensconced beneath their funeral mantles.

Some writers have claimed that, in past times, the Basques had hired mourners who, during the funeral, would improvise lamentations and eulogies for the deceased. It does seem that similar practices were found in Bizkaia (Vizcaya) and Gipuzkoa (Guipúzcoa) in the fifteenth century. Medieval archives of Baiona also mention them; but in the nineteenth century, the French Basque Country had no equivalent to the poetic *aurosts* of the Vallée d'Aspe in Béarn.

What did more certainly exist, and could still be seen until quite recently, before being replaced by a rather prosaic sum of money, was the offering of loaves of bread and wax candles during the funeral service. These offerings were accepted by the *benoîte*. Certain offerings used to be much more considerable; even animals were sacrificed for this purpose. In 1479, a census of the commandery of Urdiñarbe (Ordarp) in Zuberoa noted: “when a parishioner of the church of Saint-Michel of Ordarp dies, it is the custom to give a sheep if it is a man, a ewe if it is a woman, and for the poor, a hen.” Likewise, in the sixteenth century, the custom persisted in the cathedral of Baiona of offering slain sheep at masses for the dead, both on the day of the death and on All Souls’ Day. The victims were laid on the high altar, something that a Capuchin who had come to preach for Lent vehemently condemned as a pagan and barely decent custom. The Chapter gave Duvergier de Hauranne, then canon at the cathedral, the task of defending its interests. The future abbot of Saint-Cyran, whom one would not have expected to find involved in a matter of this kind, apparently waxed so eloquent that the preaching friar was almost lynched by the populace.

Often, the women do not attend the burial itself, and remain at prayer while it is taking place. In many places, as they leave the burial plot, the participants file in front of it and sometimes throw a little earth onto the coffin; then they line up side by side in a single row, along the road leading toward the part of town where the house of the deceased stands. Here, they pray in silence for a while before shaking hands with the mourners.

The burial is always followed by a meal, either at the deceased’s home, or even—when the house is a long way from the town—in a tavern. In fact, it is considered to be a necessary duty to treat all the family

members well, as they have unhesitatingly taken the trouble to honor the deceased, often traveling a long distance to do so. In bygone days, this custom must have been the occasion of excessive feasting, if we are to judge from a mordant saying reported by Oihenart:

Hila lurpera
Visiac asera.

The dead man in the grave,
The living get drunk.

These days, there is just a modest meal, or at least a meal of appropriate sobriety. People eat gravely, but without haste, and gradually they all start talking to each other again, renewing contact with those who had not been seen for a long time. Eventually, everyone rises and, before separating, a final prayer is said aloud for the soul of the deceased.

The cult of the dead in the Basque Country is, however, not limited to the day of the funeral. To begin with, for a novena, family and friends attend a daily mass. Mourners are grouped in two rows, in the place reserved for the purpose in the house, marked by the black carpet embroidered with initials, on which candles burn. For thirteen months, one person from the family, or, failing this, a woman paid to do this, comes every morning for mass to occupy the *yar lekhu*, spread out the little carpet, and light the beeswax taper. These objects are actually often kept in the church itself, where each house possesses one of the tiny trunks piled up on one side of the nave. It used to be claimed that a widow could not remarry unless the wax taper had been completely consumed.

Several masses are still offered by the friends and neighbors of the deceased; these are announced at the funeral service. On the first anniversary, and sometimes on several succeeding anniversaries, too, there is also a pious ceremony to commemorate the dead. Finally, not just one dead person, but all those of the house, are honored in all the important circumstances of life—on the eve of a marriage, for example—by the offering of an *obligazionezko meza*. The same is true on All Saints when all the families light their candles at the same time, and the nave of the sanctuary takes on the appearance of a sea of quivering flames.

In a rather distant past, in the middle of the fifteenth century, as we read in the travel account of the Czech writer Rosmithal, and probably as late as the start of the seventeenth century, if we are to judge from a passage in the work of Pierre de Lancre, the cult of the dead was practiced not in the church but in the cemetery, on the very tomb of the deceased. Women would come every day to spend long hours at the burial places, adorning them with aromatic plants and flowers, and



lighting torches—despite the fact that these habits were condemned by several church councils.

However, it appears that clear traces of such practices remain in the way that novenas are performed in Zuberoa: every day, at nightfall, women of the neighborhood come together at the house of the deceased dressed in their *kaputchina* and carrying their candles. First they go to pray in silence in the church and then, on the recently closed tomb, lay down their lit candles for a while, and finally repeat the same gesture before separating over the tomb of the most recently deceased of the parish.

At the wavering hour of dusk, this mysterious assembly in the burial ground, dark shapes bent in a circle around a pale bush of flickering lights, is one of the most awe-inspiring visions that Basque tradition can offer.

Pleasures and Games — Games of Basque Pelota — Other Forms of Entertainment — Dances — The Popular Theater

Pleasures and Games

The Basques are a naturally serious people, though neither dreamy nor melancholy. They can also be jolly, when the occasion presents itself. Their dispersed habitat means that they are isolated in small family groups, which in turn means that they prize the advantages of sociability all the more. Fairs, markets, local festivals—these are all so many pretexts, greeted with pleasure, for getting away from their homes, coming together and enjoying themselves in company. Many collective forms of entertainment, in which they take part—games of pelota, dances, theatrical performances—are in themselves a sufficient reason to draw attentive crowds of spectators all year round.

So it would be impossible to produce a sketch of traditional Basque culture, however brief, without including the pleasures and games that hold such a large and picturesque place in the life of the region.

Games of Basque Pelota

Basque pelota, in all its diversity, comes down to two quite distinct types. First, there are the direct games that are the most ancient. They all derive from the forms of close tennis (a form of rackets —ed.) and open-air tennis that were very fashionable in the France of yesteryear, especially up until the end of the reign of Louis XIII. Second, there are the indirect games, called *blaid* games, which did not come into existence until

around 1850. In these games, the ball does not pass into the hands of a player until it has previously bounced against a wall.

The relatively recent rise in popularity of *blaid* games was initially caused by a significant change in the nature of pelota balls and then of propulsion engines. The consequence was a profound transformation that affected the appearance and the dimensions of the pelota courts and playing fields.

Up until the start of the nineteenth century, pelota balls or *esteufs* were only made out of strips of wool that were rolled up and tied up with cotton. They were much bigger than they are these days (those for *pasaka* could sometimes weigh thirty ounces), were not very bouncy, and could not easily be caught except in midair.

They were also used in the games known in Basque as *bota luze* and *mahi-joko*, which were played with bare hands on open space no longer than 160 feet, divided into two similar areas by a transversal line, with no wall. On the high grassy plateau of the mountains in Zuberoa (Soule) and Lower Navarre, it is still possible to find a few of the original courts, known as *sorhopil* (or *soropil* —ed.).

In the villages, people mainly played with strong leather gloves, initially rounded like tortoise shells, later on rectangular in shape, short, and slightly curved. There was a difference between the *lachoan* (today *laxo(an)* —ed.) and the *rebot* games, both of them a development of open-air tennis; the distinction lay mainly in the siting of the serving stone and by the dimensions of the court defended by each side. The playing areas were no more than two hundred feet long; so, when the far end is bordered by an old house (as in Ainhoe), they can be used only for the long-distance *rebot* that is played today. There was a wall, but practically its sole purpose was to receive the shot, that is, the sending of the first ball of each point; the wall was nothing more than a mere rectangle of cut stones, twelve to sixteen feet high at most, with paving of the same size in front of it on the floor: a paved area two yards from the wall was called a *barne*. This rudimentary *fronton* or pelota court was sometimes independent, and it was usually set into the actual wall of a house, as can be seen in Ahetze, Zibitze (Cibits), Aldude (Aldudes), and the presbytery of Baigorri (Baïgorry), among other places. Each court also possessed a serving stone (*bota-barri*), a sort of squat truncated column supporting a sloping piece of wood. It was placed there permanently, in the first third of the court for *rebot*, near the far end when people preferred to play *lachoan* (like the old serving stone of Aldude, which backs on to the

porch of the church). These days, for *rebot*, wooden serving stones are used, and then removed once the game is over.

The largest villages—Ezpeleta (Espelette), Urruña (Urrugne), and so on—and the small towns also possessed one or several covered *trinquets* of modest dimensions. Already marked out on a drawing dating from 1610, these pelota halls, the best-preserved of which seems to be the old *trinquet* (or *trinket* —ed.) of Saint-André at Baiona (Bayonne), were identical to the old *tripots* of French close tennis, and in particular were more akin to what were called “the inside game” in the seventeenth century, thanks to the way the meshed cylinders were arranged. The only game played in *trinquets* was called *pasaka*: it was also very similar to real tennis, the ancestor of modern tennis. In *pasaka*, the two sides are separated by quite a high net, and the very voluminous balls are launched with the help of a small leather glove.

Of all the old games we have been listing, only two have really survived, and *pasaka* is slowly dying out. Rekindled by the efforts of the French Federation of Basque Pelota, only *rebot* has regained its full former vitality, and this is only fair, since this is the finest, most complete, and most original of the Basque sports. In addition, like other more recent games, it has been subjected to the influence of the revolution introduced into the manufacture of pelota balls by the use of a rubber core.

