

Crossed presents. Iron Age as a driving force in the construction of the current Basque political reality.

Jagoba Hidalgo-Masa

Universidad del País Vasco/Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea (Spain)

DOI: 10.32028/exnovo-vol-7-pp.5-22

Abstract

Our present is the ultimate result of the interconnection of different presents. Presents that combine characteristics of different historical periods to create a social reality experienced by Basque people. In the Basque Country, the past is not only interconnected with the present realm, but they also coexist on a daily basis, to form a legal, fiscal, social and economic reality that discursively goes back to the Late Iron, and its Age. The present paper aims to offer a different insight into how modern Basque identity has been constructed upon archaeological and historical basis. It is crucial to analyse what sort of archaeological data sustains such identity and narratives.

Bearing these pre-Roman natives in mind, one might think that the material reality available in the Basque Country from the Iron Age is rich, abundant and capable of articulating a discourse that still maintains an influence today. This deduction could not be more wrong since, we hardly have enough data to characterise the settlement pattern of this chronology for the Basque case, and more specifically for its Atlantic side where the province of Gipuzkoa is located. In other words, even with a limited material background, unevenly distributed throughout the territory, the Iron Age is part of many current discourses about Basque identity.

Keywords

Iron Age, Basque Country, Symmetrical Archaeology, Crossed Presents.

Introduction

This article aims to focus on the different processes that shaped Basque identity construction in collective memory, concretizing the analysis on the Iron Age and the narratives that emerged around particular objects from this period, in which some national/regional narratives about identity place their founding moment, as in the case of Cantabria (García Sánchez 2009, 2016), Asturias (Marín Suárez 2004, 2005), Galicia (Díaz Santana 2002), France (Dietler 1994) or Ireland (Cooney & Grogan 1991). To achieve this, the essential conceptual elements will be introduced in the first section, followed by an analysis of the current Basque present, since it is from here that we build the different presents. After that, the Basque Iron Age will be analysed, highlighting the elements of this period which, with a reconfigured narrative, are still with us. Finally, considering the concept of *crossed presents*, we will analyse how the narratives of these Iron Age elements have been reconfigured up to the present day.

Time: a stratification of different presents

We wake up, we get dressed, and throughout the day we carry out a series of tasks while constantly in contact with various objects that accompany us daily. Objects that in most cases were conceived thousands of days ago, in contexts where social, economic, or cultural realities were structured in other coordinates, i.e., in another present (Olivier 2004). But even so, the need to which they were trying to respond with their creation is still latent today, maintaining their practicality and usefulness. In other words, we wake up, get dressed, and are in direct contact with different traces of time inscribed in today's social materiality (Olivier 2020).

These traces contain the memory of their time, becoming the object of study for archaeologists (González-Ruibal 2007). However, memory tends to disintegrate, disappear and be forgotten, with change being the backbone of the act of forgetting. Repetition and reiteration acts as containment of forgetting, constantly re-signifying ideas and objects, that is to say, endowing them with new collective memory. Nevertheless, memory is only accessible here and now, in the present, since, in the words of Olivier (2020: 36): “*What remains of the past are ruins and detritus that time (the present in the making) never ceases to accumulate and crush*”.

Therefore, we are called upon to reinterpret the traces of the collective memory of different times that have come down to us. By doing this, innovation and tradition combine in different ways, providing those traces with new memory (Tamm & Olivier 2019). In view of the fact that memory is forgetful, and, that if it is not constantly reaffirmed by memories it might end up encapsulated, enclosed and disappeared, as what happened to Pompeii, waiting for someone to come across it (Cianciolo 2018), re-signifying it again.

In conclusion, our present is the ultimate result of the stratification of traces, narratives and memories that have managed to survive through time and through a process of transformation (Witmore 2007). This process allows such disparate presents as Lipovetsky's hypermodern times (Lipovetsky 2014) and Iron Age societies to intersect with each other in a bidirectional way. For example, Iron Age symbols are readapted and come to structure the cultural symbolisms of the people,

as is the case of the region of Soria (Castilla y León) (Ruiz Zapatero 2002) in the Iberian Peninsula, which has taken as a symbol of a horse-shaped fibulae from the archaeological site of Numancia (Garray, Soria), a fortified settlement dating from the Iron Age that turned as a symbol of the resistance of the Celtiberian people against the arrival of Rome. This symbolism is based on ancient citations and evidence of a Roman Republican siege (Jimeno Martínez & De la Torre Echávarri 2005).

