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BEFORE AND AFTER THE NATION

BASQUE PATRIOTIC HEROES, 1834-1939*

In the nineteenth century, Basque *fuerism*, a regionalist ideology, elaborated a narrative about Basque identity that was characterised by a double Basque and Spanish patriotism.¹ When the nationalism created by Sabino Arana (1865-1903) appeared at the end of the century, a new Basque identity began to be constructed that flatly rejected that double patriotism. Both fuerists and Basque nationalists created a pantheon of Great Men drawn from Basque history. From the Middle Ages up to the recent past, these were patriotic heroes (warriors, musicians, saints, politicians, discoverers ...) that reflected the ideologies' respective conceptions of Basque identity. Among them, fuerism included figures that expressed double patriotism. Conversely, the heroes of Basque nationalism were precisely those that had contributed, according to its interpretation, to the fight against Spanish domination. In this article we analyse the patriotic heroes of fuerism and early Basque nationalism from the decade of 1830-1840, when fuerism emerged, to the end of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). We will examine which heroes both movements shared and which were cast aside by Basque nationalism, as well as the reasons for these continuities or discontinuities.

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Through the case study presented here, we aim to contribute to the debate on the relationship and limits that exist between region and nation, regionalism and nationalism. The study of regionalism in Europe, which has been developed since the decade of 1990 with studies by Heinz-Gerhard Haupt, Michael G. Müller and Stuart Woolf, provides for an open debate on the demarcation lines between regionalism and nationalism.² The analysis of heroes and the cult of heroes (driven mainly by the ethno-symbolic school led by Anthony Smith) allows for an exploration of these limits and, in addition, the relationship between myth, history and nationalisation, as dealt with by, among others, Geoffrey Hosking, George Schöpflin and Stefan Berger.³ The case of the Basque Country, in which a late-nineteenth-century sub-nationalism developed with shared points of reference to an earlier regionalism, offers an interesting panorama to observe these issues.

***Fueros*, fuerism and Basque identity in the nineteenth century**

The construction of the liberal state in Spain had to be carried out despite the continuing presence in some parts of its territory of the *fueros* (distinctive juridical systems characteristic of the Ancien Régime). Álava, Guipúzcoa, Biscay and the former Kingdom of Navarre had entered the nineteenth century with their medieval *fueros* intact – unique to each territory, although similar in the case of the first three, the so-called ‘Basque Provinces’ – and with a firm conception of them as territorial law.⁴ This state of affairs constituted a singularity that differentiated them from the rest of the Spanish monarchy. The Basque political elite attempted to preserve this singularity within the new liberal state that was built (intermittently) from 1812 onward, even though its centralist and uniform design did not admit, at least in theory, the existence of juridical particularities.

Tensions were produced between these elites and the state, which facilitated the strengthening of ties between the former. But beginning at

the end of the First Carlist War (1833-1839), Navarre adopted a separate strategy from the other three provinces and it finally acceded, in 1841, to the repeal of its territory's *fueros* and to fuller inclusion within Spain's constitutional order, while still maintaining a measure of fiscal and administrative autonomy. The Alavese, Guipuzcoan and Biscayan elites, on the other hand, fought tooth and nail to avoid a similar fate, putting forth a united front of negotiation with the government that underscored the importance of their *fueros* as an inalienable historical patrimony. For a time, they achieved their objective and managed to keep them alive until 1876, but not without accepting profound modifications to make them compatible with the liberal state.⁵

The sustained defence that these elites had to realise, arguing that it was necessary to conserve the *fueros* in order to guarantee the well-being of their territories, peace and the established social order (complete with the consequent privileges for those who dominated the system, i.e. the rural aristocracy, the notables), gave rise to a new political ideology: fuerism. It was the hegemonic ideology in the Basque Provinces between the decades of 1830 and 1860, supported by those who controlled the foral institutions.⁶ Its birth occurred in 1834, in the midst of the First Carlist War, when its ideology was first expressed in a systematic way.⁷ Fuerists asserted the compatibility of the Basque *fueros* with the constitutional regime. They reinterpreted them as a perfect mechanism for provincial administration, one that represented 'liberty, enlightenment, development, prosperity, noble customs', that in no way opposed the constitutional unity of the state and that the latter should conserve for its own benefit.

The fuerists managed to make their thesis successful at a highly delicate moment, just after the end of a civil war, the First Carlist War, when the Spanish Parliament passed a far-reaching law (25 October 1839) that ratified the continuation of the Basque and Navarrese *fueros*, although stipulating modifications. The law had its detractors from the very beginning, but the influence that the Basque fuerists had attained in governmental circles and its particular consonance with the moderate liberals that governed the state, permitted them to maintain a good part of the foral edifice intact. Notably, they preserved fiscal and military

exemptions and the Basque Provinces' institutions of government (the *Juntas Generales* or provincial parliaments, and *Diputaciones forales* or provincial councils) until 1876.

The fuerists utilised arguments of a diverse nature to defend the perpetuation of the foral regime within the liberal state. In one, they presented the *fueros* as a 'way of being' for the Basques, the defining element of a unique people, understood as a *nationality* – the term was used, if only occasionally – that could not lose its *fueros* without also being destroyed because they constituted an essential part of its nature. Thus, the discourse that defended the *fueros* evolved into a discourse on Basque identity. Through it, a code of identification about what it meant to *be Basque* was progressively defined.