These balls, now much livelier in action, did make possible indirect play against a wall: this was a mere children’s game to begin with, but it soon spread to adults, because it was so much easier to organize games with bare hands. But the innovation met with some resistance. A few years ago, one could still read the inscription *Debekatua da pleka haritzea*, “No *blaid* playing,” on old pelota courts, an unheeded prohibition. There were town councils, such as that of Senpere (Saint-Pée-sur-Nivelle), which took the trouble to have their rural constable issue an oral warning to any bold spirits who dared to infringe the regulations. But it proved impossible, as usual, to swim against the tide; gradually, every village had to resign itself to raising its pelota court so as to adapt it to the necessities of the new game. Only then did those harmonious forms arise, rounded off in their various different ways, with their ochre, gray, or red-brown silhouettes framing the fine-grained stone, blackened by age, of the little old walls. These extensions generally go back to around 1875, but they were generally carried out, up until our own day, in successive stages reflecting the progress of another new invention, the *xistera*.

By 1850, certain top-class players (the first seems to have been a miller from Maule [Mauléon]) had come up with the idea of increasing the strength of their arms by lengthening their leather glove and curving it inwards, so as to give a significant impetus to the spin of the pelota ball. The indisputable advantage was partially cancelled by the excessive weight of the thing. And it was also too expensive.



However, the growing vogue for the game of *blaid* gave particular importance to a lightweight, inexpensive instrument that might extend the reach of the pelota ball. People tried out types of lengthened mitts (*pala*), and then various coarse rackets (*matsardea*). In 1857–58, Gantchiki Harotcha, a young lad from Senpere, is credited with inventing a method for fixing to the wrist little oval baskets made with strips of



chestnut. Within a few years, they were being widely manufactured, and their development was given a particular boost when the most celebrated champions soon acknowledged the merits of the new glove. The use of wickerwork made the *xistera* even lighter and made it possible to give it new dimensions and curves: this would lead to the old games being modified and new ones created. The pelota courts had to be raised one more time, and the playing area had to be lengthened to well over three hundred feet for *rebot* and *blaid* played with a big *xistera*. In addition, the more recent courts are partly or entirely cemented—this is a controversial improvement, since it means the players do not have to volley so much; this rewards mere endurance to the detriment of speed and agility.

Be this as it may, the *blaid* that is usually played in thirty-five or forty-five points—the advantage going to the side that has just won a point—includes the following current variations:

With bare hands: (a) in a free place, that is, in the open air; (b) on Spanish pelota courts (which are starting to become more common in the French Basque Country), with a wall on the left; (c) in a *trinquet*. The covered *trinquets* built in the twentieth century are noticeably bigger than those where only *pasaka* was played, but they have the same chicanes—side walls, cylinders, *chilo*—which make it possible for the players to perform stunning caroms. Thus, in spite of its professional character, this is the most brilliant and most exciting form of the game to watch.

With a pala: (a) in a free place; (b) in a *trinquet*. These games are more popular on the Spanish side of the frontier than in our part of the world.

With a *xistera*—in an open place only. There are different variants: (a) The *yoko garbi*, “pure game,” also called *atchiki ttipian*, “the little hold.” This was the only version played in 1860, when the *xistera* was still quite shallow and forced you to return the pelota ball straightaway, which gives a very lively and powerful movement to the whole match. This fine game, highly appreciated by real connoisseurs, was almost abandoned at the beginning of the twentieth century, but it has come back to life in our own time. The great champion Urruty won some of his most outstanding victories playing this version. (b) Conversely, the game with the big *xistera* has been sullied by an excess of professionalism. It is played with a wickerwork glove so deeply curved that you balance the ball on it for a few seconds before returning it. A volley becomes more or less impossible, and is replaced by a backhand. This game, albeit very aesthetic and

impressive to watch, thanks to the depth of the exchanges, soon starts to seem monotonous; it is more enjoyed by incompetent foreigners than by the Basques themselves.

In the domain of direct games, *rebot*, almost the sole survivor, has also adopted the wickerwork *xistera*, but one of medium and indeed variable depth, depending on the place occupied by each of the eight to ten players divided into two sides. The players have nevertheless preserved their short leather gloves. As in all the games derived from real tennis, points are scored in games, as in modern tennis; there are usually thirteen games in a match. A *rebot* match always has a certain air of solemnity about it. The players, who are never professionals, are more prepared here than elsewhere to abdicate their own personalities in favor of team spirit. Challenges are generally made from village to village, unless the game is played between old and young or between France and Spain. There are never fewer than six umpires—chosen from among the most competent notables—to decide on disputed points—which are frequent, given the complexity of the rules. In our view, the main characteristic of *rebot* lies in the unequal dimensions of the ground defended by each side. The side nearest the wall, called the *refil*, is no longer than 104 feet, while the attacking side has to protect a space that is 230 to 260 feet long. A change of side occurs each time, within a single game; the attacking side can add to its assets two *chasses* (but only one if either team has already reached forty). The *chasse* is a penalty for certain errors committed by the *refil* side; the conclusion of the point is postponed to the following game and in the meantime the site of the *chasse* (*arraia*) is marked by a branch of foliage. When play is resumed—and once the order of the sides has been switched round—a point (*kintze*) is played on every *chasse*; an ideal line marked by the leafy branch replaces, just for this moment, the normal line of separation called the *paso*. Those who benefit from the *chasse* thus have only to defend, for a very short while, an even smaller ground—a valuable advantage, from which they naturally derive the maximum profit.

While the origin of pelota games and their development since 1800 are quite easy to reconstruct, there is a nigh total lack of documents on the longstanding vogue for the game. There is only the account, from 1528, of the Venetian ambassador Navagero who mentions—albeit rather vaguely—the existence of pelota courts in Lapurdi (Labourd). We also know that King Henry VII of England (1458–1509) offered a hundred guineas to a famous “Biscayen” (i.e., a Basque) who had played in his

presence. There are two discoidal steles—one at Garrüze (Garris), where there is the silhouette of a striker; the other at Banka (Banca), representing the outline of a naked hand and a wooden bat (*pala*)—which give us the names of two *pilotari* who must have been eminent players: Guilhem Diriarregui and Manech Suhuru, buried in 1629 and 1784 respectively. Two pelota players are also sculpted on the lintel of a house in Ahatsa (Ahaxe), where we can read the date 1785 and the name of Johannes Etchebers.

A letter written by a man from Baiona, dated July 26, 1755, and reproduced by Ducéré, relates the oldest encounter that we know of: “Yesterday, great game of pelota on the square in Agaramont [Gramont], between seven Basques, among whom there was, in a peasant’s beret and shirt like the rest of them, M. Hiriart, a doctor of Makea [Macaye], the brother of our ex-mayor; the game attracted several other Basques and people from the Spanish frontiers. . . . The doctor and his team were unfortunate enough to lose, but they are counting on a return match, fixed for next Thursday.”

With Perkaïn, born in Aldude between 1760 and 1770, Basque pelota definitely appears on the stage of history. We know his partners and his rivals: Curutchet Eskerra, Azantza from Kanbo (Cambo), and his sister Tita—the only woman who has left her name in the distinguished records of the game—and Harosteguy, Simon of Larraiotz (Larráyoz). Of the countless matches fought by these champions, three of the most famous have survived, thanks in particular to popular songs that give us significant information about them. One of these games was at Donapaleu (Saint-Palais), the other at Tolosa, and another in Aldude in 1793. The latter, in particular, has remained legendary, since Perkaïn, who had emigrated (along with almost everyone else in his village), did not hesitate—it is said—to come back across the frontier, at the risk of his life, to accept a challenge issued by Curutchet. It is even claimed that he crowned his triumph by knocking out, with an unerring blow of his pelota ball, the leader of the *sans-culottes* who had come to arrest him!

We have less information about the following generation; but, in spite of the pessimism expressed by the Gipuzkoan writer Iztueta who, in 1824, deplored the decadence of the game, pelota was not dead, since, in 1850, there was an exceptional flourishing of players. Their leader was an ordinary cowherd, Jean Darritchon, from Hazparne (Hasparren), nicknamed *Gaskoïna*. There was none of the Adonis about him:

*Kaskoinaren trunkoa.
Trunko bat iduri,
Orotarik hartza du iduri.*

“The bust of Gaskoina is like a tree trunk, he himself is just like a bear.”

as one contemporary poet sang. But beneath the rough exterior was concealed the strength of a Hercules, an imperturbable composure, and a dazzlingly adroit technique. Gaskoina is particularly known as the winner of a memorable game of *rebot*, fought in Irun on August 9, 1846, in front of a crowd of over twelve thousand spectators who were at such a fever-pitch that some of them, unable to afford a ticket, wagered their heads of cattle, and even their future maize harvests! The hero of this joust is said to have won four thousand gold francs; he won with the help of Gamio, a priest from the Baztan Valley, Harriague of Hazparne, Saint-Jean of Uztaritze (Ustaritz), and Domingo of Ezpeleta. We know the names and nicknames of only three of their opponents: Melchior, Tripero, and Molinero. Gaskoina fell prey to typhus in 1859 and died at the peak of his powers in his native village, at the age of forty-two.

After him, the annals of pelota become so detailed that, for the names of the *pilotari* and their exploits, we need to refer to the specialized scholarly studies dedicated to them. Let us merely note that while our current champions are no whit inferior to their elders, they do tend, with the odd exception, to be restricted in one single specialty, whereas the great athletes of 1880—people like Chilhar, Yatsa, Otharré, Leixelard—proved their brilliance with equal success in all the varieties of the Basque sport.

Other Forms of Entertainment

There were entertainments other than pelota games that used to be fashionable, but they are well on the road to extinction on our French side of the frontier.

