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AMERIKANUAK ETA ASMOAK: NEW WORLD BASQUES  
AND IMMIGRATION THEORIES

THESIS

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The focus of this thesis is the relationship between immigration historiography and the history of Basque migration to the United States. The depictions of immigration presented by historians Oscar Handlin, Marcus Lee Hansen, and John Higham have been influential in immigration historiography and are presented in the first chapter. The second chapter contains a description of Old World Basque culture and the third chapter presents a brief history of Basque migration to the United States. The fourth chapter discusses to what extent the immigration theories presented in chapter one match the Basque experience in the New World. The concluding chapter contains some observations on the nature of immigration historiography, on the Basques, and on new directions for research.

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## CHAPTER I

### IMMIGRATION HISTORIOGRAPHY

Twentieth-century historians have had a powerful influence upon the way we think of our immigrant forefathers. This work will consider depictions of the immigrant in American history--especially those offered by Oscar Handlin, Marcus Lee Hansen, John Higham, and the fileopietists. The degree of similarity between these theories and the actual experiences of the Basques in the United States will also be discussed. It is hoped that discussion of Basques in United States history will shed light on immigration theories and reveal patterns unique to Basque migration. The objective of this work is not to criticize the works of earlier historians but, instead, to discover where future research might be needed.

The waves of immigrants who have landed upon American shores have stimulated a vast quantity of historical research. Verbal accounts, novels, and monographs have varied widely in the description of the experiences which immigrants underwent. These depictions, taken together, have enabled us to formulate a sort of consensus or

stereotype of the "typical" immigrant experience. While on one level, it is clear that there was or is no such thing as a typical immigrant, the tendency has been to lump immigrants together as we speak of them in American history.

The work of certain historians seems to stand out in our depiction of the immigrant. Oscar Handlin's The Uprooted, Marcus Lee Hansen's "The Third Generation," John Higham's Strangers in the Land, and the earlier works by fileopietists are major components in the cumulative characterization which historians call the immigrant experience.

The fileopietists were predominant at the turn of the century and immediately thereafter. While the fileopietists did not share a common philosophy, they did have in common a shared devotion or loyalty to their ancestry. The period from 1910 to 1939 was marked with a surge of first generation Americans paying homage to their immigrant roots and the Old Country. This was often accomplished by writing fictional and nonfictional accounts of their own ancestry. Scholarly accounts by Albert Faust of Cornell, George Stephenson of the University of Minnesota, and Theodore Blegan of Cornell explored aspects of adaptation among German Americans, Swedish Americans, and Norwegian Americans.<sup>1</sup>



Concurrent with the appearance of these historically careful monographs came the introduction of historical novels related to the "immigrant's plight." Written in the fileopietist spirit of glorifying the immigrant and his struggles, Ole Rolvaag's Giants of the Earth was a heart-rending novel describing the difficulties of Norwegian homesteaders in South Dakota. Johan Bojer's novel, The Emigrants, appeared in 1925, celebrated its immigrant forefathers, and was also widely read.

The fileopietist period in immigration historiography came to its conclusion with the publications of authors such as Carl F. Wittke and Louis Adamic. Wittke's We Who Built America was a mixture of idealization and fact which returned Americans to a sense of historical accuracy. Wittke's book won outstanding honors as a general study and still managed to salute his father, "who blended into the American stream and became a humble but honorable fragment of forgotten thousands who have helped us build this nation."<sup>2</sup> Louis Adamic was an immigrant himself and included numerous cultures in his From Many Lands and A Nation of Nations. With the works of Adamic, Wittke, Hansen, and Blegen, historians began writing about immigration with a different approach. As these authors hastened the close of fileopietism in immigration historiography, Oscar Handlin began formulating his own views on the immigration experience. This is not to say, however,

that later historians have ignored their own immigrant forefathers. The urge to discover one's "roots" and then write about them continues today and is a factor in numerous immigration accounts.

Perhaps the best known account of the immigrant's plight is Oscar Handlin's The Uprooted. Winning the Pulitzer Prize in 1951, Uprooted was widely read by historians and nonprofessionals as well. In attempting to analyze the impact of immigration on the immigrants themselves, Handlin developed the theme that there is a price to pay for the promise of plenty. He used idealized forms such as the Immigrant and the Peasant rather than specific histories of particular individuals. To some degree, Handlin's Uprooted rejected the fileopietist interpretation that immigrants were the modern American success story. Having had a profound influence upon the way we have viewed immigrants and immigration in American history, Handlin's Uprooted merits further discussion.

Handlin proposed a close link between the history of the United States and immigrant history. In the introduction to The Uprooted, he stated that, "the immigrants were the history of the United States."<sup>3</sup> While The Uprooted did not have as its purpose the delineation of all United States history from the immigrant point of view, it is important to note that Handlin assessed the impact of immigration as central to the American experience.

This view--that immigrants were the history of America--still has credence in some circles and supports a pluralistic view of American society. Handlin's work asserted that America is a heterogenous multitude and to some degree that all Americans are immigrants.<sup>4</sup>

The concept that immigration profoundly altered the immigrant is also Handlin's. In his view, much had been said of the successes various immigrants made. Little, however, had been said about the fact that immigrants themselves had been greatly altered by the very process of immigration. Handlin attempted to analyze the impact of immigration on the newcomers by discussing changes in their family life, separation from known surroundings, hardships of the crossing, and the experience of becoming a foreigner. According to Oscar Handlin, "the history of immigration is a history of alienation and its consequences."<sup>5</sup> Handlin observed that immigrants experienced in an extreme form what other modern Americans also felt--the breakdown of traditional communal life and institutions. As David Rothman has suggested, Handlin chose Uprooted as his title purposefully, for he intended to convey a harsher image than had been presented previously.<sup>6</sup> He wanted his readers to know that immigrants lived in daily crisis precisely because they were uprooted from their past as well as their present.<sup>7</sup>

Some themes are common to the "uprooted immigrant" portrayed in Handlin's work. First, these thirty-five million Europeans left a stable peasant world to arrive in an unstable, confusing, city life in America. This theme of migration from stability to instability also extended to include family life. Another predominant theme in The Uprooted was what might be called the difficulties of transportation. Oftentimes the immigrant had spent his last cent to book passage, the ships were crowded and unpleasant, and the foreigner arrived exhausted, unsettled, and confronted by a strange sounding language. Handlin also described an introspective stage in the lives of these immigrants, a stage dominated by alienation and homesickness. Along with the alienation came the difficult experience of religious transplantation. According to Handlin, new arrivals usually dropped their old forms of worship and, therefore, had one less method of coping with their new environment. Finally, these immigrants often found themselves in inner-city ghettos where they discovered others of similar heritage and eventually developed political strength through powerful local bosses. These themes are significant in that they have characterized to some degree how modern America thinks of the immigrant. Whether they apply to the experience of Basque immigrants will be discussed in this work.

Marcus Lee Hansen presented one of the most significant articles in immigrant historiography in his "The Third Generation."<sup>8</sup> Born of Danish and Norwegian immigrant parents, Hansen presented problems which the children of immigrants experienced. These second generation immigrants were criticized both by native Americans and by their own parents. Depending upon the critic, they were either too foreign or too American. While their first generation parents maintained that the children should retain the language, religion, customs, and respect for authority found in the Old Country, the children were eager to throw off their old ties and become American. Hansen stated that the second generation left home as soon as possible and with a fervor relatively unfamiliar to natives. "Nothing was more Yankee than a Yankeeized person of foreign descent," Hansen wrote.<sup>9</sup>

The third generation, according to the Hansen thesis, was American born, possessed good language skills, and lacked the inferiority complex of the second generation. Hansen felt that the third generation had the opportunity to synthesize the entire process. The third generation would be the generation to write the histories, to wonder why grandfather came, and to study their ancestors with pride. So, while the second generation resisted cultural ties, the third had the opportunity to formulate a positive identity out of the hyphenization.

Hansen's theory has been summarized as "what the son wishes to forget, the grandson wishes to remember." Authors since Hansen have suggested that the third generation does not return to its ancestral culture but continues to rebel in a "softer" manner.<sup>10</sup> Also, Hansen's theory has been criticized for its lack of generational distinctions--some first generation immigrants came as children themselves, some children are second and third generational at the same time. Simply stated, generations do not make a good index of complex interactions.<sup>11</sup> While these points are accurate, they fail to acknowledge the basic point which Hansen argued so persuasively--that, in descending generations, patterns of adaptation evolve and assist us in understanding how immigrants have adapted to their new settings.

As a graduate student, Hansen worked with Frederick Jackson Turner at Harvard. Hansen saw European migration as complementary to Turner's interpretation of westward movement. "Immigration," according to Hansen, "caused this clocklike progression across the continent."<sup>12</sup> Hansen felt that the application of the frontier doctrine had been too narrow and said that, "we are beginning to see that the Mississippi Valley was for fifty years the frontier of Europe as well as the eastern states."<sup>13</sup> Citing a local proverb, "When the German comes in, the Yankee goes out," Hansen reminded historians that much of American history

was a process of immigrants "filling in" after the earlier settlers moved West.

Marcus Lee Hansen's major contributions to immigrant historiography were his "three generation" theory and his application of the Turner thesis to immigration. Both of these are worth noting and will be considered in light of Basque migration to the United States.

John Higham's Strangers in the Land is the third major contribution to modern immigration historiography which is being considered in this work. Written in 1955, Strangers investigated patterns of American "nativism" from 1860 to 1925. The term nativism was first coined around 1840 and has become central to any discussion of immigration.<sup>14</sup> Higham defined nativism as an "intense opposition to an internal minority on the grounds of its foreign, i.e., un-American connections."<sup>15</sup> According to Higham, this complex set of attitudes has appeared in American history whenever anti-foreign sentiment has been prevalent. In Strangers, three themes were cited as the main currents of nativism: (1) anti-Catholicism, (2) anti-radicalism, and (3) the development of Anglo-Saxon or WASP culture. As Higham observed, the first two were concerned with what America "should not become" while the third was a positive theme. Like Handlin before him, Higham detected the inability and unwillingness of Americans to open their arms to foreigners.

Higham's Strangers began with a post-Civil War period characterized by national confidence. During such periods of confidence, Americans have been less likely to display strong nativistic tendencies. On the other hand, nativism was on the upswing during the 1880s and pre-World War period. The loss of national confidence and widespread economic problems signalled the beginning of renewed anti-foreign sentiment. Higham depicted nativism and nationalism as two counterbalancing extremes influenced by a sense of prosperity or lack of it.

Higham rejected the idea that nineteenth century America accepted ethnic diversity and stated that the idea that "all Americans are immigrants" was a legend.<sup>16</sup> In rejecting Handlin's interpretation, Higham maintained that immigrants were those who brought a foreign culture to the United States. Higham therefore rejected the idea that the Puritans and the founding fathers were immigrants.<sup>17</sup> Instead, they had "planted" the seeds of the American WASP culture.

Further, Higham has maintained that immigrant groups were not unstable because they had been uprooted. Instead, he felt that their instability came out of the American setting. Unless reinforced by new immigrants coming in from their ancestral lands, by powerful religious identity, or by a powerful racial and cultural identity, Higham felt that the American setting would offer instability to the



immigrant.<sup>18</sup> While Higham acknowledged the instability possible among immigrant groups, he cited examples--such as the Chinese and the Jewish--where stability was also possible.

Higham--along with many others--has also argued that the old melting pot concept is inadequate to our discussion of immigrants and their experience of becoming American. Suggesting that much remains to be discovered regarding the immigration experience, Higham has offered historians an outline of American history which can be expanded. His challenge to earlier thinking on immigration is valuable and will be considered in light of the Basque American experience as well.

The focus of this thesis is the relationship between the theories of Handlin, Hansen, and Higham and the history of Basque immigration to the United States. In order to evaluate that relationship, an overview of Old World and New World Basques will be presented. Chapter two will contain a description of Old World culture including religious values, rural farming systems, rules of inheritance, and other factors relevant to a discussion of Basque migration. Chapter three presents a brief history of Basque migration to the United States in addition to emphasizing characteristics which make Basques unique in the immigration landscape of United States history.

The fourth chapter of this thesis will discuss to what extent the immigration theories match the Basque experience in the New World. Each of the theories presented by Handlin, Hansen, and Higham will be discussed. The concluding chapter contains some observations on the nature of immigration historiography, on the Basques, and on future direction for research.

Evidence has been gathered from dissertations, theses, interviews, and historical accounts. It is important to note that Basque Studies in the United States is a relatively new field. An indication of this is the fact that the first dissertation on Basques in the United States was completed in 1944. Of the approximately thirty dissertations and theses which have been written on Basque Americans, there have been two dissertations in the area of history.

While the area of Basque Studies is relatively new and small, the dissertations which do exist offer valuable insights into the Basque communities of the West. San Francisco, Boise, Bakersfield, Salt Lake City, and Northeastern Nevada are a few examples. Articles from The Voice of the Basques newspaper and University of Nevada Basque Studies Newsletter have also been useful. The Basque Books Series presented by the University of Nevada has done a great deal to stimulate scholarship as has the Anglo-American Basque Studies Society. Some of the evidence gathered for this thesis has come from studying in the

Basque Country during the summers of 1975 and 1979. In addition, countless discussions with Basque friends and family have made this project even more enjoyable.