Its principal referents were the *fueros*, understood as a sacred deposit, handed down generation after generation, and guarantee of the people's welfare; the Catholic faith, of remote (mythic) origin and profound roots, expression of the Basques' moral virtues; history, constructed around the idea (also mythic) of an ancient and continuous independence in the face of multiple invasions by foreign peoples and around the notion of integration into the Crown of Castile that was voluntary and conditioned upon the conservation of the *fueros*; a culture proper, the Basque language (*Euskera*) included; and a double Basque and Spanish patriotism that expressed a profound love for the ancestors' Basque land, but also Basque loyalty and devotion to the shared *mother* and *fatherland*, Spain – these were the utilised terms – that affirmed the Basques were part of the Spanish *nation*.⁸ This final ingredient, Spanish patriotism, is fundamental for understanding Basque identity in the nineteenth century and is the principal element of difference from the discourse on Basque identity that was elaborated at the end of the century by Arana, the architect of Basque nationalism.⁹

The heroes of Basque fuerism

The code of identity that fuerism elaborated about the Basque people was popularised by elites in the Basque Country who turned to symbols that made it readily comprehensible and assimilable by diverse social strata. Among these symbols, as occurs in any construction of collective identity, heroes occupied a fundamental place: models of virtue with exemplary valour that are offered to a collective as mirrors in which to contemplate themselves. These heroes, real and legendary, historic and contemporary, were spread by means of political essays and discourses, literary works, pictorials and monuments – as such being one of those *lieux de mémoire* of which Pierre Nora wrote.¹⁰ Principally, three types of hero were put to use:

1) Figures that personified the Basques' devotion to the *fueros*. First off, these comprised legendary heroes such as Jaun Zuria ('The White Lord'), the mythic first lord of Biscay, of foreign origin (son of a Scottish princess, according to one medieval chronicle), who defeated the invading Astur-Leonese army at the just as mythic Battle of Padura or Arrigorriaga (supposedly fought in the 9th century), giving chase until they were beaten back across the frontier of the ancient seigniory, marked by the tree called *Árbol Malato*. The legendary figure of Jaun Zuria – for which written references first appear in the fourteenth century – served fuerism as a symbol of the Basques' ancient freedom to choose their lords or leaders (according to legend, the Biscayans elected him Lord of Biscay). It was an allegory that reflected the idea, defended by fuerists, of the consensual integration of the Basque territories within the Crown of Castile – while the Battle of Padura symbolised the notion of an age-old independence and resistance to outside invasion. Jaun Zuria was spoken of in the historicist discourses that were delivered by the fuerist deputies in the Cortes (the Spanish Parliament) and appeared in many political essays published throughout the nineteenth century.¹¹ But what most contributed to the popularisation of this legendary hero was literature. Two of the most popular Basque authors of the nineteenth century, the Biscayans Antonio Trueba (1819-1889) – who was named official historian of Biscay in 1862 – and Vicente de Arana (1840-1890) spread his

myth through their literary work; Trueba dedicated his *Cuentos populares* ('Popular stories') (1853) to Jaun Zuria and Arana wrote a novel about him, *Jaun Zuria o el Caudillo Blanco* ('Jaun Zuria or the White Leader') (1887). In addition, his image made the jump from print to canvas when, in 1882, the Bilbao artist Anselmo Guinea (1854-1906) composed an oil painting in his honour, *Jaun Zuria jurando defender la independencia de Vizcaya* ('Jaun Zuria swearing to defend the independence of Biscay'), which was hung at the Assembly House in Guernica.



Jaun Zuria, the mythic first lord of Biscay, swears to defend the country's independence.
Oil painting by Anselmo Guinea (1882) | FUNDACIÓN SANCHO EL SABIO.

Secondly, there were contemporary heroes that also exemplified devotion to the *fueros* and their defence, such as José María Iparraguirre or Mateo Benigno de Moraza. Iparraguirre (1820-1881), folk singer and poet, was the celebrated author of *Gernikako Arbola* ('The Tree of Guernica'), a laudatory song about the Basque *fueros* composed in 1853. It became wildly popular at the time as a symbol of love for the *fueros*, embodied by

the tree under which the Biscayan *Juntas* had gathered.¹² The town hall of his native Urretxu, in collaboration with Guipúzcoa's *Diputación*, erected a statue of Iparraguirre in 1890 to 'perpetuate the memory of the Basque bard who with virile tone sang of our past glories and patriarchal customs, made flesh in the tender laments that he dedicated to *The Tree of Guernica*' and to 'render just tribute to who, in life, fathomed how to interpret the noble sentiments of the Basque Country'.¹³ Painters of the epoch, such as Antonio Lecuona (1831-1907) or Francisco de Paula Bringas (1827-1855) memorialised his portrait in oil; the latter depicted the troubadour as a humble Basque peasant accompanied by his guitar. Somewhat later, the gallery of heroes added Moraza (1817-1878) to its ranks, the Alavese fuerist who, as a deputy in the Cortes, delivered the most famous and widespread address in defence of the *fueros* on 13 July 1876. He was consecrated as a model hero with a statue that was raised in his memory in Vitoria. Paid for by public contributions, the statue was unveiled in 1895 at a ceremony that was attended by representatives from the three Basque *Diputaciones*, during which officials affirmed that, 'from this point forward his statue will be a symbol of our devotion to the foral cause'.

2) Paragons of the Catholic faith that were declared inherently Basque and epitomised, like no other, by Saint Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556).¹⁴ He fits the role of a shared holy icon, whose importance was underscored by Eric Hobsbawm.¹⁵ Founder of the Society of Jesus and saint of singular reverence in Biscay and Guipúzcoa, Ignatius was named, along with St. Prudentius, patron saint of the Diocese of Vitoria in 1868. He was considered the '*euskaldunen aita*' ('father of the *euskaldun*' or Basques, literally Basque speakers), the 'most glorious representation of the Basque race'.¹⁶ Devotion to him was promoted by Guipúzcoa's *Diputación*, which organised visits to the Shrine of Loyola in 1870; and a likeness in his honour, painted by the Guipuzcoan Eugenio de Azcue (1822-1890), was hung in its halls when construction of its palace in San Sebastián was completed in 1885.¹⁷

3) Historical figures that realised some memorable deed and who personified the virtues of valour and daring that were ascribed to the Basques, but who had also provided a valuable service to the Crown, thus fulfilling the expression of double patriotism that fuerists championed.