One of these is the game of the iron axe or bar, called *palanka*, an exercise in which the javelin, the favorite weapon of the ancient Vascons, is reborn in a more peaceable guise. It is not without its dangers for bystanders: at the end of the eighteenth century, a young man from Abbadie, son of the lay priest of Ürrüstoi (Arrast), was killed by the axe of one of his playmates. *Palankari* were still apparently thick on the ground in Zuberoa and Lower Navarre at the end of the last century, they have become rare in the French Basque Country. The same

is not true of the Spanish Basque Country, where real champions still fight very fine tournaments. The rules of this sport are very precise, and there are no fewer than four different ways of throwing the bar. The most efficient way of doing it is for the *palankari* to place himself quite some way from the line (which must not be crossed or touched), and to work himself up by turning round and round on himself, accelerating continuously, the heavy bar being held vertically at arm's length until it escapes from the athlete's hand and goes whistling through the air. Not only the absolute distance it travels, but also the way it hits the ground, are taken into account in the judges' scores.

A very curious passage in the *Tablets* of Béla informs us that at the beginning of the seventeenth century the Basques of Izturitze (Isturits) in Arberoa (Arbéroue) were accustomed to playing "short ball," a game described with such precision that there is no doubt it was already croquet.

The Zuberoans also played games called *kalika* and *arrabilika*, a sort of rudimentary hockey or golf that no longer exists.

Conversely, it is worth noting, as ethnographic curiosities, two barbaric (and probably very ancient) games of skill before they become completely obsolete. Young people sometimes indulge in them on the occasion of local festivals, especially in the smallest villages or on the outskirts of towns: *ansara joko* and *oilasko joko*. Their common characteristic was that they were extremely spectacular, with the participants wearing special costumes and animals being sacrificed—all of which, according to the folklorists, could suggest the idea of some distant ritual origin.

The *ansara joko* or game of the goose also appears, if truth be told, as a popular echo of the tournaments and carousels of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. On horseback, dressed in white and wearing red berets, commanded by a leader armed with a saber, the young men tried in turn to gallop up and seize the head of a living goose hanging by its feet from a rope stretched across the road. When we ourselves have attended such games, the victims were stunned beforehand, a quite recent concession to people's (actually rather blunted) sensitivities. After the decapitation of a dozen or so geese (or ducks), people also enjoy slipping a small wooden dagger into a wire ring; silk scarves or colored belts, called *gerriko*, are awarded to the most skillful riders. Between each round, an intermission of Basque dances is performed by a dozen *kachkarot*, similar to those who go collecting

money on the Thursday before Shrove Tuesday in the streets of Baiona or Donibane Lohizune (Saint-Jean-de-Luz). Finally, it is worth pointing out that the goose game was also played in Baiona, but with boats on the Errobi (Nive).

In the *oilasko joko*, or chicken game, which we have attended only once at Senpere, in the Amotz district, the dance is not a mere preliminary, but an integral part of the sacrifice of the animal. For this kind of horrible ballet (in which we should perhaps see the traces of a scene of witchcraft, since the cockerel was considered as an adversary of the evil spirit), the young girls mix with the boys—as happens rarely in Basque customs—and indeed play the main role.

A more richly costumed couple than the other actors represent the king and the queen of the game. They preside over events sitting on a naively improvised podium. In front of them, a chicken is buried at ground level, or simply covered with a crate with holes in it so that just its head can emerge. The dancers, dressed in white and red, arrive one after the other in couples, and execute a few steps around the animal. At a signal, the musicians play an appropriate tune; whichever of the young women happens to be in front of the throne kneels, seizes a saber handed to her by an actor specially chosen for this task, swings it a few times in rhythm, then, brusquely, tries to cut off the victim's head. Since the saber is as blunt as the blow is clumsily dealt, several repeated attempts are required, always with the same ceremonial, before the beheading is finished. The poultry that is executed (there are several such birds) is eaten the following day, during a meal which gathers all those present, who all join in, happy and thoughtless, and make the most of this singular pastime. We believe, happily, that it can now be spoken of in the past tense, since, as far as we know, this unpleasant game has not been played since 1924.

Dances

That the Basques are passionate dancers has been known since Strabo who, in the first century BC, mentioned the dances performed by their ancestors; but to find rather more detailed descriptions of this kind of entertainment, we need to come considerably closer to the present day.

It was Abel Jouan, chronicler of the sojourn of Charles IX in our region, in 1565, who tells us how much the king enjoyed “seeing the girls dancing in the mode of the Basque; those who are unmarried all have shaven heads, and they all have a tambourine made like a sieve,

with many little bells attached, and they dance a dance which they call the *Canadelles* and the other the *Bendel*.” Clearly, the “Basque *tambour*,” which has now entirely vanished from our land, was still in use at that period; this is also attested, a few years later, by an engraved plate in *Civitates Orbis Terrarum* representing two women of Donibane Lohizune. The stringed tambourin, the only sort that the Basques have preserved, is recorded only at the beginning of the following century by Pierre de Lancre. The stern magistrate devotes no less than an entire chapter of his most famous work to the dances of the Basque witches, who excused themselves for their misdeeds on this pretext: “and they say that they went to the Sabbath merely to dance, as they are always doing in this *Pays* of Lapurdi, going to these places as if it were a parish feast day.” The pitiless inquisitor conscientiously tells us how, for the sake of evidence, he forced young women who had been charged with crimes to dance in front of the court; he distinguishes in their choreography “three sorts of *branles*,” one of which at least is not without some similarity to our current Basque jumps. “Now,” he adds a little later, “they dance to the sounds of the little tambourine and the flute, and sometimes with a long instrument which they place against their necks and then extend it down to near their belts, and beat it with a little stick.” This is, to all intents and purposes, the image of one of our *tchirulari* (today *txirulari*—ed.) playing his or her three-holed *galboulet* and accompanying himself or herself with the other hand on a *ttuntun* or a Gascontambourine. This curious musical instrument, more or less widespread on both sides of the entire length of the Pyrenees, is, in all essentials, nothing other than the “marine trumpet” extolled naively by Monsieur Jourdain in a well-known scene of Molière’s comedy *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. These days, only the Zuberoans have preserved their *tchülülari*. There are none in Lapurdi and Nafarroa Beherea, and this is a pity, since—guarding too jealously the secret of old tunes and exact traditions—they have yielded to the clarinet and the vulgar cornet, or even the accordion, and thus have taken to their graves a good part of the Basque dance repertoire.

This repertoire has been diminishing rapidly over the last century, but it is still extensive, given the smallness of the region. Only a few of these dances have a purely recreational character; most of them, performed on specific occasions by men alone, dressed in appropriate costumes, are real spectacles. The best known of the recreational dances, the *fandango*—which is actually unknown in Zuberoa and not practiced



much in Lower Navarre—has nothing Basque about it: it is a variant of the Aragonese *jota*, itself believed to come from Andalusia. According to Weber, the *cascarots* of Ziburu (Ciboure) borrowed it from Spanish Basques (who were already practicing it in the eighteenth century) only in around 1870. However, a curious comedy, *The Trial of the Fandango*, the action of which actually takes place in Donibane Lohizune, was performed in Paris, at the Théâtre du Vaudeville, in 1809. It proves that a first offensive had taken place under the Empire. In those days, the fandango, which strikes us as so chaste, was considered to be lascivious!

More ancient, the *dantza-khorda* or *dantza soka* (or *soka dantza*—ed.), which is quite often played at Basque weddings, is basically just a kind of farandole, in which young men and young women alternately are linked by a handkerchief, of which each one holds a tip. The leader brandishes a bouquet with his free hand. There are only four figures in this dance. There were probably more in bygone days, when, like its close relation the magnificent Gipuzkoan *aurresku*, it must have had a more marked ceremonial character. This was the case of the *pamperruque*—also a farandole—which the best young people of Baiona dressed in bright costumes would demonstrate to the public through the streets of the city, on every occasion of note and especially to honor noteworthy visitors. The French Revolution dealt it a fatal blow: even the music that went with it has largely been forgotten.

The Basque jumps (*jauziak*), which need to be mentioned in the plural, since there were no fewer than twenty of them—without counting their “suites,” which also had their own names and tunes—constitute the basis of Basque choreography. These are essentially men’s dances, although many years ago, some women ventured to take part in them, with success. The dancers line up behind one another, their arms dangling and their torsos incredibly stiff, their feet alone performing tiny steps on the ground, concluded by a single entrechat every time a figure ends. Until recently, the Basque jump was an important element in the little open-air balls that, under the aegis of the priest himself, took place every Sunday in every village after vespers, except during Advent and Lent. The young men were trained up and attempted to outperform each other in teams on the feast days of their patron saints, and their usual tambourine player tried to distinguish himself by his spirit of invention. This explains, in our view, the many variants (even though many have now been lost), distinguished by their names—*mutchikoak* “the boys”; *chochuarenak* (today *zozoak*—ed), “the blackbirds”—or by a precise

reference to their place of origin: *ainhoarrak*, *milafrangarrak*, *orzaiztararak*, and so on. Dancing these jumps was more than a mere amusement for young men; it was a way of upholding the renown of their town or village. This can still be seen in Zuberoa when, on leaving a *pastorale*, the honor of opening the ball is auctioned off to the people from different villages, and the winners, led by their mayor, gravely perform the first Basque jump on stage. The right to perform this ceremony is so fiercely coveted that it sometimes comes at a price of several thousand francs.

These days, Basque jumps are preserved mainly insofar as they constitute pretty much the run-of-the-mill element in the *charivarique* processions (*tobera mustrak*), which we shall be describing later on, and in the great spectacular choreographic displays of the carnival, called *santibate* and *maskaradak*.