In exploring the work of immigration historians, one begins to identify some major themes in historiography. Clearly, the works of Handlin, Hansen, and Higham are not the only ones worthy of consideration. In fact, each of them have written that a great deal of work is yet to be done. While none of them represent the "last word" on immigration individually, cumulatively their views comprise a fairly cohesive description of the immigration process. As Rudolph Vecoli argued quite persuasively, these "general" accounts are believable until we try to apply them to a specific subculture.<sup>19</sup> The purpose of this work is to do just that--to see how the theories put forward here do apply to the migration of Old World Basques to the United States. In considering this topic, the objective is not to criticize the works of earlier historians but, rather, to discover to what extent their theories apply to Basques and to discover where future research might be needed.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Respective titles of those works are The German Element in the United States (1927), Religious Aspects of Swedish Immigration (1932), and The Norwegian Migration (1931).

<sup>2</sup>Carl F. Wittke, We Who Built America, cited in Harvey Wish, The American Historian (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 153.

<sup>3</sup>Oscar Handlin, The Uprooted (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1951), p. 3.

<sup>4</sup>Oscar Handlin, "Immigration in American Life: A Reappraisal," Immigration in American History (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1961), p. 9.

<sup>5</sup>Handlin, Uprooted, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup>David Rothman, "The Uprooted: Thirty Years Later," Reviews in American History 10 (September 1982):311.

<sup>7</sup>Handlin, Uprooted, p. 6.

<sup>8</sup>Marcus Lee Hansen, "The Third Generation," Children of the Uprooted (New York: George Braziller, 1966), pp. 255-271.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 259.

<sup>10</sup>Bernard Lazerwitz and Louis Rowitz, "The Three Generations Hypothesis," American Journal of Sociology 69 (June 1964):529-538.

<sup>11</sup>Raymond Breton, "Institutional Completeness of Ethnic Communities and Personal Relations of Immigrants," American Journal of Sociology 70 (September 1964):193-205.

<sup>12</sup>Marcus Lee Hansen, "The Immigrant and American Agriculture," Immigration as a Factor in American History (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1959), p. 44.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ray Allen Billington, Origins of Nativism in the United States, 1800-1840 (1933; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1974), pp. 2-20.

<sup>15</sup>John Higham, Strangers in the Land (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1955), p. 4.

<sup>16</sup>Maldwyn Jones, "Oscar Handlin," Pastmasters (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), pp. 239-277.

<sup>17</sup>John Higham, "Immigration," Comparative Approach to American History (New York: Basic Books, 1968), pp. 91-105.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>19</sup>Rudolph Vecoli, "The Contadini in Chicago: A Critique of the Uprooted," Journal of American History 51 (1964):404-417.

## CHAPTER II

### BASQUES IN THE OLD WORLD

The Spanish and French Basque territories converge along the western range of the Pyrenees Mountains. The Basque country or Euzkadi lies at the western end of these mountains.<sup>1</sup> There are few peoples about whose origin so little is known. Roman historians referred to a tribe they encountered in the Pyrenees which spoke a "peculiar language" unintelligible to their neighbors. Livy, for example, mentioned the Vascones in his description of the Sertorian War of 77 to 74 B.C. The Vascones or Basques had settled in the region well before the Romans arrived. As Rodney Gallop has written, "It can be assumed that after the coming of the Romans they must have watched the successive passages of the Goths, Franks, Normans and Moors, and it may be suspected that they were more than spectators of Roland's defeat at Roncevaux."<sup>2</sup> Despite a few references to Basques in the literature of the Middle Ages, little is known beyond the fact that they lived in the Pyrenees. After the Spanish reconquest began in 1212, a fuero (statute-law) system was developed in Spain. This fuero system granted significant exemptions and freedoms to the inhabitants of the Basque region. A similar for system

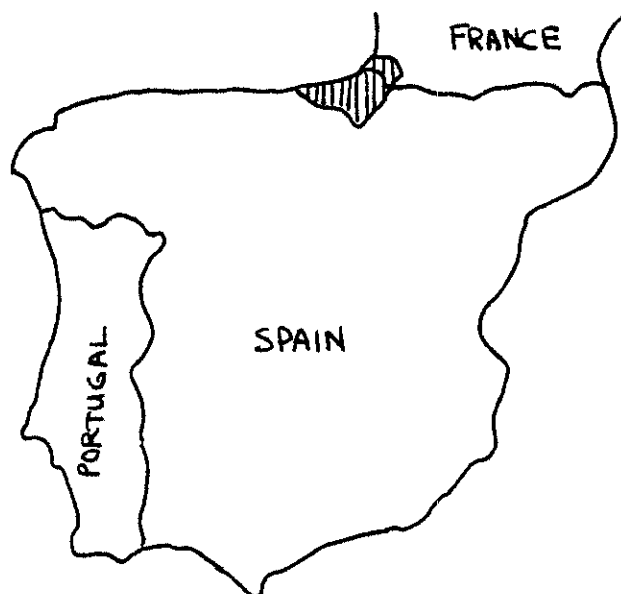
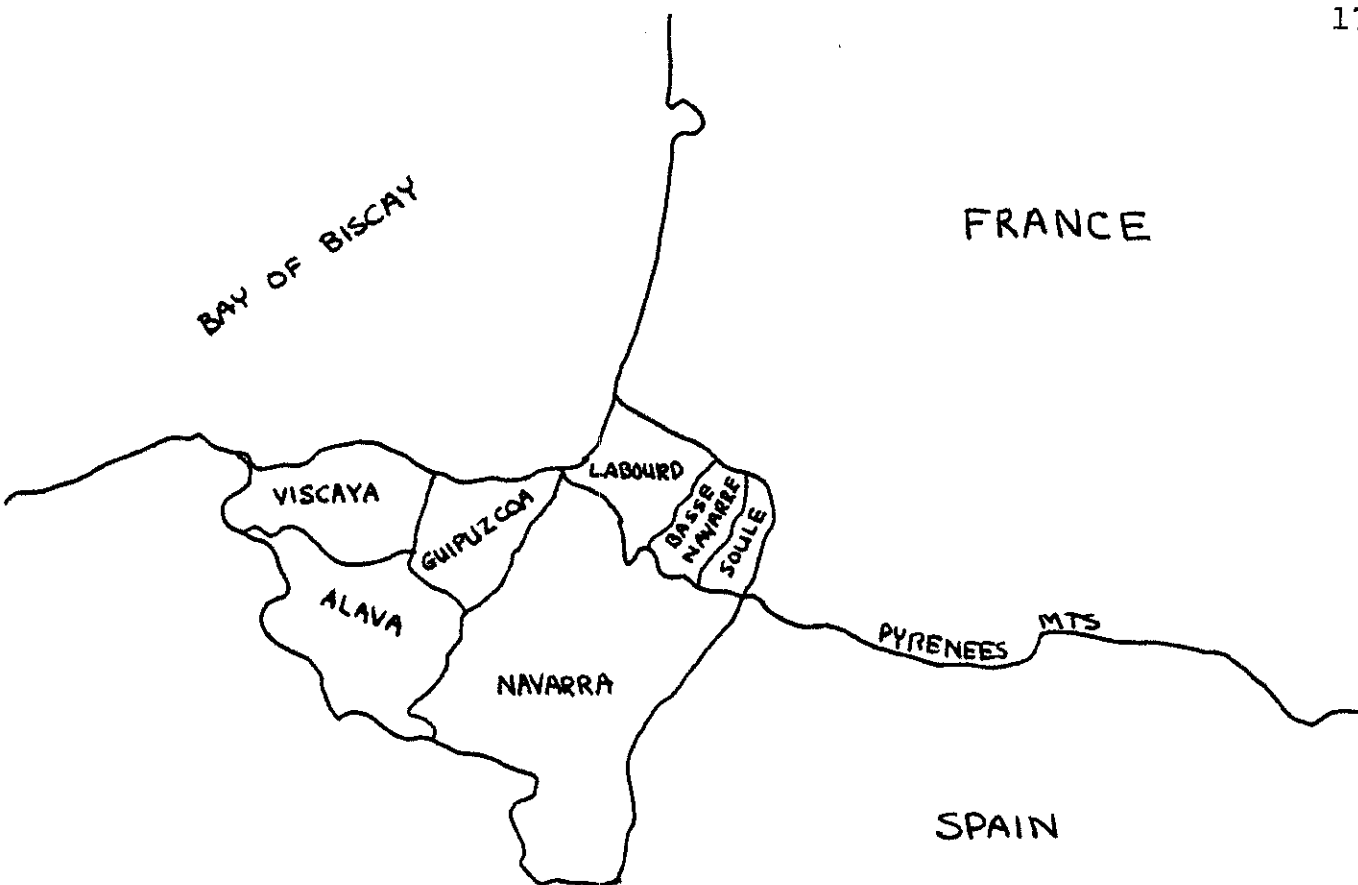


Fig. 1--Map of the Basque Provinces

existed in what is now France. The ancient Viscayan fuero, for example, reserved the ownership of land to Viscayans, exempted all taxes on maritime activities, and granted universal nobility to all Viscayans.<sup>3</sup> The tradition of self government and autonomy flourished in the Basque region until 1512 when the Pyrenees mountain range was established as the border dividing France and Spain. Since that national boundary was set up, Basque cultural identity has weakened and distinctions between French and Spanish Basques have become more apparent. One author suggested that Old World Basques might be seen as a group of closely related tribes rather than a culturally homogeneous group.<sup>4</sup> The four Basque provinces in Spain are Guipuzcoa, Viscaya, Alava, and Navarra; and in France three departements, Basse-Navarre, Labourd, and Soule are Basque. The distinction between French and Spanish Basques becomes crucial when attempting to understand their emigration patterns. For example, Spain's role in New World exploration provided early opportunity for the Spanish Basques to come to what is now called Latin America, while many of the French Basques emigrated after the French Revolution.

The entire area of the Basque country comprises some twenty thousand square kilometers. Of the twenty thousand, seventeen thousand square kilometers are Spanish. Eleven-twelfths of the Basque population--some 2.3 million--live



within Spanish boundaries. The Spanish Basques account for 7 percent of the Spanish national population. The two hundred thousand Basques on the French side, on the other hand, comprise less than one-half of a percent of the French population.<sup>5</sup> While population statistics indicate that the total number of European Basques is slightly less than 2.5 million, the number of Euskaldun--literally "holders of the language"--is seven hundred thousand. Of the seven hundred thousand, only eighty thousand are French Basque. Many reasons have been cited for the decrease in spoken Basque. Spanish Basques point to the laws enacted by Francisco Franco and remind us that speaking Basque in Spain was a crime for many years. Others, like Raymond and Francois Mougeon suggest a relationship between language decline and the decrease in rural Basque farming.<sup>6</sup>

Rodney Gallop and Julien Vinson have suggested that the most unique cultural characteristic which Basques possess is their language.<sup>7</sup> The Basque language is not related to Indo-European languages. Professor René Lafon of the University of Bordeaux applied a comparative linguistic method in attempting to link the Basques to earlier European cultures. His work underlined the importance of linguistics in Basque studies for it is linguists who have suggested the relationship between the Basque and other peoples. Old Egyptian, Japanese, Iroquois, Berbar, Georgian, and Iberian are among those suggested. At present the two theories

which seem most plausible are that Basque is either related to a variety of Georgian found in the Caucasus mountains of Russia or the language spoken on the Iberian peninsula before Roman occupation.<sup>8</sup>

The origin and isolation of Basques are themes common to most discussions of Euzkadi. Their language, their blood types, archeological proof of their age, and their own belief in their unique cultural identity set Basques apart from other cultures.<sup>9</sup> Basques differ from surrounding populations in frequency of blood types. For example, they have the highest incidence of type O blood in Europe and the lowest occurrence of type B blood. They also have the highest incidence of Rhesus negative factor of any of the world's populations. Thirty percent of all Basques have a Rhesus negative factor and only 3 percent have type B blood.<sup>10</sup> These unusually high and low numbers reflect strong intermarriage patterns among European Basques.

Archeological record indicates that the Basque region has had continuous human occupation since the Middle Paleolithic era. For about seventy thousand years, humans have inhabited the Pyrenees.<sup>11</sup> Whether present day Basques are direct descendants of that original population and developed in situ or whether they migrated to the area is unclear. Ancient cave paintings at Santamine, dolmen at Equilaz, and artifacts at Lascaux indicate that people were living in the area during the Mid Paleolithic period. While

some would link these cave dwellers to the present, there is no indication that one has descended from the other. Even the most skeptical, however, place modern Basques in the Pyrenees between 5000 and 3000 B.C.--making Basques one of the oldest in situ populations in Europe.<sup>12</sup>

Morton Levine's study of French Basques indicated that their isolation has not been geographical. Calling Basques a "true biological population," Levine maintained that their isolation has come from choice rather than compelling external factors. Basques have used their language to safeguard their privacy and "display an unquenchable desire to remain Basque."<sup>13</sup> Levine's comments regarding internal isolation also support the theory that Basques are aware of their identity. "In a society that is set apart, language becomes not only the cause but the means of remaining apart."<sup>14</sup> Isolation among Old World Basques, according to Levine, is a function of intermarriage, language retention, and a conscious attempt to remain distinct from other cultures.