One was General Miguel Ricardo de Álava (1770-1843), hero of the Peninsular War (also known as the Spanish War of Independence, 1807-1814), in whose honour a statue was raised in front of Álava's Foral *Diputación* in 1864. It was meant to commemorate the 'grand and relevant acts' that he realised as deputy general, 'not only for the Province of Álava, but also for the integrity and independence of the Spanish nation', to memorialise a 'national and provincial' glory that served 'the Throne, the fatherland, and the Basque Country'.¹⁸ But nobody represented this type of hero better than the great Basque mariners: Juan Sebastián Elcano, Miguel López de Legazpi, Andrés Urdaneta, Antonio Oquendo or Cosme Churruca. All were presented as both noble sons of the homeland and model Spaniards, representations of double patriotism.

Telling evidence of this are the arguments that were employed to justify the construction of statues erected in their memory in the public squares



of various towns in Guipúzcoa during the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1861, one such statue in remembrance of Elcano (1476-1526), the first navigator to circle the globe, went up in Guetaria, the explorer's birthplace. The project was carried out by Guipúzcoa's *Juntas Generales*, which in July 1859, motivated by 'a spontaneous impulse of patriotism' – according to its minutes – unanimously approved, 'amidst the greatest of enthusiasm, to perpetuate the

The first circling of the globe by Basque navigator Juan Sebastián Elcano was 'one of the most glorious achievements for the Spanish nation', according to Guipúzcoa's

*Juntas Generales (1859) |
FUNDACIÓN SANCHO EL SABIO*

memory of one of the most glorious achievements for the Spanish nation, erecting a statue of the illustrious Guipuzcoan mariner'. In 1885, Guipúzcoa's *Diputación* similarly justified support for San Sebastián's initiative to erect a statue of Oquendo (1577-1640), referring to him as 'one of the descendants of that noble race of Guipuzcoan mariners who, during the glorious times of our maritime greatness, powerfully contributed to extend across both worlds the fame of the Spanish seas and who with their bold expeditions expanded the colonial empire of the mother fatherland.'¹⁹ Echoing this sentiment, the local press dubbed him 'distinguished son of the Spanish fatherland' when they reported on the unveiling of his statue in 1894.²⁰

Yet another statue was dedicated in the town of Motrico in 1885 to the sailor and soldier Cosme Churruca (1761-1805), who deceased heroically at the Battle of Trafalgar. The result of a resolution passed by the *Juntas Generales* twenty years earlier (delayed due to political vicissitudes), its accompanying plaque read: 'He lived for humanity. He died for the fatherland.' Other statues of Guipuzcoan seafarers were also put up as expressions of Spanish patriotism, including one in 1897 of the first governor-general of the Spanish East Indies, Miguel López de Legazpi (1503-1572), in his birth town of Zumárraga, and another one in Ordizia in 1904 of the cosmographer Friar Andrés de Urdaneta (1508-1568), commissioned by the Guipuzcoan *Diputación* in 1899. Thus, as may be appreciated, it was commonplace to erect statues of historical figures that captured a double patriotism during those decades. The impetus to do so, however, dated back to the decade of 1860. In 1863, the Guipuzcoan author Nicolás Soraluce (1820-1884) published a biography of Legazpi in the San Sebastián newspaper *El Guipuzcoano*, which praised the conquistador, along with Urdaneta, as luminaries of Guipúzcoa and Spain, calling for statues to be constructed that kept their memories alive.²¹ The memory of the mariners was also maintained through the good many portraits that were painted during the epoch, such as those by Azcue of Elcano (1851) and Churruca (1859), as well as by the display of their busts, which adorned the façade of Guipúzcoa's *Diputación*.

The symbolic journey of these heroes continued beyond the nineteenth century – and set sail sometime before – but not all were assimilated by

fin-de-siècle Basque nationalism with the same reading that they were given by fuerism. As we shall see, the figures of St. Ignatius, Jaun Zuria and, to a lesser extent, Iparragirre were easily incorporated, but not those of the Basque sailors or other figures associated with Spanish patriotism. Indeed, as Etienne François and Hagen Schulze have noted, heroes represent 'generations-long crystallisation points of collective memory and identity, which are bound together in customary communal, cultural, and political habits, and which transform according to how their perception, appropriation, application and transmission change'.²² The change in the framework of collective identity that occurred between fuerism and Basque nationalism also brought with it, as will be seen, significant adjustments to the gallery of heroes.

New heroes, new focus: Basque nationalism during the first third of the twentieth century

The definitive abolition of the Basque *fueros* in 1876-1877 opened a new phase in the history of the Basque Country. Laid atop the foundation of Basque identity that was shaped throughout the nineteenth century, were diverse factors that explain the appearance of Basque nationalism (including the discontent felt by a good part of the Basque populace over the abolition of the *fueros* and Biscay's rapid industrialisation at the end of the nineteenth century, which brought a flood of Spanish-speaking immigrants and breakneck social change). Bereft of its traditional emblems of identity, the Basque Country at the turn of the century was a prime breeding ground for the expansion of the Basque Nationalist Party.

Unlike other nationalist movements that have no single founder, this role undoubtedly corresponded to Sabino Arana in the Basque case. Born in Biscay in 1865 to a Carlist, Catholic, and traditional family, Arana published *Bizkaya por su independencia* ('Biscay for its independence') in 1892, in which he attempted to demonstrate the supposed original independence of Biscay (and, later, of the other provinces) with respect to Spain.²³ In this tract, Arana – building upon a legendary vision of history,

inherited in part from the fuerist historiography and Romantic literature of the nineteenth century – expressed his conviction that the Basque fatherland was subjugated to a foreign people, the Spanish. Beginning with this basic idea, Arana constructed an identity – one must tightly connect nationalism and national identity, a multidimensional concept that includes a specific symbolism, as Anthony D. Smith pointed out²⁴ – that was characterised by its traditionalist Catholicism, its antiliberalism, its antisocialism, and its racial and essentialist concept of the Basque nation, whose origin was shrouded in the night of time and independent from the will of its inhabitants.²⁵

Once his project was established, Arana dedicated himself to the organisation and propagation of his creed. He created several political newspapers and centres and, in 1895, the Basque Nationalist Party (BNP). At first, Arana advocated a radical nationalism, whose only political goal was the absolute independence of the Basque Country. Other possible intermediate avenues (such as Basque autonomy within Spain or federalism) were rejected outright since they did not allow for the Basque fatherland to be liberated from a Spanish influence that, according to Arana, was contaminating the Basque Country. Nonetheless, even Arana was aware that such a radical ideology would make it difficult to grow the popular base of his movement. This recognition, in conjunction with other factors, convinced Arana to moderate his message during his short political life (he died in 1903 at the age of thirty-eight).