These later ballets, apart from their singular beauty, were of real ethnographic interest; in the nineteenth century they were considered either as symbolic figures of the movement of the stars, or, less extravagantly, as medieval warrior dances. These days, the study of comparative folklore suggests that they be more sensibly linked—probably via the *Sociétés Joyeuses* of the Middle Ages—with the primitive nature cults of Indo-European prehistory. This would explain the characteristics shared between the popular dances of countries that are as far removed from one another as the Balkans, England, and the Basque Country, for example. Celebrating the spring, these choreographic festivals, which return on fixed dates and which the Basques have preserved better than many other peoples, seem in consequence to represent the traces of pre-Christian rites aimed at stirring nature's fertility at the time of renewal. We cannot develop the arguments supporting this thesis here, as they would require too much detail.

Be this as it may, there are grounds for believing that, previously, in spite of very small local variations, carnivalesque displays were equally important throughout the Basque Country. In Lapurdi, they have now quite obviously fallen into abeyance; but in 1671, in order to put down a mutiny in Saint-Jean-de-Luz, the Comte de Guiche went to the town square on Ash Wednesday since, he writes, "it is impossible to do anything Basque during the Carnival except dance," and himself took part in the festivity, joining "those from Ziburu who had come to meet him with many little bells." Even if we do not go so far back, it is a known fact that, fifty years ago, groups of *kachkarot* from Lapurdi, who go round collect-

ing money in towns and villages on meat days and can dance little more than the fandango, used to form (in Uztaritze, for example) proper little processions with distinct roles quite similar to those that are still found in Lower Navarre. Their troupe even included masked dancers—something not found elsewhere—dressed in individual disguises. These were the *besta-gorri*, “red jackets,” and the *kotilun-gorri*, “red skirts,” also known as *marika*. The latter, sporting extraordinary and very long conical head-dresses, their waists girded with countless little bells, brandished a whip formed of a cow’s tail on the end of a sweeping broom. They made a powerful impression, with their glittering, barbaric appearance.

If one heads deeper into the countryside, the Lower Navarrese *santibate* is on quite a different scale. It is a real cavalcade, with many participants—horsemen in purple and gold, an imposing flag bearer, sappers with bear-cub bonnets and wooden axes, a drum major who twirls his stick, a few giantesses nine-feet high, whose wickerwork car-casses dressed in voluminous skirts conceal skilled dancers, the *basa-andere*, wild pseudo-women in a mixture of bright colors fluttering their fans, *kachkarot* and *volanta* who are the real stars of the ballet, and finally *Jauna eta Anderea*, the lord and his lady wife, coming ahead of the orchestra, which brings up the rear of the march. This whole procession makes its entry onto the village square, hopping and skipping, and makes long halts in front of the houses of notables, to whom an improviser, an associate of the troupe, addresses versified compliments. The flounced dresses then perform the best of their repertoire, including, inter alia, a dance with sticks, apparently derived from sword dances known in various European countries, from the fifteenth century onward, under the particular name of *moriscos*; the description “Moorish” was taken in the very broad sense of “pagan.” The term *morisco* seems not to be used among the Basques, but the *ezpata dantza* of Bizkaia (Vizcaya) and Gipuzkoa (Guipúzcoa) represent the most consummate type of these sorts of extremely stylized ritual combats. The white costume of the flounces is very richly adorned with slender, brightly colored ribbons, plaited and scattered with little gilded bells. Swathes of wider ribbons, fluttering on their shoulders, fall down to their agile waists. All the jewels in the neighborhood are artistically sewn onto the plastrons of their shirts. They hold a wand garlanded with multi-colored paper. Their headdress in particular is remarkable: it is a sort of tall miter in red and pink cardboard, always decorated with a little sparkling mirror, often embellished with feathers, soft trimmings, and

gilded foliage. This sumptuous superstructure is on the way out, being replaced by a plain scarlet beret with brilliant braid.

It is in Zuberoa, the land of the finest dancers, that the rites of *ihautiri*, the “Carnival,” reach their maximum intensity. Between the beginning of January and Ash Wednesday, each year many villages organize *mascarades*. The word is always used in the plural, since there are two sections: the troupe of the “reds,” or “beaux,” takes the main roles, and drags along behind it the troupe of the “blacks,” who provide a parody. There is no mask involved in any of this, despite the name, but extremely strange traditional disguises. The number of participants can vary from between twenty-five to eighty, depending on whether they belong to a tiny village or a more substantial one. The first performance and the last (on Shrove Tuesday) are given in the village itself, but, in the interval, the ten or twelve other performances are visits paid to neighboring villages, nine to twelve miles around. These expeditions last a whole day each—and, even midweek, this day becomes a holiday both for the dancers and for those who have agreed to host them. This makes a lot of comings and goings and, as the *mascarades* move about only on foot, it is always possible for them to meet people en route, as Georges Hérelle as so picturesquely described:

It is really a pleasant surprise to see, emerging into a narrow valley, in a landscape framed by still-snowy mountains and drenched in clear winter sunshine, this strange procession, half of which is resplendent in many different colors, while the other half, with its farcical figures, has something of a resemblance to a court of miracles on vacation: a procession in which everyone gesticulates, capers about and dances to stretch their legs and work off their over-abundant youthful energy.

The gang of the “reds” marches to the rhythm of a special step, which, curiously enough, is the very same one as that practiced in classical ballet under the name “pas de Basque.” It invariably consists in a certain number of *kukullero* (or *kukuilero*—ed.), a small troupe of dancers similar to the *kachkarot*, escorting the five traditional foreground figures. First there is the *tcherrero* (or *txerrero*—ed.), with bells around his belt, armed with a broom of long horse hairs. Second there is the *gathuzain*, a cat-man who plays with the witches’ scissors (*sorgin-goaziak*), a sort of pantograph with sudden springing actions, the very image of the feline stretching out to make a leap or to seize its prey—perhaps, also, a symbol of the lightning bolt. Next comes the *kantiniersa*, a man-woman with his

short skirt, his keg slung across his back, his jacket, and his sky-blue flat hat. The *enseinari*, brandishing his flag, is also a famed dancer. Finally, the hero of the game, the *zamalzain*, simultaneously horse and horseman, with a shining, feathered diadem, his legs emerging from the silk and lace caparison that covers the frame of his *chibalet*. This pseudo-steed, which the Basques believe to be the only one of its kind in the world, is found in analogous forms in several European countries, but there are few that are as elegantly designed as the fine head from a chess game raised on a long curved neck. The *zamalzain* grasps it in one hand, while with the other he cracks his whip, and caracoles without respite. *Kerestuak*, “the gelders,” *marichalak* (or *marexalak* —ed.), “the farriers,” *Jauna eta Anderea*, “the lord and the lady,” *laboraria eta etcheko anderea*, “the plowman and his wife,” complete the procession of the “beaux.”

The anarchic throng of the “blacks” includes only rarely, apart from the ensign, the equivalent of the major roles, merely Gypsy women (*buhamiak*) in costumes cut out of bed curtains with large floral patterns and plush pompons, boilermakers from the Auvergne (*kauterak*), knife-grinders (*tchorrotchak*; or *txorrotxak* —ed.), and so on. They all have their own dances, but indulge mainly in horseplay.

Along the whole route, and at the entry to the village, the troupe encounters “barricades,” courteous ambushes that, each time, are taken by storm, as the attackers dance in accordance with invariable rules. Then they visit the notables, and are rewarded with many libations. Once they are back in the square, the *mascarade* strikes up the *branle* (*branlia*), a long series of dances performed solely by the “reds,” following an immutable order that is crowned by the *godalet dantza*, “the glass dance.” Last of all come the “functions,” a mixture of dances and strange scenes, partly mimed and partly spoken, in which the “blacks” play a large part. A general ball brings the festivities to a late end. Sometimes, on the Thursday before Shrove Tuesday, several mascarades join up at Atharratze (Tardets) and compete. The masterpiece, the culmination of the whole display, is always the successive dance of the first five roles around the wine-filled glass that even the feet that come closest, and the most energetic entrechats, always miraculously avoid. Not a single drop is spilled, and it finally acts—for a single second—as a trampoline for the last great leap of the dazzling *zamalzain*.





The Popular Theater

The popular theater of the Basques, still very close to the Farces and Mysteries of the Middle Ages, is the only one in France and, practically, in Europe to have stayed fully alive.

Lower Navarre and part of Lapurdi have only a rudimentary form of it, the *tobera mustra*, a *charivarique* parade from the valley of the Errobi, a sort of sketch improvised on the basis of a farcical courtroom judgment. The imaginary trial of the “subjects” on whom this public punishment is inflicted takes place on the pelota court, provisionally furnished with wooden stands for the audience and a small podium for the actors. The latter represent the two people charged, the members of the court, and an usher, a bailiff figure, very fidgety, generally wearing a big cocked hat and dressed, like the old jesters, in trousers in which each leg is a different color. A small group of *bertsulari*, singing improvised songs, comment on all the details of the adventure, a bit like the chorus of antiquity. Since it would be quite impossible to gain permission for this *charivari* to be performed openly, people resort to the pretext of a cavalcade that is essentially composed of the same elements as the *santibate*, together with a great number of walk-on parts (*zirtzilak*), looking immensely scruffy, who entertain the audience with their tomfoolery. The parade lasts for an entire afternoon, since several dance interludes precede and interrupt the episodes of the trial: speeches for the defense, debates, the sentencing and execution of the guilty. In the whole shimmering, colorful performance, the short spoken or mimed scenes tend to be drowned out.