The Basque baserria (farmstead) provided a unique opportunity for a young Basque to become a jack-of-all-trades. Julio Caro Baroja, in his detailed analysis of Basque architecture, described the prototype Basque dwelling as containing two or three floors with a barn area, tool shed, and grain storage area as part of the house.<sup>15</sup> These baserriak or mixed farming systems usually

housed three generations and could cover an area of twenty to thirty acres.<sup>16</sup> In rural areas, the baserria is the center of a small self-sufficient system which produces vegetables, cereal grains, fruit, grazing land for cattle and sheep, and timberland for construction and kindling.<sup>17</sup> This emphasis on self-sufficiency has encouraged young Basques to learn and develop many abilities and prepared them with a strong generalized background.

In the Basque culture, the eredurua (heir) is trained to take responsibility for the baserria from childhood. Inheritance by the first-born son or daughter is usually the case and custom dictates that, if a daughter inherits, she must marry a noninheriting son in order to stay with the family house. Rules of primogeniture vary slightly from village to village--while the first-born child might inherit in one village, a first-born son might inherit in the next. Decisions regarding primogeniture have often influenced young, noninheriting Basques to travel to the New World.<sup>18</sup> Basque families have been known to carry the name of their homes since the sixteenth century and perhaps earlier. Names such as Gure extea (our house), Extea polita (pretty house), and Extea berria (new house) are a few highly recognizable Basque family names. The baserriak have come to symbolize the family lineage, property, and success--to lose it or divide it among siblings would be unthinkable.

Membership in the baserria is comprised of sendi (family) and the echekoak (domestics). Individuals can gain membership in a baserria through family descent, marriage into the family, fictive kinship ties such as adoption, or membership by consent. For example, domestic helpers may be brought into the family and have a significant role in it. Another significant role is that of lenbizikoatia or first neighbor.<sup>19</sup> In the instance of an emergency or need for help, a family will rely on their lenbizikoatia for support. The relationship is particularly apparent during harvesting or family crises such as death or serious illnesses.

Prior to the adoption of Catholicism in the eleventh century, Basques had developed a reputation of paganism. Rodney Gallop stated that Basques had acquired, "the grim merit of having made more than their fair share of Christian martyrs."<sup>20</sup> Saints Amand, Leon, and Eusebia are examples of the many included in this group. Sun and Moon worship ceremonies, Dianic cults, and akleharres (Saturday evening worship at the "field of the goat") were well attended up to and including the sixteenth century. Precisely why Basques embraced Catholicism later than their neighbors is not known. Some have suggested geographic isolation as a factor while others have suggested that Basques clung to paganism until forced to relinquish it by the Inquisition. Gustav Hennigson has revealed that witch hunting in the

Basque country reached a peak near 1611 and that numerous false confessions were obtained.<sup>21</sup>

Hennigson's book suggested that the Inquisition was a primary factor in turning Basques from paganism to Catholicism. There are some anomalies in this pattern, however. Roslyn Frank's article on the role of Basque women as religious leaders indicated that the serora (female religious leader) evolved from pre-Christian times. Although the serorak were often taken to be witches during the Inquisition, their descendents currently act as adjuncts to local priests in the activities of the Catholic Church.<sup>22</sup> As in the case of the serorak, Basques would argue that they adapted their institutions to the Catholic faith--not that the Inquisition forced reform.

As they have in the past, European Basques maintain universal church attendance today. The fact that men attend Mass in the Basque country makes them unique among most European Catholics. Studies of nineteenth and twentieth century Basques indicate that the village church and priest are quite important among Basques--rural Basques attend Mass weekly, sit in their prescribed seats, have a family burial area in the floor of their local church, and consider ceremonies such as baptisms, marriages, and funerals imperative.<sup>23</sup>

Basques have had a rich history of travel, migration, and exploration. Basques began to participate in the

commercial whaling industry in the fourth century A.D.<sup>24</sup> Steady expansion of the whaling fleet continued as whalers were forced to follow whales ever farther from home. The growth of the industry peaked in the sixteenth century. Artifacts of a sixteenth century Basque whaling village have been unearthed in Newfoundland.<sup>25</sup> Basques were regarded as Europe's best whalers during this period and also played an important part in the construction of the Spanish maritime fleet.<sup>26</sup> Many of Queen Isabella's ships were built in Viscayan shipyards and Basques often provided the crews as well.<sup>27</sup> These whalers, fishermen, and crew members brought stories of their travels home with them and initiated a tradition of world travel among Basques.

Large Basque settlements exist in South America, Mexico, Australia, the Phillipines, and the United States.<sup>28</sup> Many Basques migrated to South America before travelling north to the United States.<sup>29</sup> Having heard news from the New World, many Basques set sail to join those who had preceded them.<sup>30</sup> Unknowingly, they continued a migratory tradition which their ancestors began hundreds of years earlier. A surprisingly large percentage of them left with the intention of making their fortunes and then returning to Euzkadi. While some did return, others brought their rich cultural heritage and contributed it to the New World.

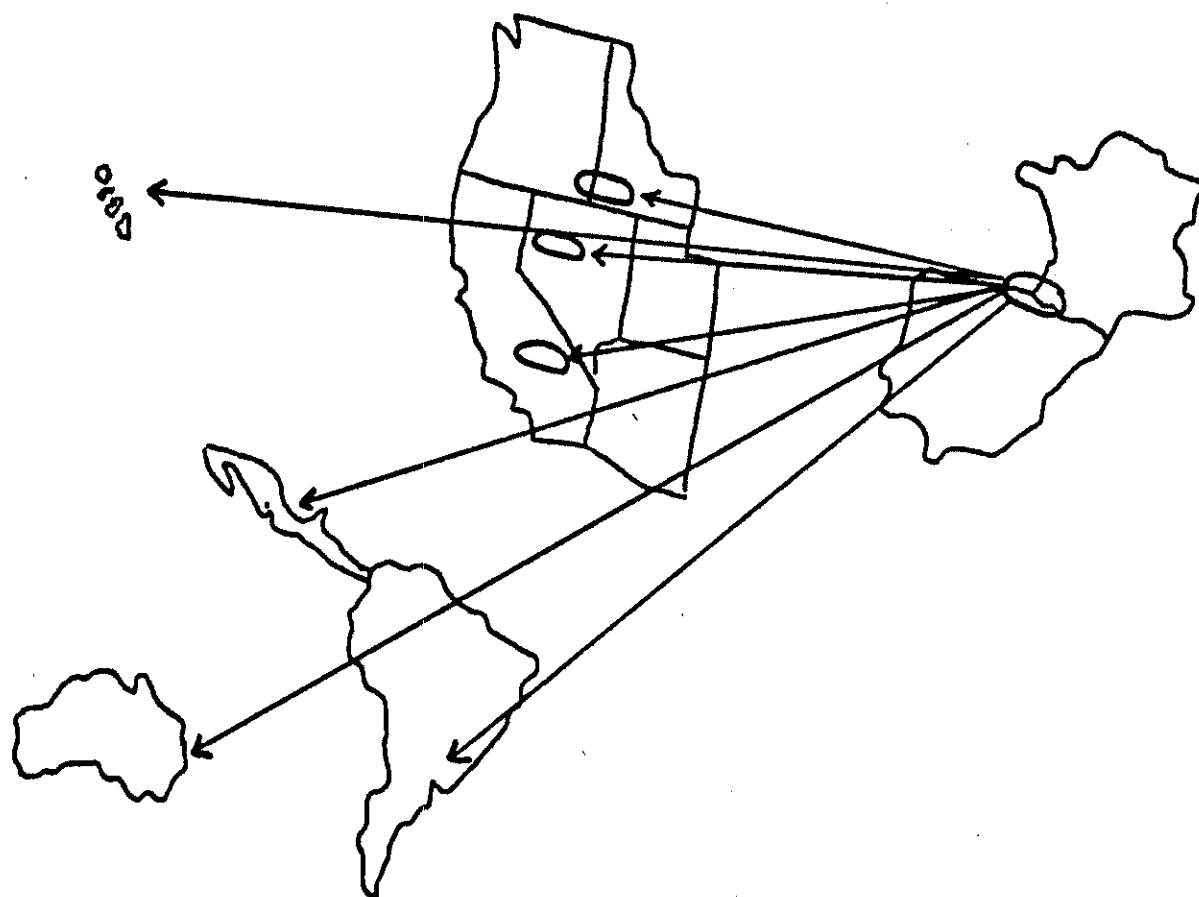


Fig. 2--Map of Basque Immigration Trends



## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>See Figure 1 for location of the Basque country and seven Basque provinces.

<sup>2</sup>Rodney Gallop, The Book of the Basques (1930; reprint, Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1970), p. 10.

<sup>3</sup>William A. Douglass and Jon Bilbao, Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1975), pp. 63-64. Due to this decree, any Viscayan could seek religious or secular administrative posts regardless of his origins.

<sup>4</sup>Grant McCall, "Basque Americans and a Sequential Theory of Migration and Adaptation" (Master's thesis, San Francisco State University, 1968), p. 31.

<sup>5</sup>Douglass and Bilbao, Amerikanuak, p. 14.

<sup>6</sup>Raymond and Francois Mougeon, "Basque Language Survival in Rural Communities from the Pays Basque, France," Anglo-American Contributions to Basque Studies: Essays in Honor of Jon Bilbao (Reno: Desert Research Institute on the Social Sciences, 1977), p. 107.

<sup>7</sup>Gallop, Book of Basques, pp. 69-71.

<sup>8</sup>William A. Douglass, "The Basques," Basque Studies Program Newsletter 1 (November 1968):5-6.

<sup>9</sup>Morton Levine, "The Basques," Natural History 76 (April 1967):45-50.

<sup>10</sup>The work of geneticist William Boyd suggests that Basques are related to the earliest European race. Douglass and Bilbao, Amerikanuak, p. 10. Physical anthropologist A. E. Mourant has suggested that the Basques originated the Rhesus negative factor.

<sup>11</sup>Douglass and Bilbao, Amerikanuak, p. 10.

<sup>12</sup>Origin theories for the Basques range from direct descendents from the Garden of Eden to early Etruscans. The variety of basic themes approaches two dozen. What can be said with confidence at this point is that we can only verify 5000 years inhabitation in the Pyrenees area. Beyond that,

experts do not agree. Angeles Arrien, "Basque Cultural Anthropology" (Lecture notes, Basque Summer Studies Program Abroad, 6 July 1975).

<sup>13</sup>Danielle Hunbelle, "The Basques--Anthropologists Most Baffling Case," Realities 192 (1966):79.

<sup>14</sup>Levine, "The Basques," p. 50.

<sup>15</sup>Julio Caro Baroja, Los Vascos, 3d ed. (Madrid: Ediciones Minotaurio, 1958), pp. 131-147.

<sup>16</sup>Arrien, "Basque Cultural Anthropology," 7 July 1975.

<sup>17</sup>Gallop, Book of Basques, pp. 203-214.

<sup>18</sup>William A. Douglass, "Rural Exodus in Two Spanish Basque Villages: A Cultural Explanation," The American Anthropologist 73 (October 1971):1100-1112.

<sup>19</sup>Arrien, "Basque Cultural Anthropology," 16 July 1975.

<sup>20</sup>Gallop, Book of Basques, p. 10.

<sup>21</sup>Gustav Hennigson, The Witches' Advocate (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1980), pp. 357-387.

<sup>22</sup>Roslyn M. Frank, "The Religious Role of the Woman in Basque Culture," Anglo-American Contributions to Basque Studies: Essays in Honor of Jon Bilbao (Reno: Desert Research Institute on the Social Sciences, 1977), pp. 153-159.

<sup>23</sup>William A. Douglass, Death in Murelaga: Funerary Ritual in a Spanish Basque Village (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969), pp. 190-209.

<sup>24</sup>Douglass and Bilbao, Amerikanuak, p. 51.

<sup>25</sup>James Tuck and Robert Grenier, "A 16th Century Whaling Station in Labrador," Scientific American 245 (November 1981): 180-188.

<sup>26</sup>Gallop, Book of Basques, pp. 268-281.

<sup>27</sup>Douglass and Bilbao, Amerikanuak, pp. 67-70.

<sup>28</sup>Lorin R. Gaardner, "Preliminary Comments on the Basque Colony in Mexico City," Anglo-American Contributions to Basque Studies: Essays in Honor of Jon Bilbao (Reno: Desert Research Institute on the Social Sciences, 1977), pp. 59-72; William A. Douglass, "Basques in Austrailia," Basque Studies

Program Newsletter 18 (March 1978):4-6; and Jon Bilbao, "Basques in the Phillipine Islands," Basque Studies Program Newsletter 20 (July 1979):3-6.

<sup>29</sup>See Figure 2 for Map of Basque Immigration Trends.

<sup>30</sup>For an excellent discussion of New World letters affecting Old World decisions, see Ray Allen Billington, Land of Savagery, Land of Promise (New York: Norton Books, 1981), pp. 50-105. An example of one Basque promotional book was Sol Silen's Historia de Vascongadas en los Estados Unidos (New York: Los Novedades, 1917).