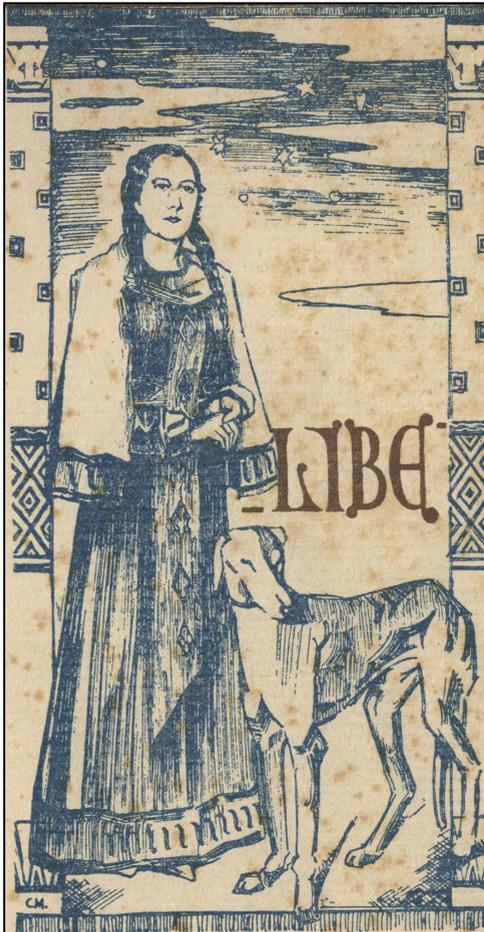
Indeed, the testament that he left to the Basque Nationalist Party was an unstable balance between a robust Basque national identity and a moderate political strategy. Without renouncing the possibility of complete independence in the future, the BNP became a legal political party that attempted to advance Basque self-government within the Spanish state. This permitted it to steadily grow its public support. In 1933, during the Second Spanish Republic, the BNP became the Basque Country's majority political party for the first time in its history. In 1936, after the start of the Spanish Civil War, the Basque Country secured a statute of autonomy and formed an autonomous government under the leadership of the BNP's José Antonio Aguirre, who was forced into exile due to the Republican defeat at the hands of General Francisco Franco.²⁶

During that period, the BNP was something more than an ordinary political party; it was converted into a social movement that forged a particular national culture through newspapers, mass gatherings, parallel organisations (of women, youth, syndicates ...), the use of sports and Basque folklore as a medium of nationalisation and so on. This 'Basque nationalist community' was 'a kind of micro-society that functions through an effective communication network and links together its members through political and extra-political bonds, through multiple organisations of diverse nature and through a system of shared beliefs.'²⁷

This Basque nationalist community, created by Arana and his followers between the end of the nineteenth century and the first third of the twentieth, also had its own pantheon of national heroes. It allowed them to embody their shared system of beliefs in concrete individuals, more easily admired or imitated than generic ideas. As Linas Eriksonas has observed, these heroes lend nationalism a 'human face'.²⁸ Following a similar framework to that which we utilised for the analysis of the patriotic heroes of fuerism, we may divide the national heroes of early Basque nationalism into three groups:

- 1) Real or legendary personages that purportedly defended Basque independence at some point in the past. The search for historical national heroes was complicated by the fact that the Basque Country, unlike Catalonia for example, had never been a unified political entity, given that each territory had possessed its own governmental institutions since the Middle Ages. Accordingly, nationalists looked to legendary figures, the kings of Navarre (a medieval kingdom whose territory Basque nationalists claimed as Basque, but which had, and has, a separate identity) or Basque leaders of the Carlist Wars, reinterpreted as a confrontation between the Carlist Basque Country and Liberal Spain. Among the legendary personages of fuerism, nationalists accepted Jaun Zuria as a symbol of the Basque Country's centuries-old independence. Adopting the already existing myth, Arana rewrote the story himself, contending that the principal protagonist of the Battle of Padura was not Jaun Zuria, but rather the Biscayan people as a whole. Furthermore, Jaun Zuria was no longer a leader of foreign origin. Instead, Arana recast him as a young Basque man. Lastly, according to Arana, it was not Jaun Zuria who in battle slayed

Ordoño, the invading force's prince, but rather a 'strong Biscayan woman', symbol of the mother Basque fatherland. With these alterations, Arana reinforced the separatist significance of this legendary hero, making impossible the idea, sustained by the fuerists, of a pact between the Basque people and the Spanish Crown.