In Zuberoa, however, under the name of *asto lasterra*, reminiscent of the classic “riding on a donkey,” people used to put on, not so long ago, real little *charivarique* comedies, whose scenes of everyday life, coarsely realistic, were linked together—as in the *pastorales*—by the intrigues, combats, and dances of the Satan figures. Because of their licentious character, the texts of these farces—always written down, and often in poetry—have rarely been preserved. Only fifteen or so are still available, but several others have been incorporated into tragic plays. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, the authorities have actually banned these performances that, under invented names, jeered at their victims too rudely. The prohibition was in vain, for the Basques—always cunning when it comes to doing exactly as they please—merely announced legendary or hagiographic plays of irreproachable morality, in which they simply inserted the forbidden fruit. Sometimes, *asto lasterra* was per-

formed in its entirety as soon as a curtain raiser. More often, the scenes have been scattered all through the rustic tragedy, in an inextricable confusion where only the spectators in the know can follow what is happening. And sometimes, finally, more subtle authors have managed to fuse,



more or less, the two subjects, so that the farce appears vaguely to be the parody of the serious play. Thus Roland and his Twelve Peers have occasionally found themselves involved in the spicy intrigues of *Recoquillard and Arieder*. The same actors—albeit in the camp of the Turks—took part in the *pastorale* of *Saint Louis* and, simultaneously, in the very saucy stories of *Jouanic Hobe and Arlaita*.

The “*tragéries*” (this is the special term) that can, as we have just seen, act as a screen for the farces, are in fact perfectly self-sufficient and have a quite different scope. In normal periods, hardly a year goes by without a performance of one of them; this is known as “putting on a *pastorale*.” This is performed solely by the boys (more rarely by the girls alone) of a single village, with a director, stage manager, and prompt, all of them the author himself, or rather the possessor and adapter of a collection of manuscripts. While the “organizers of *tragéries*,” as they like to call themselves, sometimes compose new plays, they are usually happy just to copy out, while adapting them to the possibilities of their troupe, subjects that the Zuberoans have been enjoying for several centuries. The oldest known performance goes back to 1750, but the copy of *Saint James* mentions, probably following the original manuscript, a remoter date: August 29, 1634. In addition, as a result of the archaic quality of their technique, there is no doubt that the *pastorales* are directly derived from the Mysteries of the fifteenth century.

However, out of a sense of respect and humility, they never stage the life of Christ as such. Whatever the subject—Nebuchadnezzar, Astyages, the Four Sons of Aymon, Henry IV, or Napoleon—the theme always comes down to expressing the struggle and final victory of the “good” over the “bad,” in other words of the Christians over the Turks. The dominant color of the former is blue, and that of the others red; so they are easy to distinguish at first sight. God does not appear in person, but is represented by angels. Satan and his two servants, Jupiter and Bulgifer, arouse the ardor of the infidels; they carry a kind of grappling iron that they use to drag the corpses of their faithful down to hell. They are, at the same time, wonderful dancers and, with a display of *entrechats*, occupy the stage in the intervals between the scenes—the *tragérie* is never divided into acts.

The theater, a wooden framework on barrels, has very basic scenery: a backdrop decorated with garlands, leaves, flowers, and ribbons. As in medieval “mansions,” two doors, one for each camp, occupy the rear of the scene; the door of the Infidels, with a big horned puppet

on top—the “Idol,” activated by strings. The Turks are always bowing down before it.

There are thirty or so actors, sometimes for twice that many roles, and they mainly wear white gloves. All the sovereigns can be recognized from their curious tiara-shaped crowns; they do not have any scepters, but brandish big sticks decorated with a bunch of ribbons in the respective colors of their party. Sometimes the Christian kings wear very brightly colored civilian costumes that look like the gala costume of a provincial official, sometimes they have outfits of a more military cut heavily laden with gold braid. The Turkish kings have scarlet cloth jackets, wear big boots, and are armed with short sabers: they are no less noble in appearance. Their warriors do not, as might be supposed, wear turbans, but a *koha*, a sort of tall funnel-shaped hat formed from a fabulous assemblage of feathers and glass trinkets.

After a sort of “show,” the actors return to the wings. Just one of them, accompanied by the ensign who waves his flag around, stays on stage to declaim, in the manner of a Gregorian recitative, *leben pheredikia*, “the first sermon,” a complete summary of the play. At the end of the performance, *azken pheredikia*, “the last sermon,” draws the moral of the story, thanks the audience for its indulgence, and wishes it good luck. Between this prologue and this epilogue, the “*tragédie*” lasts almost an entire day. Its aesthetic deliberately excludes any tendency to psychological realism. The characters in the *pastorale*, apart from those in the comic interludes that are there as a foil, are mainly creatures of a superhuman condition; they would be diminished if they were given the passionate gestures that reflect the souls of the common run of mortals. So the actors embodying them do not try to express their inner feelings by particular acting styles or personal intonations. Far from it: their postures and their hieratic movements are rigorously fixed by the tradition. They recite the lines of their roles in turn, and their only aim is to make themselves perfectly heard and understood. So their diction is as it were chanted, like a liturgical recitative. The Turks’ movements are by definition more lively and brutal, and they speak in a rougher, more staccato way than the Christians. The angel alone remains immobile while speaking; when he talks to God, at the moment of death of one of the “good,” he sings, to an ancient tune of poignant beauty.

The battles themselves are real mime shows, almost ballets, in which the armies, represented on both sides by half a dozen combatants, fence with each other, to music of noble rhythm. When one of the heroes, fatally wounded, is about to fall, the servant women rapidly spread out

a white cloth across the floor so that he will not spoil his fine clothes. Overwhelmed by growing defeats, at the moment of greatest pathos, the Christians gather on the stage where a bishop, or even the pope himself (to whom the priests apparently used to lend their own liturgical vestments) comes to bless them and rouse their courage. From then on, they fly from victory to victory. At the conclusion, victors and vanquished join forces to sing a chorus of thanksgiving. During the Revolution—since there were performances even in 1793 and 1796—the *Te Deum* was replaced by the revolutionary song *La Carmagnole*: a piquant example of Basque opportunism!

It goes without saying that the question of direction, as it affects space, time, and machinery, is resolved by quasi-ritual conventions, sometimes quite childish in nature, but always accepted by the spectators without any difficulty. The anachronisms are no less evident in the



language than in the costumes, but does this really matter? The seriousness and conviction—which are the prerogative of the actors as well as of the spectators—are enough to create a wonderful illusion. As Dr. Jau-reguiberry so eloquently puts it, “on the morning of the *pastorale*, an epic wind blows through the village and the whole of the surrounding countryside.” The miracle of art is that grandeur, once again, arises from simplicity.

Costume — Pastoral and Agricultural Equipment — Popular Art

Costume

Local costume, which regionalist displays aimed at tourists like to spotlight wherever they can, is merely one of the least stable elements of the popular tradition.

These days, on seeing a crowd of Basques, on market day or coming out of church, who would ever believe that this people, now so very fond of black and dark colors, have at certain times dressed in the most colorful clothes? And yet these bright colors were abandoned not much more than a century ago.

But since then, little by little, they have trodden the path toward uniformity. Basque women were the first to do so; they long since abandoned all individuality in relation to costume. Even the tiny black *motto*, bagging up the chignon of elderly women, hardly resembles the broad headscarves (*burukoak*) of past times.

As for the men, they are content with their espadrilles (*espartinak*) and beret (*boneta* or *gapelua*), with which it is really not difficult to pass for a Basque. The *gerriko*, a broad woolen belt (scarlet, purple, blue or black), wrapped several times round the waist, is tending to disappear: only the *pilotari* remain relatively faithful to it. It is a particular pity that the *chamar* has gone—this was the typical black smock, once very long, more recently very short, with wide accordion-like folds, closed in front with silver hooks. When we were young, a few old men still used to wear it; but none of them still wore their hair long, floating over the nape of the neck below the beret.

Though costumes have been largely lost, customs are rather preserved in everyday life. People have sometimes expressed amazement that

Eskuara had, at least in Lower Navarre, two distinct words for a man's shirt (*athorra*) and a woman's shirt (*mantharra*). The reason for this could lie in the fact that they are used in quite different ways—a man's *athorra* is not used by him as underwear. Over his skin, a Basque—in every season and at every age—always keeps on a knitted garment or flannel (*larru arraseko*) that are covered both by the very clean shirt, with or without a collar, but definitely without a tie.

Despite being perfectly well adapted to the needs of pastoral life, the rustic clothes of the shepherds (which take us to a distant past) are in turn disappearing—though they are better preserved in the provinces on the Spanish side. The *kapusail*, a sort of coarse homespun dalmatic, comprises two swathes of fabric, the one covering the chest, the other the back, like a stole. There is a narrow opening for the head, protected by a hood attached to a short three-pointed cape. From the shoulders, two widths of fabric replace the absent sleeves and afford some protection to the arms.

The lower limbs are defended from the inclement weather by *galtzoin*, strong gaiters of rough wool, on which are rolled slender leather rings that keep in place the *abarka*, a kind of moccasin formed of a single piece of calf skin. As early as the tenth century, a king of Navarre had the nickname Sancho Abarca. These days, this age-old shoe is sometimes cut out of thick rubber or old worn-out tires—an interesting example of adaptation.

While certain ceremonial clothes no longer enjoy their former widespread popularity, thanks to the invasion of contemporary fashions, they have not completely vanished, thanks to the way they have found a refuge in more specific circumstances, strictly laid down: entertainment, religious solemnities, and funeral corteges.

The same applies to the great Spanish cape with its velvet collar, which is often worn by the first neighbor leading the mourning rites—and also to the heavy black mantle with its crepe veil (*kaputcha*, *mantaleta*) in which the women in the family of someone who has passed away completely envelope themselves. Many *etcheko-andere* also use the *kaputcha* just to attend church services, but, less than a century ago, it was also used for every memorable occasion in life, including a wedding.

Likewise, the young men who form a guard of honor for the procession of Corpus Christi, or go on horseback to greet either the new priest of their parish, or the bishop on his pastoral rounds, always sport short jackets (*maripulisa*) of red linen, sometimes covered in braid. In the eigh-



teenth century and, we think, until 1830, this (together with breeches and stockings) was the usual way young men dressed for Sundays, market days, and local festivals.