The Basque Country today

The Basque territory, the territory where the Basque language is spoken, is located west of the Pyrenees, between the current states of France and Spain. However, it is not a unified reality as it is organised into three administrative realities: Euskadi or Basque Country, the westernmost region, made up of the provinces of Araba, Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa; Navarre or Nafarroa, the eastern region; and the French Basque Country or Iparralde, which, unlike the other two, does not have an administration but is located in the French region of the Pyrénées-Atlantiques. The present paper will focus on the western region, Euskadi and more specifically, the province of Gipuzkoa. Gipuzkoa is formed by a landscape structured by an abrupt orography, cut through by short but very fast-flowing rivers that form narrow valleys (Fig. 1).

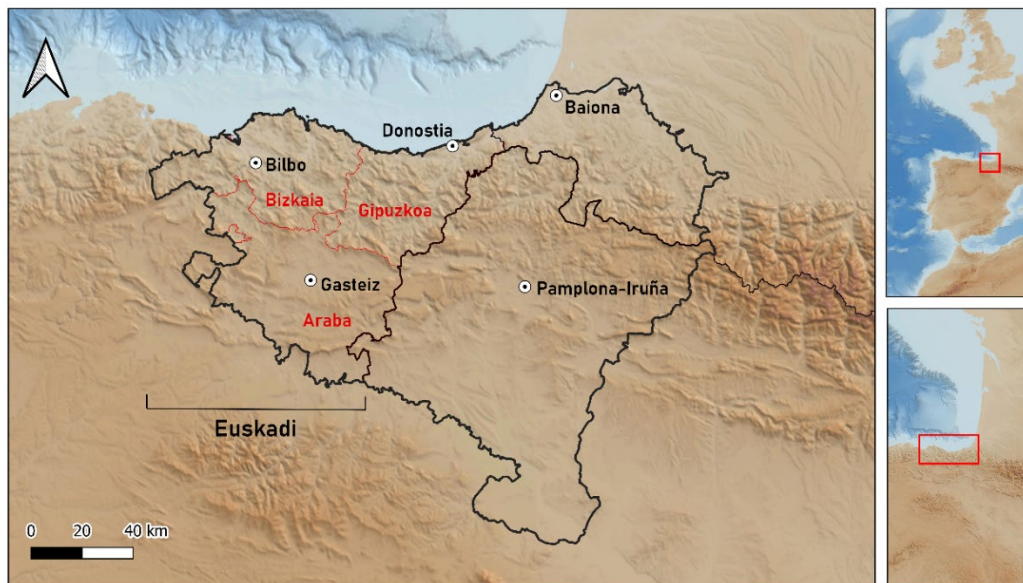


Figure 1. Location of the Basque Country and Euskadi, together with its provinces. Author: J. Hidalgo-Masa.

As in most of today's human landscapes, in the Basque Country, people coexist daily with many different temporal realities. Proof of this is the landscape, which corresponds to the Lea River valley as it passes through Aulesti (Bizkaia) (Fig. 2). In this valley, we might encounter elements belonging to different periods forming a homogeneous landscape. Among those we count, a fortified settlement from the

Iron Age small scattered population centres that can be traced back to the process of formation of medieval villages in the eighth-ninth century (Martín Viso 2016), as well as the appearance of *baserris*¹ or farmhouses in the fifteenth century (Tellería Julian et al. 2020) and eventually, the current population centre, which is located at the bottom of the valley. This pattern of settlement was standardised and systematised in the Early Middle Ages when these environments became fully habitable (García Camino 2003). Another element with a notorious presence in this landscape is the forest plantations of American pine (*Pinus ponderosa*), which were introduced in the 1940s (Fig. 2). In short, this landscape of Aulesti (Bizkaia) is the result of the ideological, social, economic, etc. needs of its time. It contains some of the most representative elements of most of the Basque Atlantic valleys, without forgetting, for example, the late medieval tower houses, the modern plots, or the contemporary industries, among many other elements.