Libe, apocryphal heroine created by Sabino Arana in an eponymous play in 1903 |
FUNDACIÓN SANCHO EL SABIO

The memory of the Battle of Padura – and of other similar medieval battles – was kept alive through the nationalist theatre and press. Arana, for instance, was the author of *Libe* (1903), a play whose eponymous central character is an apocryphal heroine. The plot unfolds in the throes of one of these battles, that of Munguía (1471). Libe has all but committed the misdeed of marrying a Spanish count (and, hence, according to Arana, a foreigner), but she atones for her near sin when she dies on the field of battle exhorting the Basque soldiers to resist the invaders. Her selfless act is a decisive blow to the Spanish, who fall in defeat, leading to the liberation of the fatherland. Despite being merely an invention, Libe is an important figure because she is the only woman to appear in the pantheon of Basque heroes (whether that of fuerism or nationalism). The play continued to be staged until the Civil War

and the nationalist newspaper *Euzkadi* went so far as to call Libe ‘our Joan of Arc’ in 1934. This may well be because this heroine not only represents the fatherland, but also the archetypal woman according to early Basque nationalism: one whose mission is to transmit the purity of the race.²⁹

The legendary heroes were supplemented with other figures, such as the kings of Navarre. These were the only kings that had actually existed in the medieval history of the territories Basque nationalists laid claim to. However, they did not fit entirely well within Arana’s idea, which envisioned a confederation of the various and previously independent Basque territories. Moreover, the BNP was quite weak in Navarre, where a homegrown identity (*Navarrismo*) prevailed that was intensely Spanish, was opposed to Basque nationalism and which viewed these kings as Navarrese and hence, from this perspective, Spaniards. Consequently, only a few circles within Basque nationalism reinterpreted the kings of Navarre as Basque kings. They paid special attention to Sancho III (r. 1004-1035), a king that, through conquest and matrimonial alliances, came to reign over nearly all of what is today Navarre, the Spanish Basque Provinces, Castile, and Aragón. The nationalist leader Anacleto Ortueta (1877-1959) wrote a book entitled, significantly, *Sancho el Mayor, rey de los vascos* (‘Sancho the Great, King of the Basques’), in which he argued Sancho may be considered ‘the guardian spirit of the Basque nationality’. Even in 2004, on the occasion of his millennial, a monument was erected in memory of Sancho the Great, ‘King of the Basques,’ which was sharply criticised by Spanish political parties.³⁰

Finally, nationalists, which blamed Spanish liberalism for destroying the Basque *fueros*, jettisoned a hero the likes of the liberal soldier Miguel Ricardo de Álava and converted a few Basque Carlist soldiers into heroes of Basque independence, in particular General Tomás Zumalacárregui and guerrilla priest Manuel Santa Cruz. In reality, Carlism is a Spanish traditionalist movement that took up arms various times during the nineteenth century in attempts to halt the implantation of liberalism in Spain. But the fact that Carlism possessed notable strength in the Basque Country and Navarre (derived in good measure from the support it garnered from the popular classes) and its respect for the Basque *fueros* (part and parcel of the traditional monarchy), permitted some of its

what Arana did with Ignatius of Loyola, a saint he was deeply devoted to, having attended a school run by the Society of Jesus. Ignatius was Guipuzcoan, but he had been wounded in Pamplona (the capital of Navarre) in 1521 fighting for Emperor Charles V's Castilian troops. As such, it was difficult to interpret his figure in a way that favoured Basque independence, and so the nationalists opted to essentially omit this aspect of his biography. They accentuated, on the other hand, how his character was typically Basque (capacity for sacrifice, sense of hierarchy ...) and had been put to service in the struggle against Protestantism. St. Ignatius was markedly present in the life of the party, which celebrated his saint's day each year with religious acts, folkloric festivals and political rallies.³²

In theory, the case of St. Francis Xavier (1506-1552) was easier to nationalise. The family of the Navarrese saint, companion of St. Ignatius when the Society of Jesus took its first steps, had fought for the independence of Navarre against Castilian conquest. Be that as it may, and as happened with Sancho the Great, the circumstance that nationalism was born in Biscay and that Arana gave preeminence to St. Ignatius left little room for a second Jesuit saint.³³ Only with the passage of time was St. Francis Xavier made into a Basque national symbol, identified above all with the language. This was helped by the story, mentioned in some contemporary accounts, that as he lay dying on 3 December 1552 along the coasts of China, Xavier uttered a few words in his 'mother tongue' that were unintelligible to those present. In remembrance of that day, the third of December remains today, although sans religious significance, the Day of the Basque language.³⁴

3) Protagonists of Basque nationalism's history, who had contributed to making the Basque nation a reality, which, according to its interpretation, was dormant beneath Spanish domination until Arana arrived to awaken it. In fact, during this period it was Arana who became the principal and nearly sole hero of this type. This transpired because of his significance to the foundation of the party, because there was no other party leader who could overshadow him, because the BNP had yet to generate any significant number of party heroes and because Arana perished at such a young age, facilitating his mythification. Moreover, although the BNP's founder succumbed to a natural death, the fact that he was imprisoned on

two separate occasions and that he dedicated his life to the promulgation of Basque nationalism made it possible to transform him into a martyr of the fatherland who died suffering for his doctrine.



Sabino Arana, founder of the Basque Nationalist Party, in Bilbao jail in 1902. Images as this one fostered his reputation as a martyr of the fatherland |
FUNDACIÓN SANCHO EL SABIO

The memory of Arana simultaneously possessed a religious and political content, which undoubtedly helped to elevate his figure to the highest place within the nationalist pantheon. After his death he was variously referred to by his followers as 'messiah', 'saint' or even a 'Basque Jesus'. Thanks to his 'life of sanctity, of abnegation, of sacrifice, of generosity', he had rescued the Basque people, liberating them from enslavement. Now an icon, Arana was constantly invoked through paintings, funerals, homages, reissues of his work, biographies ...³⁵ His tomb in Pedernales (Biscay) was converted into a genuine place of pilgrimage and the house of his birth in Bilbao into the BNP's central office where, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Arana's 'discovery' of the Basque fatherland, the first *Aberri Eguna* (Day of the Basque Fatherland) was observed in 1932.³⁶

Arana's elevation to the apex of the pantheon of nationalist heroes was designed in good measure by his successors at the head of the BNP (through the use of the press, homages, commemorations ...). But perhaps another contributing factor was that the Basque Country lacked, and nationalism may have needed, a 'foundation hero' or a 'personalised foundation myth' due to the historical absence of territorial unity since the Middle Ages. As much as they tried, there was little chance that Jaun Zuria would come to fulfil this function. Arana was a hero that lived in recent times, but also – because he was proximate and because he was partisan – one that was much more controversial. To be sure, despite the propaganda that the BNP manufactured about his figure, Arana never prospered as a national hero, remaining instead a hero only in the eyes of his own party.