After giving the reader some idea of what remains of Basque costume, let us see what it was like in bygone days.

Of the costume of the Vascons, worn, according to an old chronicle, by Louis the Debonair, we have little clear idea, except that they wore a hand dagger, a detail mentioned in Aymeric Picaud's work, around 1139:

Wherever the Navarrese or Basque goes, he carries with him, like a hunter, a horn hanging from his neck, and he usually holds two or three javelins which he calls *auconas*. The Navarrese wear short, black costumes as far as the knee, in the manner of the Scots; they have shoes, which they call *abarcas*, made of raw and still hairy leather, which they tie round their feet with rings, but which envelop the soles of the feet alone, leaving the top of the foot bare. They wear dark woolen coats which fall just down to the elbows, fringed like a hood: they call these *saies*.

By the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, we have as much evidence as we would like. Whether we are talking of the Czech Rosmithal, the grand seigneur and brother-in-law of the king of Bohemia (1466), of German or Italian pilgrims, such as Arnold von Harff (1499) and Venturino (1571), of a servant from the suite of Charles IX, such as Abel Jouan (1565), of a Spanish chronicler, Andrès de Poça (1587), of the Venetian ambassador Andrea Navagero (1528), or of the magistrate Pierre de Lancre (1609), their descriptions converge and complement each other. In further corroboration of these texts we have the fine wood engravings of Vecellio (1590), the twenty-three plates taken from the watercolors of Weiditz (1529)—which display a brilliant, somewhat barbaric coloring—and the great print that, etched by Georgio Houfnaglio, in 1567, was used to illustrate several encyclopedic works of the period.

Did the Basques of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance already wear a beret? Poça mentions “a bonnet that offers no protection from either sun or rain.” This is a perfectly appropriate general definition, but we have no image to bring any decisive confirmation of this controversial point. The word and the thing (i.e., a flat, round hat, made not of fabric but of knitted wool and filled with felt) did not definitely appear until the end of the seventeenth century. Conversely, one thing that is always noted is the way each individual went armed. Even Basque priests, according to Pierre de Lancre, traveled with “a half-pike in their hand.” The original

javelin was replaced by a sword and a crossbow, but the need for such a precaution remained the same—and this speaks volumes about the degree of security that prevailed at the time.

Truth to tell, it was mainly female attire, especially the strangeness of the headdresses, which most excited the attention of travelers. Our Montaigne, famed for his curiosity, mentions it himself in two brief passages of his *Essays*. Quite an accurate idea of these fashions can be drawn from the commentary that, in the *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*, accompanies Houfnaglio's etching:

The diligent viewer will also see in this portrait the diversity of clothes worn by the inhabitants of Bizkaia [Vizcaya] and Gascony: marriageable daughters go around bareheaded, with their hair shaven off, and on their heads, even without a scrap of cloth or anything at all, they carry vessels and other quite heavy loads. As soon as they are married, they cover their heads with a hat made more or less like a cap or burgonet, yellow in color, and wrap it round so that it looks like a horn on their forehead. The people of this land are affable, good looking, and sturdy. The men do not go anywhere, not even to church, without weapons—mainly a crossbow and arrows.

Other writers add that the shaved head of the maidens was framed by a few longer wisps of graciously fluttering hair. As for the turban with horn, which, according to Sébastien Moreau (who came to Baiona [Bayonne] with the ransom for François I) was called a *hanous*, its shape varied a little in each locality and sometimes reached a monstrous size. One widespread view in the sixteenth century gave this bizarre ornament the meaning of a phallic symbol; this interpretation was to some degree confirmed by the fact that, unlike other women, widows always wore their horns pulled down on the back. But perhaps such an ingenious explanation should be seen merely as one of those absurd prejudices of which the Basques have always been victims. Be this as it may, the horned turban did not meet with the Church's approval, and disappeared quite early in the seventeenth century.

From that time on, travelers would tend to note, instead, another and quite strange custom. Aarsen of Sommerdyck (1653) described it thus, with a clear touch of exaggeration: "In Baiona and beyond . . . the women walk around with kinds of petticoats which they throw over their heads, baring their buttocks in order to hide their cheeks." The same observation is found in Muret, an attaché at the embassy in Madrid, who, in 1666, described a procession that he saw in Donibane Lohizune



(Saint-Jean-de-Luz). Only forty or so years ago, Basque women, who then wore long red underskirts, would still commonly raise their dresses over their heads to protect themselves from bad weather or sun.

Whether written or drawn, information on this topic became rarer under the ancien régime. Until the end of the eighteenth century, popular



costume was no longer a source of interest. For this long period, we will merely quote a passage from Louis of Froidour, an unequalled observer, interesting in that he depicts the costume of the Zuberoans, even noting their favorite colors, and gives us for the first time, in 1673, the name of our official headdress:

The local people are well-dressed: men generally dress in the fashion of the Béarn, wearing the *berret* [*sic*], with short hair, a small ruff, wrinkled hose, and a Béarnais mantle, which is a tunic to which is attached a hood rather similar to that of Capuchin monks. The women are usually dressed in lined white fabric, adorned with great black or purple edges; they wear collars or ruffs which hide their bosoms and they wear hoods on their head, some of one color, some of another—these they fold down onto their heads when they wish to relax and get some air. This displays their hair hanging down behind, tied in a tress. The colors blue and columbine are very often used too, and the most unattractive thing is that they all wear really ugly great clogs. . . . [Later, Froidour adds] they wear a dagger about a foot long, as wide as our broadest swords, and a rifle.

In the nineteenth century, with the discovery of lithography and the romantic taste for the picturesque, there is yet again a profusion of documents—often rather fanciful. But we need to highlight, for its trustworthiness, the collection of watercolors (conserved at the Municipal Library of Baiona) representing Basque men and women who apparently came to this city to celebrate the passing through of the Duchesse de Berry in 1828. In this merry crowd, scarlet and cornflower blue are the dominant hues on all clothes. Trousers are starting to replace the breeches of the previous century, though this is still in evidence. Men wear the *maripulisa* with broad lapels, reaching down to the waist like a toreador's bolero. The *makhila* (or *makila*—ed.), which has a less fierce appearance, replaces javelins, pikes, daggers, or swords. The red or dark blue beret (in Béarn it is more usually brown) is, just as today, on every head, but it is broader than ours. Women find large headscarves to match the exact color of their bodice or the fichu covering their shoulders; the double points of these headscarves sometimes hang down their necks, sometimes seem to threaten the sky. These *burako*, still extremely opulent, quickly become smaller. But they had not shrunk much on the heads of the young ladies of the Second Empire.

Only under the Third Republic did the decadence of Basque costume become a *fait accompli*; in that period it assumed the appearance it still has today.

Pastoral and Agricultural Equipment

Even more than costume, pastoral and agricultural equipment is still of real ethnographic interest among the Basques.

For example, the use and manufacture of a whole series of wooden containers used for treating milk and making cheese definitely goes back a very long way. The prototype of this is the *kaiku*, a large milking vessel, cut obliquely (including the handle) from a single segment of a tree trunk. The bottom is almost always half charred; this is because milk is boiled right in the *kaiku*, by plunging it into burning serpentine stones. Now there are many reasons for believing that this method of indirect heating was already being practiced by cavemen in the Upper Paleolithic, who knew how to cook some foodstuffs (shellfish in particular) but had not yet invented fire-resistant pottery. The *kaiku* and the way of using it constituted, perhaps, the most ancient of Basque traditions.

Agricultural instruments cannot boast of such venerable old age, since they date at the latest from the Romanization of the country. This is the case with the old swing-plow (*golde nabarra*), which yielded to the modern “metal plow.” The name *golde* is actually derived from the Latin *culter*. The same Basque word is used to designate the acre, an area of land that can be cleared in a day and which, for that very reason, varies somewhat from one locality to another (the *golde* is the equivalent of 84 square feet in Sara [Sare] and 120 square feet in Senpere [Saint-Pée-sur-Nivelle]); however, Basque peasants still use it more frequently than they do the units of the metric system. The outline of the ancient *golde* is often faithfully reproduced on the ancient tombs of plowmen.

The same cannot be said—despite what has sometimes been claimed—for the *laya*, a very popular tool among the Spanish Basques, though one that seems never to have been used on our side of the frontier. It is a sort of fork with two long straight teeth mounted on a short, stout handle. Men and women marching in lines and rows, a *laya* in each hand, can turn the soil in a single powerful and harmonious gesture. The *laya* is apparently very effective on bumpy ground; it is curious that French Basques completely ignore its use.

Rural modes of transport also deserve a mention. Women carrying burdens on their heads is something that was already attracting attention in the sixteenth century—and until recently was still quite frequently found among laundrywomen, fishmongers, and so on. But when it comes to drawing water from the well, the common or garden pitcher has finally replaced, with a few exceptions, the heavy jug in earthenware (*pegarra*) or in wood circled with metal (*ferreta*) that gave Basque women such a noble demeanor when they walked along.

One can still see, albeit rarely, donkeys laden with a double panier of chestnut laths, balancing them on both sides of their rubbed and worn spines. But what has completely disappeared are—in consequence of the same system—the mule-litters or *cacolets* (*kakoletak*), the delight of curious observers in the Romantic age. There is not a traveler in the first half of the nineteenth century who did not celebrate the charms of the excursion between Baiona and Biarritz in one of those hanging seats to which, on the opposite flank of the mount, a pretty *cacoletière* acted as a living counterweight.