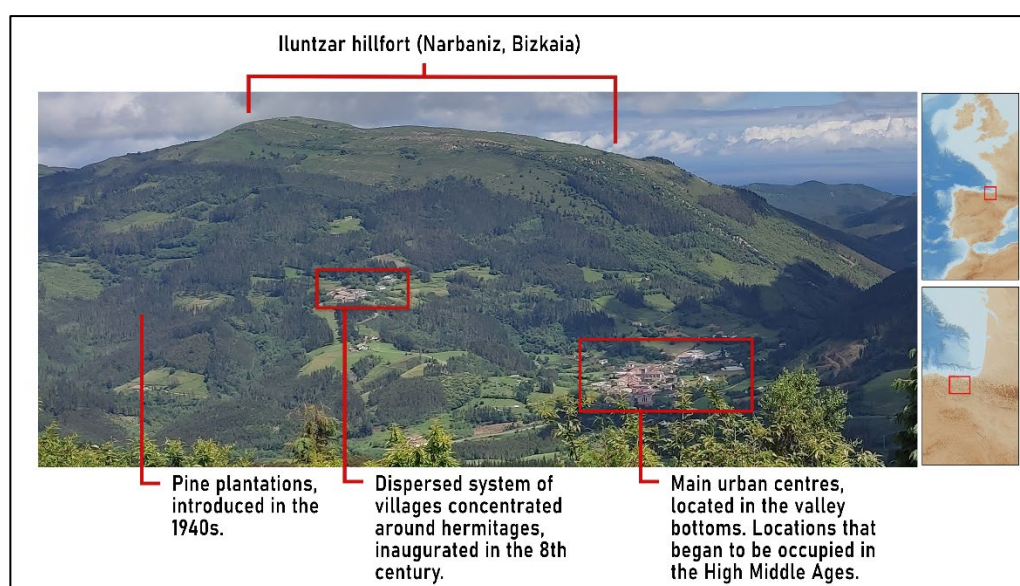


Figure 2. The different types of presents that form the landscape of a large part of the Basque area. Author: J. Hidalgo-Masa.

Ideas or ideologies, like landscapes, are palimpsests with a long-time span. Current Basque politics are a good example of this, as the Basque political-administrative reality is the result of a very convulsive nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as we shall see below. In the nineteenth century there was a transition from a conservative and deeply Christian society, with a solid rural aristocracy that based its power on certain privileges, to a strongly industrialised society with a liberal social model (Valdalisio Gago 2013). Nevertheless, this transition was the result of two wars, the First Carlist War (1833-1840) and the Second Carlist Wars (1872-1876), between the rural aristocracies and the regime of the Hispanic Monarchy, which tried to accelerate the liberalising processes. In addition, common property lands were expropriated, the landscape was industrialised with foreign and national capital, and

¹ A country house that combines in a single structure, productive activities such as the apple press for the production of cider, with living spaces.

the cities experienced a demographic growth (Rubio Pobes 1996). All this altered and transformed the day-to-day life of a society which, under the influence of romanticism and the feeling of loss, due to the Carlist defeats in the 19th century wars in which a large part of society fought alongside the Carlists, was driven to a strong national sentiment (Rubio Pobes 2003). This feeling was reflected in the political pretensions of a local elite, which, with the profits from industry, strengthened its position and formed the Basque Nationalist Party (EAJ-PNV), together with part of society. The 20th century merely continued the dynamics of the 19th century, a Civil War (1936-1939), the prohibition of Basque culture and language under Franco's fascist dictatorship, a strong post-war reindustrialisation and the consequent attraction of labour from all over the state, with strong migrations, laid the foundations for the so-called Basque armed conflict, between Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) and the Spanish State, in the second half of the 20th century. The conflict, which began in clear opposition to Franco's regime and due to the repression, he exercised, was later transformed into a conflict for the independence of the Basque Country and the establishment of a socialist state, as ETA's ultimate aspiration.

The Iron Age, a not-so-distant reality

Among all the different presents that still echo in the Basque Country, the Iron Age is perhaps the oldest and most enigmatic one. The Iron Age in the present-day territory of the Atlantic Basque Country dates, as well as other neighbouring regions, from the first millennium BC, specifically from 800 to the second half of the first century BC (Jordá-Pardo et al. 2009). The Iron Age is usually characterised by the standardisation and expansion of settlements patterns located at a high altitude and defended by a defensive system adapted to the conditions of the environment, from which strategic areas of the surrounding landscape are controlled (Parcero Oubiña, 2002), such as cultivation areas, strategic passes, etc. Multiple factors can explain this need for fortification. However, perhaps one of the arguments that have gained more relevance is the destabilisation and consequent crisis of the Bronze Age social model, which forced these societies to a substantial reconfiguration of many of their characteristics (Ayán Vila 2013, Parcero Oubiña et al. 2017). In the Basque Country the settlement pattern repeats certain characteristics, such as the fact that most of the settlements are date to in the Late Iron Age, the second half of the first millennium BC, unlike in other Atlantic regions such as Galicia where this pattern extends into First Iron Age (Parcero Oubiña et al. 2017, González-Ruibal 2008). This fact may be explained by a more remarkable survival of the Bronze Age social moulds, an example of which is the use of earlier funerary rites such as the deposition of ashes in cromlechs² (Edeso Fito et al. 2016) or the low-density