Prior to the Civil War, Arana was virtually the only BNP leader to be converted into a hero by the nationalist movement. It was not until a new generation arrived, one indelibly marked by the Civil War and exile, that Arana was joined by other leaders, although none has obtained the same importance as the founder of the party. Among these, attention must be drawn to José Antonio Aguirre (1904-1960), the first president of the Basque government; other leaders of the BNP that went into exile, such as Manuel Irujo (1891-1981), Telesforo Monzón (1904-1981) or Jesús Galíndez (1915-1956); and above all Basque nationalists that were gunned down in the war by the Francoists, such as Esteban Urkiaga (1905-1937) or the priest José Ariztimuño (1896-1936).

From fuerism to nationalism: continuities and discontinuities in the pantheon of Basque heroes

As can be seen, the list of nationalist heroes contains some names that also constituted part of fuerism's gallery of heroes. But nowhere to be found are those that nationalists considered too Spanish to reconvert into purely Basque. Each constructed its heroes expressing their respective referents of identity. Fuerists included symbols of a double Basque and Spanish patriotism in their gallery, patriotic Basque heroes that had also

contributed to the aggrandisement of Spain through their service to the Crown. Conversely, the heroes of Basque nationalism were precisely those that had contributed, from their viewpoint, to the struggle against Spanish domination. As a consequence, those soldiers and sailors whose heroic deeds had been realised in service to the Spanish Crown or as part of the Spanish army's ranks, and who had been heroes from the perspective of fuerism, such as General Álava or mariner Churruca, completely vanished from Basque nationalist memory and were not even mentioned in the Basque Country history textbooks written by nationalists.

It is true that mariners were cited, such as Elcano, Oquendo or Legazpi, albeit only to remark on their valour and heroism, characteristics supposed proper to the Basques, overlooking that these exploits were carried out in service to the Spanish Crown. As early as 1899, the Basque fuerist Carmelo Echegaray (1865-1925) accused Arana of 'annulling the glories' of Elcano, Legazpi, Churruca, Oquendo and other Basques that had participated in the colonisation of America and who 'extolled the native land with the greatness of their heroic acts'. Arana countered that he defended the 'legitimate glories' of these heroes (namely their valour, intrepidity and so on), but 'ceded' to Spain all the historic feats that were done in service to the Crown. This Basque participation in purely Spanish activities was something that only served to 'dishonour their history', for which Arana had no interest in retaining these heroes as authentic Basques.³⁷ A few nationalist writers placed Oquendo or Legazpi at the same level as the *conquistador* Lope de Aguirre (c. 1510-1561), *El Loco*, stressing as well that he had never recognised Spanish sovereignty over the Amazon. In this way, an implicit parallelism was established with those that did not accept Spanish sovereignty over the Basque Country. Following this rationale, some nationalists also claimed the figure of Simón Bolívar (1783-1830), the 'Liberator of America' (*El Libertador*), as their own. Given his Basque origins, it was relatively easy to compare Bolívar to Arana, even to the extent that a biography of the latter was later published entitled *El libertador vasco* ('The Basque Liberator').³⁸

Basque nationalists adopted an ambivalent attitude with regards to fuerist heroes such as Moraza or Iparraguirre. Arana ignored them; other nationalists acknowledged the fuerists 'felt an unquestionable love for the

Basque Country', even if they 'worsened the Basque nation's cause'. It was said of Moraza that his 'point of view regarding the Basque question was altogether false', specifically because it was that of a 'fuerist, which is to say, that of a Basque who believes he is Spanish'.³⁹ Iparraguirre was a special case. By the end of the nineteenth century, his paeon, *Gernikako Arbola*, was so popular and had made him such a beloved author that Basque nationalists could not disregard his attractive potency, centred, after all, on Basque identity, even if it was not nationalist. Owing to this, the BNP chose to accept Iparraguirre's figure, but with the caveat that he was a child of his time and, therefore, did not know the renaissance of the Basque nation that Arana would engender. The BNP's founder called him 'distinguished', but also a perfect reflection of 'the frivolity, the crass error of the Basques of his time', which was none other than to feel at once both Basque and Spanish. In the words of the nationalist historian Bernardino de Estella, Iparraguirre 'will always be deserving of recognition from the Basques for having been a grand awakener of the Basque spirit'. Yet, Estella continues, his vision of the Basque question was 'quite deficient' because it remained clouded by fuerism: 'Iparraguirre was not capable of being the national poet; he lacked the qualities of abnegation for the fatherland as well as truly Basque sentiments.'⁴⁰

In conclusion, continuities and ruptures may be observed between the heroes of nineteenth-century fuerism and those of Basque nationalism during the first third of the twentieth century. Nationalists could not squander the sowing of eminent personages that had already been popularised by fuerism, but neither could they embrace those that displayed the double Basque-Spanish patriotism of that movement. Accordingly, they selected and reinterpreted the history of those shared heroes in only a Basque sense, striving to eliminate the possible Spanish connotations from their biographies, whether legendary or real, as evidenced by Jaun Zuria or St. Ignatius of Loyola. In the case of saints, the common Catholic identity of both movements made it easier to find nexuses of union.

For Basque nationalism, a new epoch had begun with its founder. It not only required fuerism's heroes to be recycled, but also new heroes and heroines to be created (such as Sancho the Great, Zumalacárregui or Libe,

model for how Basque women could collaborate in the spread of nationalism). Even so, Arana's absolute protagonism in the BNP's foundation, along with his premature death, ultimately converted him into the national hero *par excellence* of early Basque nationalists. Fuerism and Basque nationalism's respective galleries of heroes, each containing models of exemplary virtue for Basque society, were not only responses to two very different periods in its history, but were also two distinct ways to conceive of the relationship between Basque and Spanish identity: compatible in one case, exclusive in the other.