The wagon with a shaft, known as an *orga*, drawn by cows or oxen, has grown in size to adapt to contemporary roads, and its two wheels, quite large in diameter, now have spokes. Nonetheless, the other wagon with wheels rotating on the axle alone is still used very frequently in the hollow paths of the clayey hills of the Basque lands. In Basabürüa (Upper Zuberoa), we find a rather different model, with a chassis closer to the ground, rolling on four full little discs with almost conical profiles; this Zuberoan wagon seems better adapted to mountain slopes. Not so long ago, it was possible to hear the ox cart coming from a great distance away, thanks to the terrible squeaking of its axle untouched by any kind of lubricant. This strident clamor seems to have been deliberate—the Basques used it as a way of warning each other of their approach, so that they would not meet face to face in paths that were almost always too narrow. There is an allusion to this custom in a picturesque old saying that still reminds us:

Orga tcharrago, karranka handiago.

“The more decrepit the cart, the more noise it makes.”

To descend the ferns along the steep slopes of the hills, the Basques also use a quite typical wooden sledge, called *lera*.

The yoke (*uztarri*) used in the haulage of these vehicles is different from the collar yokes of several other countries in that it always rests on the horns. As the adage puts it:

Idiak adarretik eta gizona hitzetik.

“Oxen are led by their horns, and men by words.”

The Basque yoke, more or less the same on both sides of the frontier, is apparently one of the best adapted of its kind; it tends to spread

into neighboring countries. It is often decorated with notches made by a knife, in a fishbone pattern; these in fact remain invisible, since the heads of the oxen are usually covered by the fleece of a sheep.

In Donazahhare (Saint-Jean-le-Vieux), a skilful craftsman, Jean Bera, is perpetuating the ancestral trade with consists in founding bronze bells for all the herds of local cattle.

Finally, although it is a little arbitrary to see it as a tool, we should mention the inseparable companion of the French Basques, when they travel to fairs and markets: the *makhila*. The word comes not, as has been rashly supposed, from the Hebrew *makhel* but in a straight line of descent from the Latin *bacilla*. The thing was—and still often is—merely a cudgel of medlar wood, tipped with iron or not, with a strap and a leather handle with copper studs. Only in the course of the nineteenth century did the *makhila*, gradually assuming its definite appearance, become equipped with a goad, a fearsome weapon concealed inside its handle. So it is not correct to see in this recent detail a survival of the *aukona*, or javelin of the Vascons. The creation of the *makhila* owes a great deal to a whole line of craftsmen, the Ainciart, makers of distaffs, in Larresoro (Larressore). Through the works of Gratien (1789–1860), Antoine (1831–1873), and Jean Aiciart, known as *Khilo* (a nickname that evokes primitive industry), it is possible to follow, up to the present day, in the Musée Basque, the progressive perfecting of the proportions of the *makhila*, and the increasing importance of its decorative elements. The latter are of two kinds: first there are the winding grooves cut into the stem of the medlar while it is still standing; as they form scars, these produce a fine and usually knotty appearance. Then, fine chiseling—like those that in bygone days were traced on the distaffs—covers the three brass casings encircling the handle with its horn pommel, the goad, and the tip of lead and iron.

Today, the *makhila* remains one of the few craft productions of the region. It is still going strong, and is exempt from the spirit of pastiche that spoils most neo-Basque objects. We need however to add the manufacture of the *chahako*, that little goatskin wine container, which Basque peasants take to work or hunting for when they are thirsty. Although it has been used for a good long while, until recently it appears that the *chahako* (or *zahato* —ed.) was always imported from Spanish Navarre. In Ainhoa, these days, it is a small modernized industry, whose clientele extends far beyond the limits of Eskual Herri.



Popular Art

The Basque Country is relatively poor in works of religious or secular archeology with evidence of the great styles of the past; on the other hand, it does possess a regional decorative art, rich and completely homogenous, both in technique and in its various applications. While in several of the most lush provinces of France—Normandy, Burgundy, or Béarn—the somewhat bourgeois appearance of rustic styles reflects quite closely the contribution of the classic French periods, Basque ornamenta-

tion, relatively more reluctant to absorb the transient influences of urban art, is more akin to the archaïcizing tendencies that are found in Brittany, in Auvergne, or in Upper Savoy.

If we try to see it as part of a broader framework, it is clear that Basque art also has certain curious affinities with the popular creations of various Central European countries. Its material extent, however, is much less extensive. This is a detail of some importance. In order to define the spontaneous art of a people, it seems to us, indeed, also necessary to point out the lack of certain productions as to insist on those that are prevalent. To mark out the limits of Basque art may here help us to know, right from the start, wherein its quite real originality resides.

Let us observe, to begin with, that color plays but a minor role in it. There are no painted furnishings or objects, apart from a few clock plinths from the nineteenth century. Embroidered fabrics are usually in a single color, dark red or dark blue, or even black. In addition, many minor arts such as weaving, lace, gold and silver work, and painting can be considered to be practically nonexistent. Likewise, work in copper, tin, iron-work, and ceramics shows no particularly characteristic trend. Forged iron, insofar as it diverges from the path of small and utilitarian productions, seems to have been totally subjected to the artistic influence of the powerful corporation of the Baiona *faures*, whose (admirable) works are without qualification based on the Louis XIV and Louis XV styles. The faiences of Garrûze (Garris), and in particular those known as Ezpeleta (Espelette) faiences (though these were, we believe, actually manufactured in Baiona itself) are quite closely akin to the very eighteenth-century style productions of Samadet in Les Landes. All this remains clearly secondary. In the final analysis, it is almost solely in the decoration of wood, and even more of stone, that the Basques have shown the full measure of their artistic personalities. As might have been predicted from the study of traditional institutions, Basque rustic art is first and foremost monumental, domestic, and religious; it usually embellishes the durable goods that are closest to the hearts of the inhabitants of this country: the house and its furniture, the church, and the tomb.

A few humble and familiar objects were however given a rather primitive but gracious ornamentation, dug into the wood at the point of a knife or a red-hot nail. This was work done by shepherds during their long hours of leisure in the solitary pasturelands of the high mountains. *Joalte*, a broad wooden collar used to hang the bell from a ram's neck; *gazna achal*, the cheese mold that creates a round geometrical imprint; *ferrela*, the slender disc of pierced wood that is floated on the pitcher to

prevent the water from splashing; *astalkari* and *khilu*, the spinners' spool and distaff—these, usually, are the bases of this naïve pastoral art.

Let us now tackle the production of the real craftsmen in wood, the makers of hutches and the joiners.

It is in Lapurdi (Labourd) that we mainly find the masterpieces of their skill: the half-timbered facades of the houses and, inside the churches, those monumental galleries whose importance we pointed out above. The work is a little rough, but it is bold in execution. Whether we are talking of wall plates, purlins and rafters on the outside of buildings, or beams, pillars, and corbels that all together comprise the frame of the galleries, the decorative elements remain similar—and they are influenced to some extent by the great classic styles: the ogee arches, ovolos, and flutes of the Renaissance, and the partitioning, foliated patterns, volutes, and palmettos of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Balusters with redundant profiles hint at the proximity of Spain. The beginnings of banisters are often rather elaborate, and sometimes even display attempts at embossed sculpted figures (the churches of Arrangoitze [Arcangues] and Itsasu [Itxassou]).

As for the gilded sculptures of reredoses, they seem to be the work of skilled but impersonal artisans who came from elsewhere.

Conversely, furniture demonstrates its purely local manufacture. The use of oak wood would be almost exclusive, if cherry, with its fine glossy tone, dark red or golden, did not just as frequently characterize most French Basque rustic furniture. This furniture generally preserves a very sober appearance, both in its somewhat squat lines and in its ornamentation, whose essential features are also found—albeit in more sophisticated forms—in stonework.

People might object that there is considerable decorative richness displayed on the front of chests and coffer (*kutchak*; today *kutxak* —ed.)—but these are almost always works imported from the Spanish provinces and that become rarefied as soon as we move away from the frontier. To the north of the Errobi (Nive), the chests become simpler, with minimal adornment—a raised string highlighted by a rough horizontal molding. The oldest two-door sideboards are derived from these chests and in the upper part, instead of a drawer, they keep an empty space to which access is gained by lifting the entablature with its hinges. The cupboards, often as wide as they are high, end in fronts and cornices, always straight. The dresser (*mankalasea* or *basherategia*) hardly ever has fewer than three doors, and sometimes several more; it can be

really monumental in size. One noteworthy thing: old beds are very difficult to find; it is possible that, in many cases, they have been burned at a crossroads—a superstitious custom that, even today, is followed after a death, but only the mattresses and the pillows of the departed.

We have kept until last the only typically Basque (if not Zuberoan) piece of furniture, the *zuzulu* or *zizailu*, a huge wooden bench with an upright back, part of which can be lowered at will to form a little table. On the *zuzulu* sheltered by the mantelpiece, the *etcheke-jaun* takes his meals near the fireside. In this favorite spot, he sometimes even takes his siesta, if we are to believe the proverb that, according to Oihenart, used to be applied to lazy people:

Ohetic mahaira, mahaitic susulura, korongas Paradusura.

which he himself translates thus:

“From bed to table, from table to the great bench, and from there, snoring away, to Paradise.”

If we now pass to the work of stone cutters (who were often ordinary masons), we find a much more evident luxuriance of decorations. This taste for lapidary art, which corresponds so well to the conservative tendencies of the Basque soul, is indisputably better developed in our part of the world than in all the neighboring lands. It is initially carried out (especially in Lower Navarre) for the sake of the ancestral house: fully bending arch stones over the portal, lintels, or even complete frames around a door or a window are covered, not just by long inscriptions with fine lettering in relief, sometimes very curiously ligatured, but at the same time by a complete set of very delightful ornamentation. Sculpture in the round is almost always absent, and the Basques' favorite procedure is still simple champlevé, for here alone have they been able to show all their skill.