² The cromlechs are circular megalithic structures made up of a series of sunken stones. In the Basque Country they are located in mountainous areas, especially in the pre-Pyrenees, and have a long chronology. Finally, they have been related to funerary use due to the discovery of ashes in several of them, although they are also related to the farming and symbolic world, being considered marker milestones (Mujika 2017).

network of sites per square kilometre that was articulated from Late Iron Age onwards (Fig. 3).

Even so, by the middle of the first millennium BC, there was a network of settlements irregularly distributed throughout Euskadi, which generated significant voids that still need to be studied. These settlements are located at an average altitude of 400 metres above sea level, have an area of between 2 and 3 ha and are delimited by these structures that combine natural and artificial defences (Hidalgo-Masa 2020). However, their number is considerably reduced, as mentioned above, since we know of 19 confirmed³ settlements in the Atlantic area of Euskadi, a figure representing a density of 0.0055 sites per square kilometre. Meanwhile, in other parts of the Cantabrian coast (Iberian Peninsula), there is a higher level of hillfort concentrated in a single region or basin, such as the region of Ortigueira (A Coruña, Galicia) (Fábrega Álvarez 2004), the Besaya-Pas river basin (Cantabria) (Serna Gancedo et al. 2010) or the Eo-Navia region (Asturias) (Camino Mayor 1995). However, these clusters are combined with spaces that are poorly represented, such as the far east of Cantabria (Serna Gancedo et al. 2010) or Asturias (Camino Mayor 1995), among others, a dynamic in which the Atlantic Basque Country seems to be a part of as well.

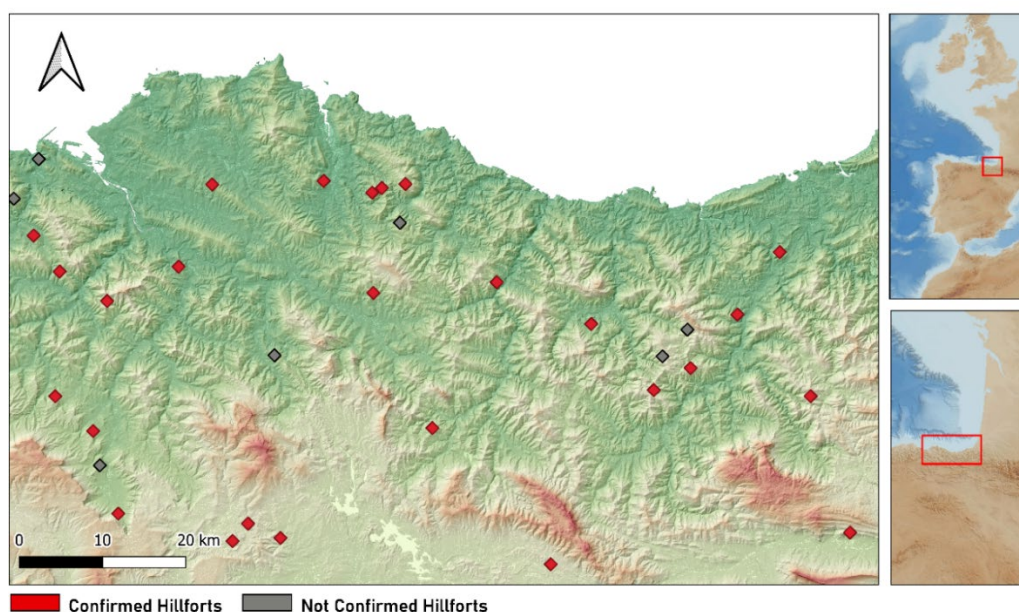


Figure 3. Dispersion of hillforts in part of the Basque Country. Author: J. Hidalgo-Masa.