In conclusion, this case study of the patriotic heroes of fuerism and Basque nationalism reflects appropriately the complex relationship between regionalism and nationalism. In the Basque case, a clear dividing line can be established between both issues in relation to the key factor, as noted by Xosé M. Núñez Seixas, of the 'demand for political sovereignty' (understood as absolute independence from Spain).⁴¹ What is more complicated is to distinguish both by the greater or lesser 'historicist' and 'ethnocultural' degree of their discourses. As we have seen throughout these pages, both fuerism and Basque nationalism have galleries of heroes, in whose creation and dissemination it is difficult to completely separate different strategies, although the double patriotism of fuerist regionalism – that can be related with the 'double identity' which Josef Honauer highlights for certain areas of the Austro-Hungarian Empire⁴² – disappears in both the ideology of Basque nationalism and its pantheon of national heroes. In any case, we must avoid falling into a 'finalist' or 'teleological' (in the words of Maarten Van Ginderachter⁴³) vision of both political movements in which we interpret fuerist regionalism as a mere step, necessary prior to the emergence of Basque nationalism.

Endnotes

¹ Often translated into English as ‘foralism’, the term ‘fuerism’ (*fuerismo* in Spanish) signifies the nineteenth-century movement in defence of the Basque *fueros* within the liberal constitutional system. It differs from the more generic term *foralismo*, which refers to the discourse in defence of the *fueros* in different eras and political contexts.

² H.-G. Haupt, M.G. Müller & S. Woolf (eds.), *Regional and national identities in Europe in the XIXth and XXth centuries* (The Hague, 1998).

³ A. Smith, *Myths and memories of the nation* (Oxford, 1999); G. Hosking & G. Schöpflin (eds.), *Myths and nationhood* (New York, 1997); R. Gerwarth, *The Bismark myth. Weimar Germany and the legacy of the Iron Chancellor* (Oxford, 2005); R. Gerwarth (ed.), ‘Hero cults and the politics of the past: comparative European perspectives’, in: *European History Quarterly*, 39/3 (2009) 381-502; S. Berger, L. Eriksonas & A. Myckok (eds.), *Narrating the nation. Representations in history, media and the arts* (New York - Oxford, 2008); S. Berger & C. Lorenz (eds.), *Nationalizing the past. Historians and nation builders in modern Europe* (Basingstoke, 2010).

⁴ For the growing association between the *fueros* and territorial law that occurred in the eighteenth century, see J.M. Portillo, *Monarquía y gobierno provincial. Poder y Constitución en las provincias vascas (1760-1808)* (Madrid, 1992).

⁵ See C. Rubio, *Revolución y tradición. El País Vasco ante la revolución liberal y la construcción del Estado español, 1808-1868* (Madrid, 1996).

⁶ There were other political ideologies besides fuerism in the Basque Country in the nineteenth century. Among these was Carlism, which in reality was a Spanish traditionalist movement, despite its strong support in Basque territory.

⁷ This happened with the publication in 1834 of a piece entitled, *Observaciones sobre la necesidad de reformar el régimen administrativo de las Provincias Vascongadas* (‘Observations on the necessity to reform the administrative regime of the Basque Provinces’). See J. Fernández Sebastián, *La génesis del fuerismo*.

Prensa e ideas políticas en la crisis del Antiguo Régimen (País Vasco, 1750-1840) (Madrid, 1991).

⁸ For the process of the construction of this Basque identity, its components, and socialisation, see C. Rubio, *La identidad vasca en el siglo XIX. Discurso y agentes sociales* (Madrid, 2003).

⁹ For anti-*Españolismo* and other defining elements of Sabino Arana's nationalist discourse, see J.L. de la Granja, 'La doctrina fundacional del nacionalismo vasco: el aranismo', in: J. Avilés (ed.), *Historia, política y cultura. Homenaje a Javier Tusell* (Madrid, 2009) vol. 1, 147-181.

¹⁰ P. Nora (ed.), *Les lieux de mémoire*, 3 vol. (Paris, 1984-1992).

¹¹ One example is the speech that the Basque deputy Joaquín Barroeta gave in the Senate in 1864, published in *Crítica de los fueros de las Provincias de Álava, Guipúzcoa y Vizcaya* (Madrid, 1864).

¹² For the symbolism of this tree, see F. Luengo & A. Delgado, 'El árbol de Gernika. Vicisitudes del símbolo foral de los vascos', in: *Historia y Política*, 15 (2006) 23-44.

¹³ Tolosa, Archivo General de Gipuzkoa [AGG], JD IT 1512b, 8927: minutes, 1890.

¹⁴ For this association, see B. Altuna, *El buen vasco. Génesis de la tradición 'Euskaldun Fededun'* (San Sebastián, 2012).

¹⁵ E. Hobsbawm, *Nations and nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge, 1990²) 71-72.

¹⁶ *Semanario Católico Vasco-Navarro*, 31/7/1868; *Sermón que predicó el R.P.F. Manuel de Umerz* (San Sebastián, 1902).

¹⁷ *Guía del palacio provincial* (San Sebastián, 1901).

¹⁸ *Apuntes biográficos de los ilustres patricios señores Prudencio María de Verástegui y D. Miguel Ricardo de Álava, escritos por D. Daniel Ramón de Arrese, con motivo de la inauguración de las estatuas que la Provincia de Álava ha erigido en el Palacio de la Diputación General* (Vitoria, 1861) 8.

¹⁹ AGG, JD IT 1512b, 8926: minutes, 1885.

²⁰ *La Unión Vascongada*, 17/9/1894.

²¹ *Biografía del ilustre conquistador de Filipinas Miguel López de Legazpi* (Tolosa, 1863).