Conceived in the same stylized manner, other more secret beauties are spirited away into the inner sanctum of houses: in Arberoa (Arbéroue) for example, a whole school of stone carvers, active until 1870, splendidly decorated the back of the hearths of rustic kitchens, and even the front of the humble charcoal stove, raised, it might be said, to the dignity of an altar to the household gods.

The church also plays its part—a somewhat lesser one, admittedly—in this quest for artistic adornment. Here or there, sometimes a porch





(Ainhoa, Ezpeleta), sometimes a strange font (Urruña [Urrugne], Garüzte) or else a piece of fenestration, a recess (Sara, Senpere), or a fine cross on a pedestal in the middle of the cemetery (Luhuso [Louhossoa]) indubitably reveal the hand and mind of a local craftsman.

But in the final analysis it is the *hil harri*, “funerary stones” that attest most completely to Basque artistic tendencies. The large surface of the tombstone is particularly propitious to the development of epigraphy, and the tabular stele is also very suitable for this, but one of its faces, often even its edge, is kept for ornamental motifs. From age-old discoidals to the crosses of the nineteenth century, we can follow the evolution of lapidary technique, sometimes in a single cemetery. The craft is at first coarse, but powerful in its simplicity, and from the sixteenth century onward it reaches its perfection: sufficiently deep carving, with precise crests, for the grainy stone to set off the vigorously traced reliefs. Toward the beginning of the nineteenth century, this robust style grows more slender. Little by little, the motifs become both more saccharine and more complicated; the ever-decreasing thickness of the champlévé work starts to conceal, thanks to the black-on-white painting, the poverty of its execution.

In spite of this relative decadence, the general characters of Basque art do however persist through the ages. Their minor variations depend rather on geography; it is quite easy to recognize in the surroundings of this or that center the favorite procedures and themes of various lapidary workshops of bygone times: those of Amikuze (the Pays de Mixe), the environs of Bardoze (Bardos), Iholdi (Iholdy), Itsasu, and Kanbo (Cambo).

In spite of these nuances, the unity of this rustic ornamentation is still a constant, whatever the domestic, religious, or funerary domain in which it is manifested. Everywhere, on a cupboard, a font, a tomb, or a garden stone, the same decorative or symbolic elements continually appear, juxtaposed or melded together, following similar methods of composition.

We can classify this general repertoire of Basque craftsmen under three main rubrics. First, the themes of a religious character (which by themselves constitute a good half of Basque ornamentation); second, linear and geometrical motifs; and third, representations of conventional or realist figures.

Among religious symbols, the cross naturally occupies pride of place. There is the Maltese cross, the recrossed cross, and liliated crosses,



which were doubtless copied onto coins. There are crosses from Lower Navarre, either pierced or with their branches charged with fantastic indentations, probably inspired by the work of gold or ironsmiths. Then crosses quartered with an X, in which we can see a very deformed echo of the romano-byzantine chrisim. And wayside crosses of Zuberoan steles whose crosses sometimes take the shape of a *tau*.

The monogram of Christ is no less frequently found and it has led to the most curious interpretations on the part of the craftsmen: its three letters, sometimes juxtaposed, sometimes interwoven, often have a gothic shape; the *I* is sometimes (in the sixteenth century) replaced by a fleur de lis; the *H* is almost always surmounted by a cross or even by a plume of ferns; the *S* (especially in Lower Navarre) assumes strange shapes. Sometimes the Greek letters *alpha* and *omega* crown the whole design. Other symbols—the monogram M.A. next to the mystic rose bush, hearts aflame or pierced with arrows, the lamb bearing the cross—seem noticeably less widespread.

On the other hand, the representations of ritual objects are many and varied: there are ciboria, monstrances (often associated with a floral or geometrical motif), candlesticks and altar vessels (always in pairs), and processional crosses, whose arms are decorated with bells (like the one that is still preserved in the church of Ahetze)—these all aroused the indignation of the devout Pierre de Lancre three centuries ago.

Linear and geometric motifs are among those reinvented by popular workmen in all the countries of Europe; it is only the exceptional frequency of some of them and, in particular, the way that they are combined that confers on them a relative originality. Let us quickly enumerate them. There are rosettes with four, six, or eight leaves, which are sometimes interwoven like the mesh of a net; radiating motifs that, reduced to a semi-circumference, assume the appearance of fans; the ancient helical rosette with curving radii that, some scholars say, evoke the image of the moving sun; spirals whose resemblance with Mycenaean decorations can only be fortuitous; star motifs, with five or six points like the pentalpha and Solomon's seal, though they often have eight, twelve, or even sixteen points; and so on. We should also mention, to end with, those comma-like shapes, produced by the bipartite division of a circle by a sinusoidal curve. Basque art uses these a great deal, either isolated, or twinned in various ways, or else coupled to stars, hearts, fleurs de lis, and so on. But the most widespread arrangement of these commas is the one formed by a sort of four-petaled rosette, called the "Basque rose." Sometimes this has been seen as derived from the swastika, sometimes as a magical sign

reserved for the protection of the herds. We have shown elsewhere that these very hypothetical interpretations are extremely fragile.

By “conventional figures” we mean mainly all the motifs of heraldic origin. These are less rare than might at first sight appear. Many images of trees and animals are, on closer inspection, merely extremely rudimentary blazons without any escutcheon, supports, or mantling. Other elements from armorial bearings seem to have been borrowed for a purely ornamental end. They include the fleur de lis with its infinite variants, the chains of Navarre, the checkerboard of the Baztan Valley, and so on.

Realistic depictions—that is, those spontaneously drawn from observation of the external world—are much clumsier but more revealing of the personality of each craftsman. The most interesting are the reproductions of work instruments, the simple shop signs or touching symbols of the occupations of the deceased. There is all the equipment of small trades: masons, blacksmiths, carpenters, clockmakers, seamstresses, and barbers. A royal notary shows us his writing implements, a priest his monstrance, a soldier his crossbow, a sailor his harpoon. But the most frequent images remain, as one might expect, the plow of the plowman, the tools of the spinner, and the bundle of keys of the good housewife. Domestic animals—hens, cockerels, ducks, cows, and pigs—have their place in this microcosm of everyday life. There is hardly a horse without its rider. These are just quite childish outlines, like the ones that attempt to reproduce the human gestures of the soldier, the hunter, and even the *pilotari*.

Also realistic in appearance, but only in appearance, and more probably imitated from Christian iconography, are the vine stocks with grapes being pecked at by birds, and the naïve drawings of the sun and moon in humanized guise.

Taken in isolation, none of these elements of very different origin that we have just enumerated can be entirely unique to the Basque Country. Nonetheless, the fact that they are constantly found together in the same places and traditionally assembled on the same works has ended up imbuing this decoration as a whole with an indisputably Basque appearance.

Thus we find confirmed, with relation to popular art, an observation that has already been implicit in several other pages of our study—the exceptional aptitude of Basques to take such a strong and unrelenting hold of anything that suits the temper of their race, that it subsequently becomes impossible not to attach their name to it definitively. It barely

matters if, as Camille Jullian puts it, past centuries and civilizations have, each in turn, bequeathed most of their customs on the Basques, since they alone have been able to absorb so many different characteristics that have almost died out elsewhere, and thus to compose the mysterious face of a people that resembles no other.

Bibliography

However long the following list may appear, it is actually just an approximate choice from all the readings that preceded and accompanied the writing of this book. Without attempting to parade our erudition, we simply felt it would be useful to indicate some of the most immediately accessible works to the beginner who would like to gain a better understanding of things Basque. So we have deliberately eliminated purely documentary historical sources, specialized linguistic research that needs special preparation to be tackled, and a number of works that used to be of great merit, but which are these days of value just as curiosities. On these points the reader will find invaluable further details in the admirable bibliographies drawn up by J. Vinson and F. Barbe.

In spite of the indisputable value of some mainly literary works, we have also omitted these; the best of them are sufficiently well known already.

On the other hand, we have found it interesting to include many long or short studies that have appeared in important collections of our major regional publications, which can be consulted at the Bibliothèque municipale or the Musée Basque in Baiona. As much as, if not more than, in big books, it is often in these countless detailed pieces of research that one will find the most recent discoveries on most subjects relative to the Basques and their country. [*Editor's Note*: This bibliography pertains to the 1955 edition of *Les basques de Soule, Labourd et Haute-Navarre*, and is mostly presented as Veyrin intended other than minor style changes.]

Abbreviations

SLAP — *Bulletin de la société des Sciences, Lettres et Arts de Pau*

SLA — *Bulletin de la société des Sciences, Lettres et Arts de Bayonne*

MB — *Bulletin du Musée Basque*

BNL — *Revue de Béarn, Navarre et Lannes*

RHA — *Revue Historique et Archéologique du Béarn et du Pays Basque*

RIEB — *Revue Internationale des Etudes Basques*

GH — *Revue Gure Herria*

ER — *Bulletin de la Société d'Etudes Régionales de Bayonne*

EJ — *Revue Eusko-Jakintza*

IK — *Bulletin de l'Institut de Recherches Basques "Ikuska"*

BSVAP — *Boletín de la Real Sociedad Vascongada de los Amigos del País*

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Further Readings

This list is intended more as a general introduction than as an exhaustive list. It consists of two sections: Veyrin's own major works and an introductory list of mostly contemporary works on Basque history and culture. The latter relates to the broad themes discussed in *Les Basques* and is weighted toward English-language studies.

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