### CHAPTER III

#### BASQUES IN THE NEW WORLD

Basques are relative newcomers to the immigrant landscape of United States history. The influx of Basques into the United States peaked between 1890 and 1934. While the Basque presence has been felt in a number of ways, national immigration statistics are nonexistent. Joseph Castelli pointed out that Basques entering the United States have been tallied with either French or Spanish populations rather than being counted as a distinct group.<sup>1</sup> The number of Basques who returned to Euzkadi is also unavailable. This makes the researcher's task a difficult one.

The 1980 Census was the first to assess the size of the Basque American population. Based upon results of a long form questionnaire, approximations placed the total number of Basques currently residing in the United States at 19,927. Of these, 5,090 claimed French Basque ancestry and 2,882 Spanish Basque.<sup>2</sup> In Table I the results of the Census in each of the fifty states and the District of Columbia is shown. Undifferentiated Basques were those who did not distinguish between Spanish and French Basque ancestry. It is important to note that these numbers approximate current Basque populations. Respondents were

TABLE I

## UNITED STATES BASQUE POPULATION: 1980

State	French Basques	Spanish Basques	Basques Undifferentiated	Total Basques
Alabama	17	0	32	49
Alaska	0	16	26	42
Arizona	55	83	435	573
Arkansas	4	0	39	43
California	1230	1437	4535	7202
Colorado	124	35	318	477
Connecticut	12	39	60	111
Delaware	14	0	3	17
District of Columbia	16	0	14	30
Florida	115	163	176	454
Georgia	63	22	42	127
Hawaii	0	0	29	29
Idaho	32	131	1314	1477
Illinois	262	23	107	393
Indiana	57	6	4	67
Iowa	130	10	19	159
Kansas	28	5	36	69
Kentucky	54	12	28	94
Louisiana	72	0	37	109
Maine	13	0	17	30
Maryland	17	12	90	119
Massachusetts	16	46	129	191
Michigan	115	7	116	238
Minnesota	86	2	59	147
Mississippi	1	2	16	19
Missouri	87	2	29	118
Montana	38	6	157	201
Nebraska	1051	4	21	1076
Nevada	109	132	1026	1267
New Hampshire	0	0	26	26
New Jersey	79	92	196	367
New Mexico	22	7	122	155
New York	115	164	344	623
North Carolina	50	17	12	79
North Dakota	13	0	0	13
Ohio	111	7	52	170
Oklahoma	19	5	65	89
Oregon	187	26	762	975
Pennsylvania	94	4	57	155

TABLE I--Continued

State	French Basques	Spanish Basques	Basques Undifferentiated	Total Basques
Rhode Island	0	0	7	7
South Carolina	25	17	5	47
South Dakota	10	0	0	10
Tennessee	22	0	11	33
Texas	88	82	317	487
Utah	66	47	401	514
Vermont	0	0	18	18
Virginia	95	36	90	221
Washington	66	163	397	626
West Virginia	40	0	23	63
Wisconsin	125	0	45	170
Wyoming	44	20	91	155
Total	5,090	2,882	11,955	19,927

asked to write-in their ancestry and record their nationality based on self-identification. The Census Bureau has indicated that self-identification of ancestry may be subject to misinterpretations and inconsistencies. As stated in the Ancestry of Population by State Report, "more research and analysis is needed to determine whether a direct interview procedure or self-enumerative procedure produces more reliable information on ancestry."<sup>3</sup>

In reviewing the Census material, a few comments seem to be in order. First of all, the total population of Basques is lower than expected. One report based on the early Census information indicated that a total of 43,140 Basques are currently residing in the United States.<sup>4</sup> The

discrepancy between the earlier statistics and the current totals is substantial. Further, there are some flaws in the report. Table II lists those states with a population of over four hundred Basques. As can be seen in Table II, Nebraska is listed as the fourth greatest population of Basques in the United States! Given that there is no known concentration of Basques in Nebraska, this is highly unlikely. Table I lists 1,051 French Basques in the state and this is probably the area of the inaccuracy. Despite inaccuracies, the Census has proven to be a useful tool. While there has been an awareness of the large populations of Basques in California, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington, for example, some of the other state populations provoke interest. The fact that the Texas Basque population was tenth largest is of interest in that relatively little research has been done in the area. Six of the Mexican and

TABLE II

## STATES WITH OVER 400 BASQUES

State	Number of Basques
1. California . . . . .	7,202
2. Idaho . . . . .	1,477
3. Nevada . . . . .	1,267
4. Nebraska . . . . .	1,076
5. Oregon . . . . .	975
6. Washington . . . . .	626
7. New York . . . . .	623
8. Arizona . . . . .	573
9. Utah . . . . .	514
10. Texas . . . . .	487
11. Colorado . . . . .	477
12. Florida . . . . .	454

Spanish Governors of Texas, for example, possessed Basque surnames yet have been lumped together with the Spanish and Mexican influence.<sup>5</sup> The Census has proven useful in that it has raised as many questions as answers.

Basques in small numbers arrived in California in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Jesuit priests, ship captains, and missionaries from Spain were among the first Basques to set foot in Alta California. These Basques, however, generally did not stay in the Americas. Ironically, Basques who had migrated to South America and Mexico would be the first Basques to permanently settle in the American West.<sup>6</sup> In search of gold in the Sierra Nevadas, Basques came by ship from Chile and Argentina, overland from Sonora, Mexico, and trans-Atlantic from the French Pyrenees.<sup>7</sup> These three groups of Basques were the first to respond to the news of the Gold Rush.

Some Basque miners returned to the nations they left shortly after arriving. Others discovered more secure fortunes in the occupations which served the growing number of miners in northern California. Some trailed sheep north from southern California to San Francisco and the mines. Jean Etchemendy and Pierre Larronde, for example, left mining and became two of the largest sheep ranchers in the state.<sup>8</sup> The demise of the cattle industry in California occurred just as the Gold Rush was beginning to boom.



During the 1850s and 1860s--as Basques were leaving the mines--droughts, floods, and epidemics drastically reduced the number of cattle in California.<sup>9</sup> The blows suffered by the cattle industry created opportunities in the sheep industry.

Food for the miners was relatively scarce and prices were at premium rates. Sheep could be sold for as much as twenty dollars in the mining camps. Sheep were trailed in from southern California and from far-off places such as Missouri, Illinois, Texas, and New Mexico.<sup>10</sup> In these areas, sheep had been selling for only one dollar per head.<sup>11</sup> Other factors contributing to the growth of the sheep industry were the accessibility of inexpensive land in California, the ability of sheep to survive semi-arid pasture better than cattle, open grazing on the public domain, the improved quality of Merino wool, and a ready market for wool as a consequence of reduced cotton production after the Civil War.

California was the first foothold for Basques in the post-Hispanic West. Sheep licenses in Inyo County, for example, demonstrate that Basques dominated herding in the area by 1897.<sup>12</sup> Some have maintained that Old World Basques spent their lives in isolated conditions and that these circumstances made the Basque better-equipped to experience the privation and isolation of western range

herding. It is more likely that Basques became sheepmen because of the unique opportunity which emerged at this particular point in history.<sup>13</sup> Had another opportunity presented itself, Basques would have taken it.

By 1870 a new trend in sheep trailing had begun. Bands were trailed east and northeast from California to the Great Basin area of northeastern Nevada, southern Idaho, and southeastern Oregon.<sup>14</sup> The completion of the Southern Pacific railway in 1869 made the shipment of wool from this area to the eastern markets possible. This began a Basque exodus from California to the Great Basin between 1870 and 1900.<sup>15</sup> Basques from the province of Viscaya were migrating to the Basin area during this period as well. This is not to say that Basque sheep ranchers were uniform in the practice of their trade. Some left California at this time and some remained. Some owned very large ranches with sheep divided into a number of flocks each of which numbered between two and three thousand. Some may have owned fewer than five thousand in total, and some were landless nomads who depended upon access to public grazing for their sheep.<sup>16</sup> The latter group of tramp sheepmen has also been referred to as "ranchers without ranches."<sup>17</sup>

By the early twentieth century, according to Douglass and Bilbao, "the Basque shepherd was the irreplaceable backbone of the open-range, transhumant sheep outfits of the American West."<sup>18</sup> Initially, kinship ties and contacts

between fellow villagers were the key factors which attracted the new herder to the United States. By the early 1900s, Basques were known for their ability as herders. Between 1890 and 1915, almost all Viscayan immigrants became herders in the Great Basin region.<sup>19</sup> There are indications that a surplus developed and that, by 1920, the influx of new herders was increasingly dominated by supply and demand rather than kinship. Herders were more often recruited from a labor pool found at a local Basque boarding house than from the Old Country. On the other hand, some correlation between the distribution of Basques in the western states and regional distinctions in the Basque country continued. French and Navarrese Basques continued to settle in California, western Nevada, and small portions of Wyoming and Montana. Viscayan Basques continue to be predominant in the Great Basin area.

The Quota Act of May 26, 1924, had as its stated purpose the limitation of foreign persons entering the United States.<sup>20</sup> National origin was used as a basis for the allocation of quotas and remained the basis until repealed by the Quota Act of 1965. Concerned with the reduction of incoming Basque herders, representatives from the Western Range Association and Woolgrowers Associations pressured their Congressmen to initiate legislative reforms.

Senator McCarren and Representative Baring from Nevada initiated bills in the eighty-first Congress which would give skilled worker status to incoming herders. In the second session, the McCarren bill was incorporated into another labor market bill and passed. As of June 30, 1950, up to 250 sheepherders could be admitted annually.<sup>21</sup>

Wyoming Senator Hunt introduced Senate bill 1217 to provide additional quota immigrant visas to aliens willing to accept jobs as herders. This bill amended the Sheepherders Act of June 30, 1950, to increase the limitation from 250 to 550.<sup>22</sup>

By the second session of the eighty-second Congress, pressure was building to revise and codify the maze of immigration and naturalization laws. Officially known as the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, the McCarren-Walter Act revised the quota preference structure.<sup>23</sup> Among its many stipulations was one which allowed the entrance of skilled agricultural workers. It should be noted that the McCarren-Walter Act did not specify Basques as the only nationality able to take advantage of this provision. Nevertheless, many in the sheep industry considered it to be a "Basque immigration" law. Senator Lehman of New York, for example, objected that admitting more Basque herders was unfair because immigration quotas had not changed for other groups.<sup>24</sup> Despite Lehman's

objections, the "Shepherders' Laws" remained a part of the McCarren-Walter Act and supported a sheep industry in need of revitalization. As Nason Ruiz stated, "no other group in the United States has received so much specific attention and legislation on the basis of occupational specialization."<sup>25</sup> Between 1942 and 1961, 383 men received permanent United States residency due to this series of legislation.<sup>26</sup> In 1965, the Western Range Association sponsored 1,283 work contracts for Basques which had been sanctioned by Senator Hunt's amendment.<sup>27</sup> The herders, however, report that the work is difficult and tedious. Sheepherding was accepted as a means to an end. It provided the opportunity to earn money and then go back home, transfer to better occupations, or buy one's own herd.

Despite the popular image, not all Basques came to this country in order to herd sheep. Especially toward the close of peak immigration years--around the 1920s and 1930s--Basques began seeking other occupations upon entering the United States. Examples of such diversification abound. The French-American Bakery in La Puente, California, currently employs fifteen Basques; Farmer John's Meat Packing Company in Vernon, California, employs fifty Basques; and sixteen Basques own large dairies in the Chino-Ontario area of southern California.<sup>28</sup> A recent study by Jean DeCroos suggests that San Francisco area

Basques moved into gardening after the deportation of Japanese gardeners in 1942.<sup>29</sup> Basques have also had a role in California and Nevada silver and gold mining.<sup>30</sup> A colony of retired and active professional jai alai players make Miami, Florida, their home.<sup>31</sup> New York City hosts a sizeable Basque population and probably accounts for most of the state's Basques. In the past the shepherd of the American West has dominated the literature on Basque Americans. The literature has generally ignored urban and non-herding Basques until recently.

In 1972, sixteen Basque herders terminated their three year Western Range contracts in Bakersfield, California. Of the sixteen, eight returned to Spain, four became gardeners, two became professional janitors, and the remaining two took jobs with a local ranch.<sup>32</sup> Of the eight who remained, all took positions alongside other Basques. That half would turn down United States resident visas suggests that some modern Basque immigrants retain the intention of earlier generations: to come to America, become successful, and then return to Euzkadi. Although this intention is difficult to estimate and impossible to quantify, it needs to be included in any discussion of Basque immigration primarily because Basques themselves speak of it. The trend seems to be that Basques who came to the United States before 1930--"the earlier ones"--generally intended to return after making their fortunes.

As time progressed, there seem to be more Basques who arrived intending to remain.