In addition, we do not have much information about secondary sites, such as necropolises or productive areas. In short, the Basque Iron Age sites are ill-represented, especially if we consider the existence of twenty-five catalogued Palaeolithic sites, according to the official site catalogue *Ondarearen*, materiality that tends to be more difficult to detect, so it may be that processes such as reforestation and its negative impact on these sites are behind this figure. This issue may once

³ Hillforts that the author considers to be confirmed by their morphological and geographical characteristics and the associated materiality.

again be an example of the fact that the past can only be accessed from the present (Olivier 2020). During the last decades researchers have focused mainly on the study of the Palaeolithic and the Middle Ages, perhaps due to the conscious or unconscious importance that these chronologies have acquired in the construction of Basque identity (Ruiz Zapatero 2006).

The lack of data is a constant that is repeated in archaeology in different periods and locations, so it is not strange that a specific moment in Basque history is under-represented, but what is strange is that even with a lack of data and latent knowledge, the Iron Age in the Basque Country continues to have a certain prominence when it comes to constructing certain devices, in the Foucauldian sense of the word (Agamben 2015). This is because certain present moments have a unique *Kairos*,⁴ in which specific processes that take place that can't be easily forgotten. On the contrary, these processes lead to dynamics that impact future present moments. One of these moments is the Iron Age, because this is the time when the main historical peoples emerged, and the current societies are projecting their identities on (Ruiz Zapatero 2006, Woolf 2011). This is the case of the Celtic people's relationship with Scotland or Ireland, whose identity developed, to a certain extent, in opposition to the English identity tied up with the Roman world (Morrison 2001). A similar process is taking place in the Spanish State, in which the Iron Age acquires a singular relevance, especially after the establishment of the current constitutional regime (1978), which is composed by regions/nationalities with autonomous competences that seek historical legitimation for their new mandates (Alonso González & González Álvarez 2013, González Morales 1994). This, along with previous ideological traditions, such as the Galician nationalism, which has its roots in the nineteenth century (Díaz Santana 2002), or the Asturian regionalism in the early twentieth century (Marín Suárez 2004), leads to promoting national historical-identitarian devices. These narratives are based on the Iron Age Celticism, and the idea of resistance or survival, which are deeply rooted in Europe (Dietler 2006). In the Basque Country, the Celtic world is not considered to be the founding moment of identity. In fact, pre-Indo-European times, maybe Palaeolithic (Ruiz Zapatero 2006, Peñalver Iribarren 2005), were considered the origins of Euskera or Basque, thus used as referential moment for Basque identity. Perhaps this is why there has been a particular predilection for the Palaeolithic period from a considerable number of Basque researchers. Therefore, the people from the Iron Age can be considered the heirs of this linguistic tradition. Concretely, the *Vascones* (Sayas Abengoechea 1999), from which comes the name of the language, Basque, or the name of the territory, Basque Country, and which goes back to the ethnonym cited by classical authors such as Strabo or Ptolemy (Andreu Pintado et al. 2009) and which could be located in a territory similar to the current region of Nafarroa (Wulff 2009, Almagro Gorbea 2005).

Beyond a particular toponymic or sociological survival, the Iron Age is present in our lives in many ways that we do not perceive. A clear example of this phenomenon

⁴ Kairos is a concept from Greek philosophy that represents an indeterminate period of time in which something important happens.

can be found in the symbolism of current European societies. These symbols, which in many cases could be called solar symbols, expressed the movement of the sun, alluding to the need to monitor the various vicissitudes of the weather in an agricultural production model that was highly dependent technically on the weather. It was proposed by some scholars that solar symbols spread throughout Eurasia and were adopted by local elites (González-Ruibal 2012) since many of these societies had similar technological means and, therefore, similar climatological conditions. Consequently, they were the backbone of the worldview of their period and perhaps due to their relevance they endured over time, combining and adapting to the new social realities. It is worth noting that although these symbols continued to be used during the Middle Ages and especially in the Modern Age (De Pablo Contreras 2009) it was in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that these symbols were recovered and reintroduced into the social scene by historians, artists, archaeologists and politicians who, under the influence of romanticism and nationalism, sought the roots of their respective peoples in these symbols (Díaz-Andreu 1995). So much so that Nazism, one of the main ideologies of the twentieth century, adopted one of these symbols, the *swastika*, as the representation of its ideology (Arnold 1990). In the Iberian Peninsula this process also had an echo. It is common to find symbols such as *triskele*, or similar, related to the national identity of historical Atlantic peoples such as the Galician (González-Ruibal 2012, Díaz Santana 2002), the Asturian (Marín Suarez 2004, Marín Suarez et al. 2012) or the Cantabrian where it is common to see symbols, solar or not, of the so-called giant stelae of Cantabria from the Iron Age (García Sánchez, 2009) on the political scene. In the Basque Country, this trend also had a significant influence and authors such as the artist Jorge Oteiza Embil, sought the essence of the Basque people in different elements. The abovementioned author was inspired by the prehistoric cromlechs of the Basque Pyrenean area, which in many cases were reused in the Iron Age. From that archaeological context he deduced in his 1963 masterpiece, *Quousque tandem...!* that emptiness or the empty whole represented to a large extent the Basque (Oteiza Embil 1993), setting in motion a long tradition of artists who sought this emptiness in their creations and artistic expressions.