²² E. François & H. Schulze (eds.), *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte* (Munich, 2001) vol. 1, 18.

²³ Part of the Basque Country is located in the south of France. In theory, Arana also claimed the French Basque Provinces as part of a future sovereign Basque state. In practice, however, Basque nationalism made scarce inroads into France until the second half of the twentieth century. Even today, support for Basque nationalism in France is slight.

²⁴ A. Smith, *National identity* (Reno, 1991) VII.

²⁵ J. Corcuera, *The origins, ideology, and organization of Basque nationalism, 1876-1903* (Reno, 2006). In comparison with fuerism, the identity developed by Arana was based on 1) the purity of the Basque race, manifested in the origin of surnames and in the language; 2) the *fueros*, understood as charters of Basque national independence; 3) the Catholic faith, which necessarily set the Basques in complete opposition to liberalism and socialism; 4) history, based on the mythical idea of the Basque territories' secular independence, which ended in 1839 at the close of the First Carlist War and the modification of the *fueros* (interpreted by Arana as an abolition); 5) a proper culture, including a language without known relation to any other in the world; and 6) an exclusive Basque patriotism that was radically anti-Spanish, considering Spain an alien and decadent invader of Basque territory.

²⁶ S. de Pablo & L. Mees, *El péndulo patriótico. Historia del Partido Nacionalista Vasco, 1895-2005* (Barcelona, 2005).

²⁷ A. Lamikiz, 'Maintaining alternative memories under an authoritarian regime: Basque cultural associations in the 1960s and early 1970s', in: S. Rutar (ed.), *Beyond the Balkans. Towards an inclusive history of Southeastern Europe* (Zurich - Berlin, 2014) 408; J.L. de la Granja, 'The Basque nationalist community during the Second Spanish Republic (1931-1936)', in: W. Douglass (ed.), *Basque politics, a case study in ethnic nationalism* (Reno, 1985) 155-173.

²⁸ L. Eriksonas, *National heroes and national identities. Scotland, Norway and Lithuania* (Brussels, 2004) 15.

²⁹ J.L. de la Granja, 'Batallas de Arrigorriaga y Munguía', in: S. de Pablo, J.L. de la Granja, L. Mees e.a. (eds.), *Diccionario ilustrado de símbolos del nacionalismo vasco* (Madrid, 2012) 187-202; N. Aresti, 'De heroínas viriles a madres de la patria. Las mujeres y el nacionalismo vasco (1893-1937)', in: *Historia y Política*, 31 (2014) 281-308.

³⁰ S. de Pablo, 'Sancho el Mayor', in: Idem e.a., *Diccionario*, 716-728.

³¹ Chaho also invented Aitor, the supposed patriarch of the Basques. But this personage, despite its popularisation by fuerist and Romantic literature, especially in Francisco Navarro Villoslada's novel *Amaya* (1879), never enjoyed favour within early Basque nationalism, which understood that he was just a recent literary invention. What is more, Chaho did not mesh well with the BNP's traditional Catholicism. Still, in the BNP's daily *Euzkadi* (2/6/1929) there was some talk about whether the 'legendary patriarch' might not have existed: 'We know modern critics deny the existence of the patriarch Aitor, as they have that of so many other historical personages; but are we always wise to follow the excessive sceptical and argumentative light of the historians of our time?' See J. Juaristi, *El linaje de Aitor. La invención de la tradición vasca* (Madrid, 1987); V. López de Maturana, 'Tomás Zumalacárregui', in: De Pablo e.a., *Diccionario*, 762-775.

³² Saint Ignatius' feast day was also the official day of the foundation of the BNP (31 July 1895).

³³ Arana's infatuation with Biscay also led him to convert Valentín de Berriochoa, martyred in present-day Vietnam in 1861 and the first Biscayan to be beatified in 1905, into an important figure within his politico-religious creed.

³⁴ J.M. Tápip, 'San Ignacio de Loyola' and 'San Francisco Javier', in: De Pablo e.a., *Diccionario*, 685-706; S. Leóné, 'La construcción de San Francisco Javier (1880-1941)', in: *Sancho el Sabio*, 13 (2000) 77-112.

³⁵ In the period under study here, Basque nationalists did not resort to a policy of statue or monument building because, in contrast to fuerists, they did not manage (except on rare occasion) to control the Basque *Diputaciones*. The Basque government that formed in the thick of the Civil War had scarce opportunity to exercise power in the territory during its nine months of leadership, let alone time to erect statues.

- ³⁶ J.L. de la Granja, 'Sabino Arana', in: De Pablo e.a., *Diccionario*, 118-143; Idem, 'El culto a Sabino Arana: la doble resurrección y el origen histórico del *Aberri Eguna* en la II República', in: *Historia y Política*, 15 (2006) 65-115.
- ³⁷ S. Arana, *Obras completas* (Bayonne - Buenos Aires, 1965) 1756.
- ³⁸ P. Basaldua, *El libertador vasco. Sabino de Arana Goiri. Biografía histórica* (Buenos Aires, 1953).
- ³⁹ B. Estella, *Historia vasca* (Bilbao, 1931) 360, 368.
- ⁴⁰ Arana, *Obras*, 2000; Estella, *Historia*, 371.
- ⁴¹ X.M. Núñez Seixas, 'Historiographical approaches to sub-national identities in Europe: a reappraisal and some suggestions', in: J. Augusteijn & E. Storm (eds.), *Region and state in nineteenth-century Europe. Nation-building, regional identities and separatism* (Basingstoke, 2012) 13-35.
- ⁴² J. Honauer, 'Federalism in Austria', in: P. Wagstaff (ed.), *Regionalism in the European Union* (Exeter, 1999) 127.
- ⁴³ M. Van Ginderachter, 'Nationalist versus regionalist? The Flemish and Walloon movements in Belle Époque Belgium', in: Augusteijn & Storm, *Region*, 13-35.