According to Edlefson's study of Basques in southwestern Idaho, most immigrants arrived young, single, and alone. Of the 119 foreign-born Basques polled for Edlefson's study, 63 percent arrived in New York before reaching twenty years of age. The remaining 37 percent were between twenty and twenty-four years old. Of the eighty-four considered to be of marriageable age, only 10 percent had married.<sup>33</sup> Edlefson concluded that lack of opportunity for youth in the Old Country was recognized at an early age and that these young rural Basques displayed a high degree of ambition and initiative. The percentage of males to females who emigrated was expectedly skewed. Especially at the turn of the century, more males came than females. As the men settled in, young Basque girls came over to work in Basque boardinghouses and for established Basque families. A majority would marry Basques. Douglass noted that Basque females from baserriak were quite reluctant to return to the rural way of life after having moved to urban areas. Presumably, this was a result of Basque women discovering independence.

As the influx of immigrants from the Pyrenees continued to grow, a new feature appeared in California. By 1870, California had its first Basque hotel in San Francisco.<sup>34</sup>

Such hotels provided local centers for socializing, discussing job opportunities, and meeting other Basques. By 1900, Basque hotels dotted the American landscape: the Hogar Hotel in Salt Lake City and the Hotel Espanol-Keller in New York are two examples of early hotels which made the newly arrived feel more at home.<sup>35</sup> Once a number of hotels were established throughout the American West, a "Basque network" was also created. At any one of these hotels, a newcomer could discover local job opportunities, find others who spoke Basque, and learn the easiest way to the next hotel. In 1974, Araujo found five fully functioning Basque hotels within a two-block area of downtown Bakersfield, California.<sup>36</sup> Just as in earlier days, the hotels continue to be a meeting place for local Basques.<sup>37</sup>

Examples of the importance of the hotels to the newly arrived abound. Lorenzo Echanis is a Guipuzcoan Basque who speaks of the significance of the hotels in his journey to the United States in 1916. When Lorenzo arrived in New York City, he had just completed his first experience aboard a ship. He was sixteen and had left Motrico because, as he stated, "I had no future there."<sup>38</sup> Upon his arrival, Basques from a local hotel greeted him in Basque and gave him a ride to the hotel. There he took a room for the night and found Basques who could help him arrange train transportation to Boise and deliver him to the station the next afternoon. When his train reached



Boise, he headed for the local hotel and found similar assistance. In numerous cases, the hotels eased the newcomer into the New World experience.

Historically, the network of hotels or boarding houses provided a system in which Basques could move about the United States without suffering the extremes of culture shock. Undoubtedly, the hotels were and continue to be the most important ethnic institution among Basques in the American West. They became critical both as employment agencies and as recreational facilities. Communal activities continue to be centered around the hotels. They have also taken on the function of providing a setting in which American-born Basques have been able to experience and express their cultural heritage. Dancing, dining, drinking, watching jai alai, playing mús (a Basque card game), and singing folksongs are part of the cultural activities often found in the hotels. Hotels regularly sponsor local Basque clubs, regional picnics, and other Basque functions.

From this brief description of Basques in the New World, some characteristics surface. First of all, Basques took advantage of an opportunity to dominate the western sheep industry. The impetus to do so was opportunity rather than a preference for sheepherding among Basques. Similar opportunities not involving herding have appeared in other areas. For instance, Basques who migrated to

Australia moved into control of the sugar-cane cutting industry much as their American cousins did with the sheep industry. Jean DeCroos's depiction of Basque gardeners in San Francisco suggests a similar ability to dominate a local trade. Douglass and Bilbao have pointed out that Basques have demonstrated a very strong entrepreneurial drive. One interviewee stated three times within a one hour interview that he could see no reason to work for someone else when he could own his own business.<sup>39</sup> This entrepreneurial drive does seem to be strong among American Basques.

Another unique characteristic of the early Basque immigrants is that the majority of them intended to return home after making their fortunes. Their history of travel and exploration seems to account for this in part. In addition, their intention to return home--and the fact that they often did--made them less interested in becoming assimilated into American culture. If they did decide to stay, the assimilation process was a gradual one.

A third element in understanding Basque Americans is that the herder stereotype had limited application. While a majority of Basques became herders as their first occupation in the States, most of them moved rapidly into other jobs and developed other occupational stereotypes--the baker, the hotel owner, the rancher, the dairyman, the

gardener are examples. These newer stereotypes developed out of those Basques who came and decided to remain.

A fourth characteristic is the particular way that Basque immigrants clustered in the New World. Basques tended to cluster in rural or small town settings. With hotels as a nucleus for these clusters, Basques developed a network for handling their specific needs. This clustering explains the fact that Boise Basques tend to be Viscayan while La Puente Basques tend to be French and Navarrese. Richard Etulain's report on Basques in Yakima, Washington, suggested that smaller clusters of Basques can have assimilation patterns unique to the larger population.<sup>40</sup> Studies of small Basque communities such as Shosone, Idaho, and Miles City, Montana, await research. Entire states--such as Texas and New Mexico--are known to have had Basque settlers yet very little has been written about them.

These characteristics indicate that Basques have developed an identity in the New World. Each immigrant group is unique and there is no reason to assert that the Basque experience is unusually eccentric. Whether Basque characteristics fall in line with the theories of Oscar Handlin, Marcus Lee Hansen, John Higham, or the fileopie-tist tradition is another question.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Joseph Castelli, "Basques in the Western United States: A Functional Approach to Determination of Cultural Presence in the Geographic Landscape" (Ph.D. diss., University of Colorado, Boulder, 1970), p. xviii.

<sup>2</sup>U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Ancestry of Population by State: 1980 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1983), pp. 51-56.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>4</sup>William A. Douglass, "Counting Basques: The U. S. Census," Basque Studies Program Newsletter 28 (November 1983):3-7.

<sup>5</sup>The three Governors under Spanish dominion with Basque surnames were: Prudencio de Oribio de Bastera (1738); Jacinto de Barrios y Jauregui (1756); and Juan Bautista Elquezabal (1803). Under Mexican domination were Governors José Maria Letona (1831); Francisco Vidauri y Villaseñor (1834); and Juan José Elquezabal (1834).

<sup>6</sup>William A. Douglass and Jon Bilbao, Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1975), pp. 177-202.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 209.

<sup>8</sup>Sonia Jacqueline Eagle, "Work and Play Among the Basques in Southern California" (Ph.D. diss., Purdue University, 1979), p. 43.

<sup>9</sup>E. N. Wentworth and C. W. Towne, Shepherd's Empire (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1945), p. 166. Robert Glass Cleland credited the growth of the California sheep industry to droughts, increased property taxes for ranchers, and cattle epidemics. He also emphasized the disruption of cotton trade during the Civil War as the primary cause for the California sheepmen's prosperity in the 1860s. Robert Glass Cleland, Cattle on a Thousand Hills: Southern California, 1850-1880 (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1964), pp. 140-142.

<sup>10</sup>Eagle, "Work and Play," p. 49.

- <sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 49-52.
- <sup>12</sup>Douglass and Bilbao, Amerikanuak, p. 250.
- <sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 405-407.
- <sup>14</sup>E. N. Wentworth, America's Sheep Trails (Ames: Iowa College Press, 1948), pp. 258-285.
- <sup>15</sup>Richard Lane, "The Cultural Ecology of Sheep Nomadism: Northeastern Nevada, 1870-1972" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1974), p. 44.
- <sup>16</sup>Eagle, "Work and Play," p. 54.
- <sup>17</sup>Frank Araujo, "Basque Cultural Ecology and Echinococcosis in California" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Davis, 1974), p. 112.
- <sup>18</sup>Douglass and Bilbao, Amerikanuak, p. 299.
- <sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 302.
- <sup>20</sup>Edward P. Hutchinson, Legislative History of American Immigration Policy, 1798-1965 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), p. 484.
- <sup>21</sup>S1165-Public Law 587 granted special quota visas to a maximum of 250 alien sheepherders per year. Congressional Quarterly Almanac, 81st Congress, 2nd Session (Washington: Congressional Quarterly News Features, 1950), 6:218-219.
- <sup>22</sup>Hutchinson, Legislative History, p. 490.
- <sup>23</sup>HR 5678-Public Law 414, Congressional Quarterly Almanac, 82nd Congress, 2nd Session (Washington: Congressional Quarterly News Features, 1952), 8:154-160.
- <sup>24</sup>Pierre Salinger, "Senator Lehman Protests Bills," The New York Times, 21 June 1956. Newspaper coverage of the "Sheepherders' Laws" were generally sympathetic to need for more herders. Christie Peters' article in The New York Times, 9 January 1955, Pierre Salinger's article in The Wall Street Journal, 29 November 1960, and C. M. Cianfarra's article in The New York Times, 21 August 1954, are examples of such articles.
- <sup>25</sup>Allura Nason Ruiz, "The Basques--Sheepmen of the West" (Master's thesis, University of Nevada, Reno, 1964), p. 51.

- <sup>26</sup>Douglass and Bilbao, Amerikanuak, p. 306.
- <sup>27</sup>McCall, "Basque Americans," p. 46.
- <sup>28</sup>Eagle, "Work and Play," pp. 134-135.
- <sup>29</sup>Jean Francis DeCroos, The Long Journey: Social Integration and Ethnicity Among Urban Basques in the San Francisco Bay Region (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1983), pp. 30-35.
- <sup>30</sup>T. H. Inkster, "Basques in America," Contemporary Review 197 (April 1960), 227-229.
- <sup>31</sup>Rafael Ossa Echaburu, Pastores y Pelotaris Vascos en U.S.A. (Bilbao: Ediciones de la Caja de Ahorros Vizcaina, 1963).
- <sup>32</sup>Araujo, "Basque Cultural Ecology," p. 135.
- <sup>33</sup>John B. Edlefson, "Sociological Study of Basques in Southwest Idaho" (Ph.D. diss., State College of Washington, Seattle, 1948), p. 45.
- <sup>34</sup>Douglass and Bilbao, Amerikanuak, p. 371.
- <sup>35</sup>Bob Ithurralde, "Agur Hogar Agur," Voice of the Basques, April 1977. A photograph of the Keller-Espanol can be found in Douglass and Bilbao, Amerikanuak, between pages 306 and 307.
- <sup>36</sup>Araujo, "Basque Cultural Ecology," p. 138.
- <sup>37</sup>See the Appendix and Figure 3 for communities which have had active Basque hotels and other Basque functions.
- <sup>38</sup>Lorenzo Echanis, Interview with author, Brea, California, 16 February 1984, Transcript, North Texas Oral History Collection, p. 6.
- <sup>39</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>40</sup>Richard Etulain, "Basques of Yakima, Washington," Basque Studies Program Newsletter 10 (May 1974), 8.

## CHAPTER IV

### AMERICAN BASQUES AND IMMIGRATION THEORIES

In The Uprooted, Oscar Handlin portrayed European immigrants as culturally and economically stable before leaving their homes. Migration, he maintained, threw these travellers into a difficult, unstabilizing process. Upon their arrival in the United States, these newcomers found homes in the unfamiliar and large cities of the eastern seaboard.

In the case of the noninheriting son on a baserria, rules of primogeniture dictated the future. For him, the local village and baserria were culturally comfortable. As an individual, however, he knew from the onset that he must find another way to make his living. While the first born son or eredurua knew his inheritance and the expectations that came with it, this second born son--or daughter--knew that his responsibility was to find "another way." In this sense, a noninheriting Basque youngster knows that his personal situation is anything but stable. Historically, alternatives open to noninheriting siblings have been:

1. to receive cash from the family to help them build their own house on other property;
2. to leave the Basque Country so that they could in theory make their fortunes and return;

3. to join Catholic religious orders;
4. to become local artisans or herd the village sheep in the Pyrenees;
5. to become sailors or join the merchant marine;
6. to remain celibate and live and work within the family baserria; and
7. to marry another who has inherited his or her family's baserria.<sup>1</sup>

The Handlin depiction of European immigrants neglects some elements which would push an individual from his homeland. In the case of noninheriting Basques, the pressure to migrate as a consequence of primogeniture customs could be strong. Such factors would perhaps cause the local village setting to be less stable than it might seem on the surface. While the future of the baserria and local village customs might be quite stable, the future of siblings other than the eredurua was not. This would have created an internal instability in Basque villages and continues to be evident wherever primogeniture rules dominate.

While primogeniture convinced many noninheriting Basques to leave their villages, there were enticements pulling them away also. As Wilbur Shepperson has written, "wave after wave of Basques were drawn by the magnetism of opportunity."<sup>2</sup> The hope for a better life, of course, is not unique to Basques--many peoples have been drawn by the perception of opportunity.



There are two factors which contributed to making Basque migration a less stressful process than other immigrants experienced--or at least less stressful than Handlin described. First of all, a large percentage of the "first" Basques who arrived before 1920 went directly to agriculturally-related work. A typical Viscayan herder, for example, would enter the United States, take a train to the nearest town, and report for work within three weeks of leaving his village in the Pyrenees. What is significant about this pattern is that the herder went through the process with a minimum of contact with large cities. Subgroups of other ethnic groups--such as Germans in Texas and Swedes in Minnesota--also managed to avoid contact with cities. In bypassing urban settings, Basques and others also bypassed some of the culture shock and alienation that large, English speaking cities offered migrants.

A second stabilizing factor relates to marriage patterns among Basques. Passenger lists indicate that New York city arrivals between 1897 and 1903 were men between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four and most were single.<sup>3</sup> Basques usually arrived unmarried, established themselves, and then selected a spouse. The immigrants described in The Uprooted brought their nuclear families or left them behind. The fact that Basques left home unmarried reduced the problems of familial stress which many immigrants faced.

These two factors--selecting rural jobs and arriving single--contributed to making the Basque immigration experience distinct from the immigrants discussed in The Uprooted.

The Basque immigration experience seems less stressful than the model which Handlin proposed. Basque immigration, of course, generated its own types of difficulties and stresses. There is little doubt that the process of migration was frightening and difficult for all peoples. Still, Basques seem to have reduced the degree of culture shock which Handlin described by working in rural settings and marrying in the New World setting. Circumstances rather than forethought dictated both. In this sense, Basques were fortunate.

Oscar Handlin built a strong case for the dramatic shift from a stable environment in the Old World to an unstable life in America. While it undoubtedly has application in some instances, it is difficult to apply to Basques. When questioned on their expectations related to immigration, Basques note that they expected hard times. A majority of them spoke only Basque, averaged less than four years of formal education, and had to borrow money to book passage. When questioned, a Basque might state that he had no right to expect an easy transition. When asked about the decision to come to the States, the reply might

be that, "everyone seemed to be coming, and all young people want to go someplace."<sup>4</sup> Whether Basques consciously underplay such decisions and struggles or whether historians tend to overplay them is difficult to conclude. Regardless, a surprisingly common response to such questioning often goes something like, "well, what else would you expect?"

The hardships of early trans-Atlantic crossings is another topic which received considerable attention in The Uprooted. The costs of setting sail, the crowded conditions, and the fear of the unknown were included in his depiction. One Guipuzcoan Basque reported that the ship that brought him to the United States was the only ship he had ever seen. While he reported fear of the unfamiliar circumstances and problems communicating, harsh treatment from the ship's captain or crew was not part of his experience.<sup>5</sup> Records of harsh treatment are difficult to find among Basque immigrants.

Basques express the expectation that the crossing would be difficult. In the interview mentioned earlier, for example, Echanis stated that six days of storms at sea had slowed his crossing and kept him below deck. He often pointed out that the storms had denied him the opportunity to socialize with the other Basques on board.<sup>6</sup> While it would be inaccurate to generalize for all Basques, there does seem to be a tendency to underplay the hazards of the crossing as well as the difficulties of adjusting to the

New World. Perhaps Basques were better informed than those who preceded them or perhaps part of their cultural personality is to minimize difficulties. In either case, Handlin's depiction of such hardships seems to have very narrow application in the Basque experience.

One scholar has suggested that the overland passage was often more difficult for the Basque than the trans-Atlantic voyage.<sup>7</sup> David Echeverría, for example, left New York City for Boise and ended up lost in Salt Lake City.<sup>8</sup> Ramón Oyarbide and his partner Pedro disembarked from their train some sixty-three miles from their destination and walked the remainder through Nevada desert without water.<sup>9</sup> In both instances, the inability to speak English was the cause. For the Basque immigrant, overland passage could be terrifying--not because of prejudice and persecution, but because he was unable to speak English. Often travelling alone, early Basque immigrants were unable to find directions, to order meals, or to communicate their needs.

Perhaps Handlin's most powerful contribution to immigrant historiography has been his depiction of the alienation, loneliness, and homesickness common to newcomers on the American scene. Handlin's predecessors--especially the fileopietists--had ignored the personal suffering of their forefathers in deference to the more pleasant aspects of the experience. Most historians agree that all immigrants

experienced some heartaches in the process of becoming American and Basques are no exception.

In Basque literature, the most poignant examples of isolation and loneliness come from shepherds. One elderly Basque spoke of his earlier experience of herding in Nevada:

Of course I was homesick. If I had had the money I would have returned. Every evening as it got dark I started to cry. I didn't even have a tent until I had made enough money to buy one. I had borrowed money in France to come and I would have borrowed more to return if it had been possible. I went to town twice in eight and one-half years.<sup>10</sup>

Among herders such tales are numerous. As one retired herder told Robert Laxalt,

In them days, we no sooner got off the train from New York after the boat from the Old Country than we found ourselves out in the desert herding . . . the hard part was the loneliness. You would almost die from the loneliness, just to hear a human voice.<sup>11</sup>

Among Basques in the United States, the sheepherders offer the most glaring examples of isolation. In their case, isolation was occupational as well as cultural. William Douglass has written that Basques, "show a pronounced determination to undergo temporary physical and mental privation as an investment in a secure economic future."<sup>12</sup> Common among herders was the fear that such privation might lead to getting "sheeped" or "sagebrushed"--of losing one's sanity during long periods of loneliness. It has been suggested that alpine tree carvings by herders was an attempt to alleviate some of the boredom of mountain

herding.<sup>13</sup> This New World phenomenon can be seen on stands of carved aspens in northeastern Nevada and the Tonopah area.

The shepherd was not the only Basque immigrant to experience alienation, however. As Handlin suggested, most immigrants eventually bumped up against cultural differences. Joseph Arburua cited the difficulties which his mother experienced.<sup>14</sup> Her story suggests that alienation among immigrants could come in a variety of forms. At the age of twenty, she married a Basque rancher. Unable to speak English, she rarely went into town. Her home was sixty miles from the nearest town and her nearest neighbor was over two miles away. She lived in fear of local bandits who pillaged ranches throughout the San Joaquin Valley. Examples of such quietly alienated individuals abound in our national history and can be found in the Basque experience as well.

Oscar Handlin indicated that immigrants experienced in extreme form what other Americans also felt--the breakdown of family life and religious institutions. Noting the demise of the external family, the tensions within immigrants' marriages, and the harassment foreign children received in public schools, Handlin concluded that the immigrant lost his sense of family in the process of settling in America. The loss of family contributed to the experience of being uprooted.

These trends are difficult to assess in the Basque experience. While more quantitative data is sorely needed in order to make conclusions regarding Basque family life, some trends can be cited. First of all, preferential endogamy was and continues to be high among first generation Basques.<sup>15</sup> This pattern seems to break down rapidly in the second generation, however. In a study of less than fifty Basques in Stockton, California, Pagliarulo found that 86 percent of the second generation married non-Basques.<sup>16</sup> Iban Bilbao has suggested that Basques intermarry faster than any other second generation subculture in the Reno area.<sup>17</sup> Bilbao also stated that first generation endogamy rates are high because Basques feared marrying American women. Besides the obvious language difficulties, one report indicated that Basques have feared intermarriage due to their view that the breakdown of parental authority in American society was bringing about the disintegration of family life.<sup>18</sup> In this sense, Basques feared the same breakdowns which concerned Handlin. Information suggests that Basques have been very concerned with the maintenance of strong family ties and saw first generation endogamy as a means of retaining cultural identity. Patterns of first generation endogamy are not necessarily unique to Basques, however. Many other cultural groups have attempted to preserve their familial values through endogamy.

In his study of Basques in southwest Idaho, John Edlefson stated that intermarriage continues to be the most rigid test of assimilation.<sup>19</sup> While this would seem to be a major factor, there may be others. Given that early Basques came with the intention of returning to Euzkadi, it seems that the decision to make the United States their permanent home is also significant. In contrast with their predecessors, more of the recent Basque immigrants seem to come with the intention of staying. There does not seem to be clear delineation on this point. Some Basques currently come to the United States with the intention of returning. It would seem, however, that--once a Basque has decided to stay--his pattern of assimilation could vary greatly. The decision to remain, then, could be just as important a factor as intermarriage.

Others have suggested that language retention is the most critical aspect of Basque cultural identity. Learning English and the gradual decline in the use of Basque, therefore, is considered critical to the process of assimilation. The 119 foreign-born Basques in Edlefson's study averaged four years of education apiece and their American-born children attending school in the 1940s averaged an eighth grade education.<sup>20</sup> Most Basques report beginning to speak English just after their children started school. Basque parents often state that they want their children



"to make it in America" and begin speaking English at home to support their children.<sup>21</sup> As in other immigrant households, once the eldest started school, English often became the household language.

In addition to problems in learning English, Handlin stated that immigrant children often encountered harassment in school. While there are occasionally reports of teasing, fighting, and hazing, most second generation Basques report that their problem was primarily linguistic. As one Basque American stated, "It was a problem because when you can't speak the language you can't mingle with other kids. You don't know how to talk to them . . . naturally it makes it kind of hard to get along for awhile."<sup>22</sup> It seems ironic that the same thing which makes Basques so unique has also provided such problems--their language.

Preferential endogamy may have helped the Basque family alleviate some of the pressures found in the New World. The tendency to marry after arrival, the enrollment of children in more education than the parents had, and the willingness to learn English with their children may have been contributions which helped keep the family a priority among Basque Americans. Another support to the Basque family is the modern vestige of the lenbizikoatia system found in the Old World. Among European Basques, the lenbizikoatia is an integral relationship with the nearest geographic neighbor.

Among New World Basques, the nearest Basque family is often adopted in similar fashion. As in the Old World, New World lenbizikoatia share the work and yield of harvest, the hours of lambing season, and the joys and pains of family life. A modified lenbizikoatia system in the New World helps each family through difficult times and aids in the retention of familial and cultural values.

Generally speaking, Basque families had to endure the same types of problems other immigrants endured. While Basque family life was spared some of the hardships Handlin described, they also had to adjust to changes in lifestyles, language, and customs. As their children have reached school-age and as they have decided to remain in the United States, Basques have demonstrated an increasing willingness to become part of the American scene. Traditionally, Basques have placed a high priority on familial values and demonstrated a concern similar to one voiced in Handlin's Uprooted--the breakdown of familial values. It is likely that other immigrant cultures also shared some degree of concern for the future of their families.

Oscar Handlin suggested that immigrants turned to their religion with increasing intensity as their other institutions were threatened. As they have in the past, European Basques maintain universal church attendance today. Men, women, and children attend religious services in their villages. Almost all European and American Basques are

Roman Catholics. In places such as Jordan Valley, Oregon, Fullerton, California, and Gardnerville, Nevada, Basques were instrumental in constructing their own churches.<sup>23</sup>

In many instances, however, Basques developed different habits of worship from the Old Country. Attendance became irregular among Basque American men primarily because they often worked far from the established churches. In the Old World, Basque men were more likely to work and worship in their own villages. Douglass and Bilbao report a reticence on the part of foreign-born Basques to become active in their "American" congregations.<sup>24</sup> Basque clergy from the Old Country travel throughout the American West celebrating Mass at Basque festivals, at sheep camps, and in private homes. Services and retreats are conducted in Basque. Basque priests assigned to the western United States usually come for a three to ten year period. Such priests are something like folk-heroes as they have become symbolic of Old World religious values and ethnic identity.<sup>25</sup> In some small degree, the travelling priests have also alleviated the shock of religious transplantation which Handlin cited.

Gerald Lenski has written that religious activity has increased with each successive generation of Americans.<sup>26</sup> He found this to be true especially among American Catholics. Rather than increasing attendance, first generation Basques in the United States seem to attend Mass less often, prefer

priests from the Old Country, and seem hesitant to participate in congregational activities. While these could be held as indications of institutional breakdowns in Basque Catholicism, they could also be held as an attempt to hold onto the more conservative elements of Old World Catholicism. Basque immigrants seem to prefer the religious expression they left in the Old Country to that which they encounter in the United States. Data on second and third generation religious participation is lacking.

In The Uprooted, Handlin located most European immigrants in the ghettos of large cities, which was not the case for Basque immigrants. Handlin also said that cultural groups tended to cluster together in these urban settings--that populations of Italians, Chinese, German, and Irish, for example, could be found in separate concentrations within these large cities. What is true of the Basques is that they--like others--clustered together. While Basques were "unique among immigrant groups to the United States because they bypassed Eastern ghettos," they did seek "their own kind" precisely as others have.<sup>27</sup>

Handlin also suggested that foreigners were often used politically by opportunistic politicians who saw them as potential voting blocks. This aspect of Handlin's interpretation seems to evolve from his depiction of the inner-city immigrant clusters. Basques have had a very low profile in American politics and display relatively little

interest in political office. There have been a few notable exceptions, however. Paul Laxalt served as Governor and then Senator from Nevada before becoming the Republican Campaign Manager for President Reagan's re-election. Senator Anthony Yturri from Oregon, Secretary of State Peter Cenurrusa from Idaho, Representative John Garamendi from California, and the head of the Nevada State Gaming Commission, Peter Echeverría, are examples of the few Basques who have become involved in politics on a state or national level.

Basque newspapers seem to indicate a preference for local issues over national and state politics among Basques. The Voice of the Basques--a monthly Basque newspaper now out of print--contained numerous articles announcing local charities and community events.<sup>28</sup> The coverage and selection of articles in Voice of the Basques suggested that Basques generally have restricted their focus to local and occupational issues. Relatively few Basques have entered politics and those who have done so seem to come from communities which have relatively large Basque populations--such as Jordan Valley, Oregon; Boise, Idaho; and Reno, Nevada.<sup>29</sup> Handlin's depiction of opportunistic politicians using foreigners as voting blocks does not seem useful in this instance.

In summary, Handlin's portrayal of immigrants in The Uprooted has limited application in the Basque experience.

A major Handlin theme is the depiction of Old World Europeans as stable and relatively content before migrating to the New World. In the Basque example, rules of primogeniture convinced many noninheriting Basques to leave their villages--thus creating a degree of instability in the Old World setting. Handlin described the process of migration as stressful for immigrating families. While on one level this is undoubtedly true, Basque patterns of migration had two built-in advantages which Handlin did not consider: they usually took agricultural, rural jobs thus avoiding urban settings and they usually did not have families to bring with them. They married after establishing themselves in America. Perhaps Handlin's discussion of alienation, isolation, and homesickness is the theme which most closely approximates the Basque experience. Stories of isolation, privation, and loneliness seem abundant. This perhaps is a theme common to other immigrants as well. It is difficult to assess the accuracy of Handlin's commentary related to Basque family life. While Basques have consciously endeavored to protect against the familial breakdowns which Handlin discussed, judging their effectiveness seems impossible. More information on second and third generation Basques is needed. Handlin suggested that immigrants turned fervently toward their religion in the New World and Basques seem to have turned slightly away from Catholicism.

While most Basques continue to attend Mass, they have not incorporated their religious practice into their lives as Old World Basques have. And, finally, Basque involvement in politics has taken a different course from that described by Oscar Handlin. Rather than emerging as political voting blocks, Basques have demonstrated a relatively low political profile.

Since Hansen first discussed his "three generational hypothesis" in 1938, historians and sociologists have attempted to clarify the distinctions among first, second, and third generation Americans. In his work with Basques in Mountain Home, Idaho, Urquidi suggested that second generation Basques are more interested in assimilation than in retaining their cultural identity. Urquidi cited the lack of interest on the part of young Basques in joining local Basque clubs as an example.<sup>30</sup> In A Shepherd Watches, A Shepherd Sings, Louis Irigaray attested to parental expectations placed upon second generation Basques. He told of going off to college for a brief period only to discover that it was time to come home and "take over the sheep business."<sup>31</sup> It is difficult to decide exactly what comprises the "rejection" of the first generation. Seemingly, Irigaray attempted and was either unwilling or unable to make the break.

The traditional Basque home which in Europe would house two and three generations is rare among Basques in the

United States. In America, there seems to be an expectation that children will leave home once they have reached their late teens. DeCroos cited one example of the confusion and frustration that this expectation caused for one Basque woman in the 1970s.

If my grandmother (in the Basque Country) had known that I moved out of the house without being married my mother would have been a failure. It was hard. When I look back I would probably encourage my children to move out when they are ready. For a long time I did not want to be Basque.<sup>32</sup>

Not all second generation Basques report this inter-generational conflict, however. Examples of children sharing the same basic philosophies as their parents can also be found. While some Basque parents instruct their daughters to marry "a nice Basque boy," for example, others respond that intermarriage is inevitable.

Hansen's "three generation theory" continues to attract scholarly attention and seems to merit favorable analysis. Yet, in the Basque setting, there is not enough hard evidence to indicate the accuracy of Hansen's theories. Whether the second generation Basque rejects parental values in becoming more American is also unclear--for the two do not seem necessarily opposed. There are indications that Basque immigrants--once they decided to stay--wanted their children to retain Old World cultural values while at the same time "making it in America." Perhaps in trying



to apply Hansen's theory historians have placed too great an emphasis upon clashing cultures rather than potential co-existence of two compatible identities.

Hansen described recent waves of immigrants "filling in" behind those who had arrived earlier. Having new herders fill in the demand for more herders, for example, allowed for occupational diversification among Basques.<sup>33</sup> In the Basque experience, however, there was not the "clocklike westward progression" which Hansen described. Rather than moving from east to west, Basques began in the West. From there, they moved east and northeast and then, later, arrived in New York and travelled west.

Nearly forty years after it was presented, Hansen's "three generation theory" continues to be discussed among immigrant historians. Valid criticisms of his theory have been made yet it has not been discounted. There do seem to be examples of second generation Basques attempting to reject Old World values. On the other hand, whether the second generation individual is attempting to reject the Old World or simply trying to find his own course in the New World is difficult to conclude. Hansen's theory seems to apply in some Basque families and not in others. His discussion of "filling in" seems to directly apply to Basques--new herders arrived, "filled in" for their predecessors, and kept the immigration process rolling.

On the other hand, Hansen's description of a "clocklike" progression does not apply to Basques. In this case, Basques would seem "counterclocklike."

John Higham's Strangers in the Land outlined significant American reactions to foreigners between 1860 and 1925. Higham demonstrated that American nativism has fluctuated with history and that such fluctuations continued beyond 1925 when the gates were closed to immigration. Prior to 1882 there were no limitations upon the influx of healthy individuals into the United States. The Immigration Act of 1917 made reading comprehension in some language a requirement for entrance.<sup>34</sup> Data concerning the consequences of this act upon Basque aliens is lacking. Given the fact that Basques often lacked formal education, this law may have had an appreciable effect if it had been enforced. The temporary quota acts of 1921 and 1922 followed and sharply restricted the entry of southern Europeans. The Immigration Act of 1924 made the quota concept official and marked "the closing of the gates," as Higham said. In 1929, Spain was limited to a quota of less than three hundred and France to about three thousand.<sup>35</sup> Higham's Strangers related a high degree of nativist sentiment to the increase of anti-foreign legislation in the 1920s. There is little doubt that this legislation cut the numbers of Basques as well as others entering the United States.

Wartime wool demands and the interruption of trans-Atlantic travel by World War I increased the demand for herders in the West. For example, wages increased more dramatically for herders than any other farm or agricultural laborer in Nevada.<sup>36</sup> The quota had diminished the flow of herders. Basques were beginning to enter illegally by posing as sailors on leave and by crossing the Mexican border as "wet Basques."<sup>37</sup> Illegal entry of Basques seems to have begun around 1920 and continued until 1955. Various range associations and sheep owners associations pressured Congressmen to initiate importation schemes to alleviate the labor shortage in the sheep industry.

Public legislation eventually led to the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952. This law provided for the large-scale entry of herders from Spain. As a result, 1,498 "skilled sheepherders" were permitted to enter the United States for permanent employment in that occupation.<sup>38</sup> While the bill has undergone amendments, it still is in effect today.

Higham's observation that immigration legislation came out of anti-foreign sentiment has both general and specific application for Basques. The national legislation clearly had an impact on Basques as well as others. Basques also ran into specific instances of anti-foreign sentiment. The Carson Morning Appeal (Carson City, Nevada) ran an article during the Spanish American War that some "dangerous" Basque

herders were expected to pass through town that day.<sup>39</sup> Edlefson reminded us that Basques in Idaho underwent a brief discriminatory period in the early 1930s when they were known as "garlic snappers."<sup>40</sup> In "Lest We Forget," Paquette told of the herders who had driven their 10,000 sheep into Kern County, California, in order to save their flocks from drought conditions.<sup>41</sup> The drive saved most of the sheep at the expense of regional tensions and anti-Basque sentiment. In both cases, the "natives" were upset with the Basques because their herds had overgrazed open rangelands.

According to Richard Etulain, Basques were "thrice damned" during the Progressive period: they came to make their money and leave without becoming American citizens; they were clannish and did not speak English; and they took jobs that others did not want.<sup>42</sup> The Taylor Grazing Act was passed in large part because of these three irritations. Passed in 1934, this act severely affected the tramp sheepmen by closing open range to grazing. After it was passed, the irritation between ranchers and sheepmen virtually disappeared. Douglass and Bilbao maintained that the image of herders improved dramatically after the Taylor Act went into effect.<sup>43</sup> Newspaper articles began to extol the Basque culture and the honesty of the Basque herder. As Douglass and Bilbao stated, Basques have become one of the most respected ethnic groups in the American West.<sup>44</sup>

Primarily, Basques had gone into competition with local ranchers for open pasture lands. During the droughts and depression, the competition became intense and nativism was more prevalent than usual. The threat to local pasture together with the drive for ownership no doubt flamed the anti-Basque prejudice. Increased competition for resources caused the itinerant sheepman to become the focus of prejudice in central California and the Great Basin area. While Higham's Strangers did not treat open range competition, his observations seem to apply to the Basque situation.

Earlier Oscar Handlin suggested that the trans-Atlantic migration had a destabilizing effect on European immigrants. John Higham disagreed and stated that some immigrants--such as the Chinese and Jews--have maintained both a sense of stability and cultural values. According to Higham, there are two factors which can facilitate stability within immigrant populations. The first is that they continue to be reinforced by new immigrants from the same culture. The second is that they have a very strong cultural identity which helps them withstand the experience of migration with their cultural heritage intact. While Higham's view does not necessarily refute Handlin's, it indicates that cultures often contain internal traditions which offer stability to people who seem to be undergoing external change. This point of view seems to have merit in the Basque example as

well. New herders, for example, continued to "reinforce" earlier arrivals. Also, strong emphasis upon family and language have helped Basques build a relatively strong identity in the United States. In some ways, Higham's concept of "reinforcement" seems to parallel Hansen's concept of "filling in."

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Grant McCall, "Basque Americans and a Sequential Theory of Migration and Adaptation" (Master's thesis, San Francisco State University, 1968), p. 38.

<sup>2</sup>Wilbur S. Shepperson, Restless Strangers Nevada's Immigrants and Their Interpreters (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1970), p. 13.

<sup>3</sup>Iban Bilbao, "El Pastor Vasco como Trabajador en el Oeste de los E.E.U.U." (Paper in preparation for submission, University of Nevada Basque Studies Library, 1980), p. 65.

<sup>4</sup>Shepperson, Restless Strangers, p. 49.

<sup>5</sup>Lorenzo Echanis, interview with author, Brea, California, 16 February 1984.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Shepperson, Restless Strangers, p. 226.

<sup>8</sup>David Echeverría, interview with author, Brea, California, 20 August 1975.

<sup>9</sup>Shepperson, Restless Strangers, p. 226.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>11</sup>Robert Laxalt, Nevada: A Bicentennial History (New York: William Norton and Company, 1977), p. 24.

<sup>12</sup>William A. Douglass, "Lonely Lives Under the Big Sky," Natural History 82 (March 1973):32.

<sup>13</sup>Richard Lane, "Basque Tree Carvings," Northeastern Nevada Historical Society Quarterly 1 (Winter 1971), 1-7.

<sup>14</sup>Joseph Arburua, "Rancho Panocha de San Juan y los Carrizalitos" (Family history, University of Nevada Basque Studies Library, 1970).

<sup>15</sup>Shepperson, Restless Strangers, p. 65.

<sup>16</sup>Carol Pagliarulo, "Basques in Stockton: A Study of Assimilation" (Master's thesis, College of the Pacific, Stockton, California, 1948), p. 34.

- 17 Iban Bilbao, "El Pastor Vasco," p. 70.
- 18 William A. Douglass and Jon Bilbao, Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1975), p. 345.
- 19 John B. Edlefson, "Sociological Study of Basques in Southwest Idaho" (Ph.D. diss., State College of Washington, Seattle, 1948), p. 79.
- 20 Ibid., p. 108.
- 21 Mary Louise Mujica, interview with author, Chino, California, 15 February 1984, and Lorenzo Echanis, interview with author, Brea, California, 16 February 1984. Transcripts, North Texas State Oral History Collection.
- 22 John Yturry, interview with author, Brea, California, 16 February 1984. Transcript, North Texas State Oral History Collection.
- 23 Douglass and Bilbao, Amerikanuak, p. 355.
- 24 Ibid., p. 356.
- 25 DeCroos, The Long Journey, p. 54.
- 26 Gerald Lenski, The Religious Factor (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1961), p. 41.
- 27 Diane Link, "The American Basques," Literature of Ethnic Minorities (Spring 1974), 73.
- 28 The Voice of the Basques, April 1976, pp. 8-10.
- 29 Douglass and Bilbao, Amerikanuak, 363.
- 30 Richard Urquidi, "History of Mountain Home Basques" (Master's thesis, Boise State University, 1980), p. 22.
- 31 Louis Irigaray and Theodore Taylor, A Shepherd Watches, A Shepherd Sings (New York: Doubleday and company, 1977), pp. 267-280.
- 32 DeCroos, The Long Journey, p. 65.
- 33 Douglass and Bilbao, Amerikanuak, p. 333.
- 34 Hutchinson, Legislative History, p. 465.



- <sup>35</sup>Lane, "Cultural Ecology," p. 269.
- <sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 270.
- <sup>37</sup>Ruiz, "The Basques," pp. 57-67.
- <sup>38</sup>Ibid., pp. 41-43.
- <sup>39</sup>"Nevada's Danger," Carson Morning Appeal (Carson City, Nevada), 4 May 1898, p. 3.
- <sup>40</sup>Edlefson, "Sociological Study," p. 110.
- <sup>41</sup>Mary Grace Paquette, "Lest We Forget the History of the French in Kern County," Kern County Historical Society (1978), p. 6.
- <sup>42</sup>Richard Etulain, "Basques of the American West: Some Problems for the Historian" (Paper presented at the Idaho Historical Conference, Boise, March 1974), p. 3.
- <sup>43</sup>Douglass and Bilbao, Amerikanuak, p. 369.
- <sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 394.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

American historiography in the twentieth century has developed a consensus view of the immigration process. Historians such as Handlin, Hansen, and Higham contributed their interpretations to those of the earlier fileopietists. Oscar Handlin's Uprooted shifted us away from the relatively simplistic picture painted by the fileopietists and reminded us that immigration could be a difficult process. Marcus Hansen focused his thoughts upon families and provided a generational discussion which continues today. John Higham critiqued some of Handlin's views, pointed out aspects of nativism, and spoke elequently for cultural pluralism. Contemporary historians also grapple with these issues when considering immigration. One of the difficulties in immigration historiography, however, is that the stereotypical Immigrant does not really exist. He has been created out of our need to make sense of the immigration process. Another difficulty in immigration historiography is the discussion of immigrants as "minority" groups. It is important to remember that there is no "majority" among American immigrants. The "majority" group--those Americans of British ancestry--comprise 15 percent of national population. The Germans

and Blacks follow closely with 13 and 11 percent.<sup>1</sup> With such small percentages, focusing upon "minority" and "majority" seems futile.

In Ethnic America Thomas Sowell suggested that the term immigrants is a blanket one which neglects certain important distinctions among those who have come to America. He suggested three distinctions which he labelled the refugee, the sojourner, and the immigrant.<sup>2</sup> Refugees, such as the Irish and the European Jews, came as victims of famine and pogroms. Sojourners, such as the Basques, Italians, Chinese, Japanese, and Mexicans, have arrived with the intention of returning to their native lands. Immigrants, such as the Germans and Scandinavians, were more likely to come with long term settlement as their goal. These three distinctions offer clarity and new direction for historians researching immigration trends.

In some instances, one can see that the theories of Handlin, Hansen, and Higham have direct application to the discussion of Basque migration. On the other hand, some unique elements make it difficult to fit the Basque immigrant into the trends of immigration historiography. A strong migratory tradition coupled with the intention to return to the Basque homeland have made Basques unique. Entrepreneurial drive and the ability to seek and establish themselves within open markets may also be characteristic to Basques. Their selection of small town or rural settings

in America together with their tendency to arrive as single men and women have eased some of the adaptive processes. A Basque hotel network coupled with family support systems have also made the process easier.

The question of whether Basques are unique among American immigrants has surfaced throughout this work. If one were to accept the Handlin, Hansen, Higham composite as representative of all American immigrants, Basques would definitely be considered unique--as would every immigrant group other than Sowell's "fifteen per cent majority." It seems that no two cultural groups are completely similar and each has offered its own unique contribution to United States history. In this sense, Basques are both unique and not unique at all. Such paradoxes continue to plague and please the historian.

One concept which is extremely strong among Basque Americans is the loyalty to two cultures and two homelands. Among Basques, this dual identity does not pose a conflict. Young Basque Americans, for example, might be seen leading festival processions wearing traditional Basque costume, carrying an American flag, and singing "Gora Amerika" (God Bless America) in Basque. As Wilbur Shepperson has suggested, perhaps entirely too much emphasis has been placed upon the notion of two worlds--the Old versus the New, the American versus the foreign.

John Higham suggested that the melting pot concept of American history is an inaccurate model. Others, such as Moynihan and Glazer in Beyond the Melting Pot, Michael Novak in The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnic, Thomas Archdeacon in Becoming American, and James Fallows in his recent Atlantic article, have agreed that the melting pot is an outdated concept.<sup>3</sup> In fact, it may have been an inaccurate one. It is possible that--in their ability to maintain two compatible identities--Basque Americans naturally discovered something which historians are now discussing. Their ability to be of both cultures supports a pluralistic view of America and points to new directions in historiography.

The models suggested by the works of Handlin, Hansen, and Higham seem appropriate for Scottish, Irish, and English settlers. When imposed on Basques, however, the models seem less persuasive. Early Chinese, Japanese, and Basque immigrants might be more likely to share similar immigration models. Each of the three groups stressed family cohesion, arrived unmarried, and intended to return to their homelands. It is entirely possible that new models need to be developed for each immigrant group. Once developed, comparisons of those models might generate useful and accurate generalizations.

As Higham mentioned frequently, immigration has also been a divisive factor in American history. Trying to impose a monocultural model on the millions of immigrants who have

landed upon our shores seems inappropriate. While historians have moved away from the melting pot or monocultural model, it is unclear whether the concept of cultural pluralism has replaced the old model.

As Thomas Archdeacon has suggested in his recent work, generalizations are especially risky when discussing immigration. First of all, Americans tend to think of themselves as "a nation of immigrants." Other nations such as Canada, Australia, and Argentina, for example, could make the same claim. Also, there is no single American reaction toward immigration, and if there were a solitary prevalent attitude it would be shifting constantly. Finally, ethnic characteristics are very elusive. Immigration historians find themselves somewhere between identifying cultural characteristics and supporting worn stereotypes. Authors with surnames such as Araujo, Arburua, Echeverría, Ossa Echaburu, and Irigaray might be suspected of Basque fileopieté.

While Basque Americans have made a unique contribution to the immigration landscape, it would be inappropriate to overstate their influence. One pitfall in concentrating on a relatively small population such as Basques is the danger of overstating their importance to United States history. A similar pitfall in emphasizing immigration is the problem of overstating the effect of minorities in general. The

immigration historian, it seems, must keep an eye on the entire society while studying the particular group in question. This seems accurate for this study as well. The point of this work has not been to overemphasize the Basque contribution, but rather to consider a few threads in an immense fabric known as immigration history.

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Thomas Sowell, Ethnic America (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1981), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 275-276.

<sup>3</sup>Daniel P. Moynihan and Nathan Glazer, Beyond the Melting Pot (Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1963); Michael Novak, The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnic (New York: MacMillan Company, 1972); Thomas Archdeacon, Becoming American: An Ethnic History (New York: Free Press, 1983); and James Fallows, "Immigration: How It's Affecting Us," The Atlantic (November 1983), pp. 45-108.



APPENDIX A

PRESENT AND PAST BASQUE COMMUNITIES  
IN THE AMERICAN WEST

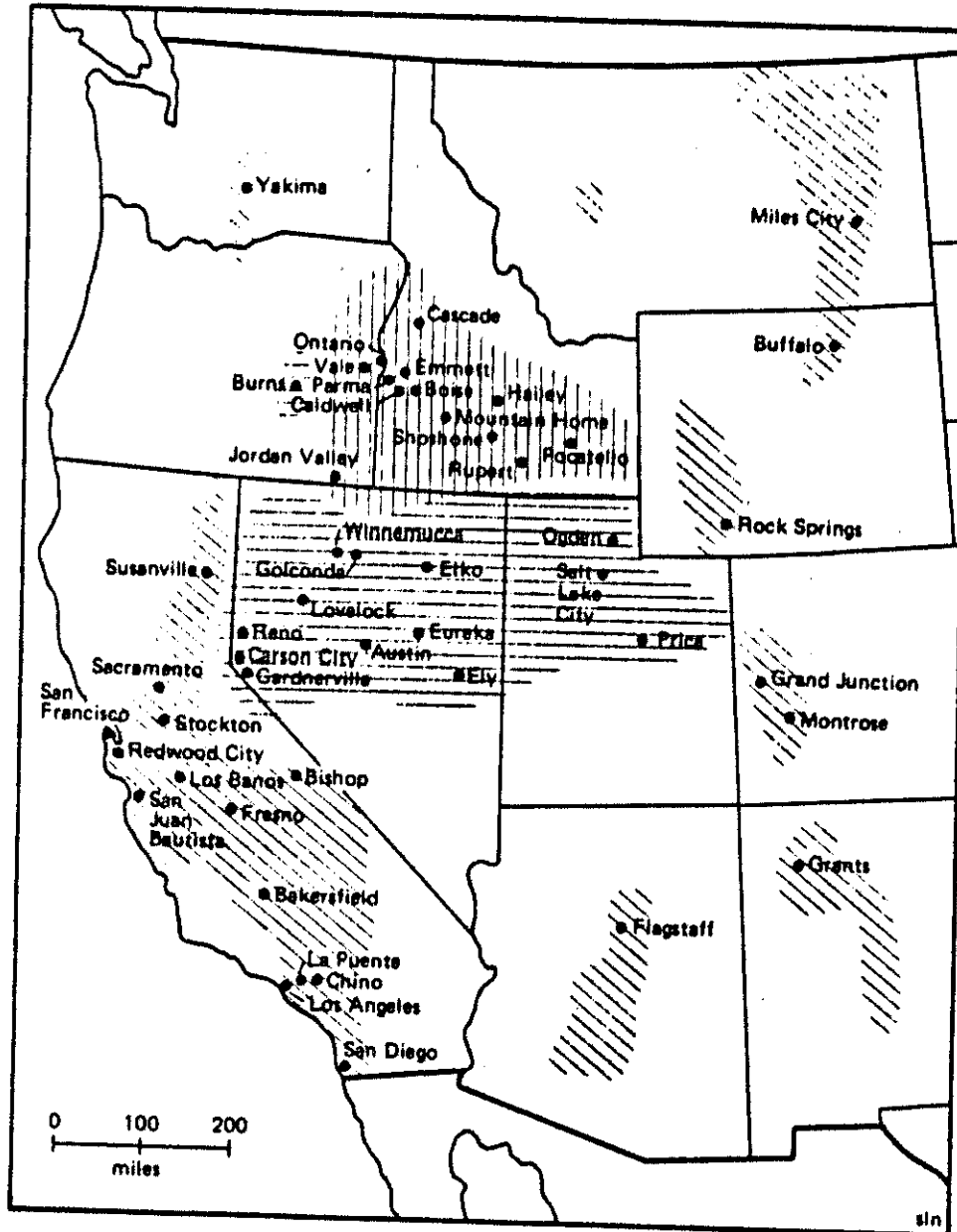


Fig. 3--Map of Basque Settlement in the American West  
Diagonal lines indicate areas of predominantly French and Navarrese settlement; vertical lines identify predominantly Viscayan Basque settlement; and horizontal lines indicate the settlement of all three groups. Source: Douglass and Bilbao, Amerikanuak, pp. 430-435.

## KEY TO SYMBOLS

H = Basque Hotel or Boarding House  
 SC = Basque Social Club  
 HC = Handball Court  
 RB = Basque Language Radio Broadcast  
 D = Basque Dance Group  
 F = Festival  
 P = Annual Basque Picnic  
 N = Newsletter or Newspaper  
 PP = Physical Plant for Social Club  
 BP = Basque Priest

## Arizona

1. Flagstaff: H

## California

1. Bakersfield: H, HC, SC, F, D, N
2. Bishop: H
3. Chino: H, HC, SC, F, D (with La Puente)
4. Fresno: H, HC, P, D, BP
5. La Puente: H, HC, SC, F, D (with Chino), PP
6. Los Angeles: H, N, BP
7. Los Banos: H, SC, HC, F
8. Redwood City: SC
9. Sacramento: H
10. San Diego: H
11. San Francisco: H, SC, HC, D, F, N
12. San Juan Bautista: H
13. Stockton: H, HC, P, SC
14. Susanville: H

## Colorado

1. Grand Junction: H, SC
2. Montrose: H

## Idaho

1. Boise: H, SC, P, F, D, HC, RB, N, PP, BP
2. Caldwell: SC, H
3. Cascade: H
4. Emmett: SC
5. Hailey: H
6. Mountain Home: SC, H, HC, D, P
7. Parma: BP
8. Pocatello: H
9. Rupert: BP
10. Shoshone: H

## Montana

1. Miles City: H

## Nevada

1. Austin: H
2. Carson City: H
3. Elko: H, SC, D, F, RB, N, HC, BP
4. Ely: H, SC, D, F
5. Eureka: H
6. Gardnerville: H
7. Golconda: H
8. Lovelock: H
9. Reno: H, SC, D, F, N, HC
10. Winnemucca: H, SC, D, RB

## New Mexico

1. Grants: H

## Oregon

1. Burns: H, SC, P
2. Jordan Valley: H, HC, D
3. Ontario: H, SC, P, N
4. Vale: SC

## Utah

1. Ogden: H, HC
2. Price: H
3. Salt Lake City: H

## Washington

1. Yakima: H

## Wyoming

1. Buffalo: H, SC, RB, P
2. Rock Springs: H

It should also be noted that the New York City Basques have several of these ethnic indicators including: H, HC, D, N, F, PP, BP.

## APPENDIX B

### GLOSSARY OF BASQUE TERMS

- agur: goodbye
- akleharres: worship ceremonies
- Amerikanuak: Basques in America
- asmoak: ideas or theories
- baserria: farmstead, can be used to refer to house or house and property
- baserriak: plural of baserria
- echekoak: domestics in the baserria
- eredurua: heir
- eta: and
- Euskaldun: those who speak Basque
- Euzkadi: political name for Basque country
- extea berria: new house
- extea polita: pretty house
- Gora Amerika: "God Bless America" in Basque
- gure extea: our house
- jai alai: Basque ball game
- lenbizikoatia: first or nearest neighbor
- mús: Basque card game
- sendi: family
- serora: female religious leader
- serorak: plural of serora

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