However, it is not the only element used in the Iron Age that has been given the capacity to represent the Basque. This is also the case with the *Lauburu* (Fig. 4), which in Basque means four heads and is an adaptation of the solar symbols in the form of a swastika with rounded arms. In the Basque Country, these solar symbols, from which the *Lauburu* derives, appear on the funerary stelae used by the Iron Age societies (Fig. 4). This symbol was later combined with other Roman elements, such as epigraphies or anthropomorphic figures, that end up being assimilated by the Christian worldview of the Middle Ages. We can place the first appearances of the *lauburu*, in its current form, in the 16th century (De Pablo Contreras 2009), when it was used as ornamentation of different elements of popular culture. This remained the case until the nineteenth century when the archaeologist Schliemann discovered abundant motifs of this type in his excavations around the Aegean Sea and became popular throughout Europe, associating them with the identity of current societies (De Pablo Contreras 2009). Something similar happened in the Basque Country

when nationalism at the beginning of the twentieth century adopted these symbols as Basque, popularising them enormously. But it was not until the Second Spanish Republic (1931-1939) that the term *Lauburu* was separated from the swastika, a symbol that used to be associated with. After this, its use became standardised and popularised, achieving great recognition, so much so that it has become a symbol of personal self-representation and the main element of Basque merchandising (Fig. 4).

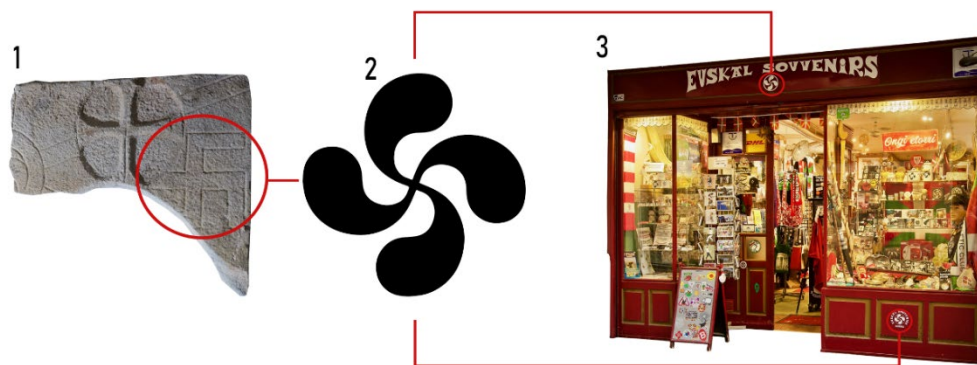


Figure 4. 1: Swastika on the pre-Roman stele (Later Iron Age) of Paresi (Busturia, Bizkaia), source: J. Hidalgo-Masa. 2: Current representation of Lauburu, source: Wikipedia.org. 3: The Lauburu turned into merchandising, source: Facebook.com.

Another notorious example of Iron Age elements in our present day can be found in various elements from the official Basque heraldry, such as the case of the coats of arms of the Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa and the municipality of Anoeta (Fig. 5). Before going into the matter, it is worth mentioning that the symbols of a public body represent much more than just a territory; they embody ethical and ideological values (Gregg 1991). Thus, for example, it is no coincidence that the Bolshevik revolutions of the early twentieth century used red as a symbol, since it represents power or revolution, and with it they wanted to convey the power of popular organisation by using it. The same stands for the examples we will analyse below, where each colour and element were carefully chosen and in order to convey specific values, intertwined with elements from the Iron Age.

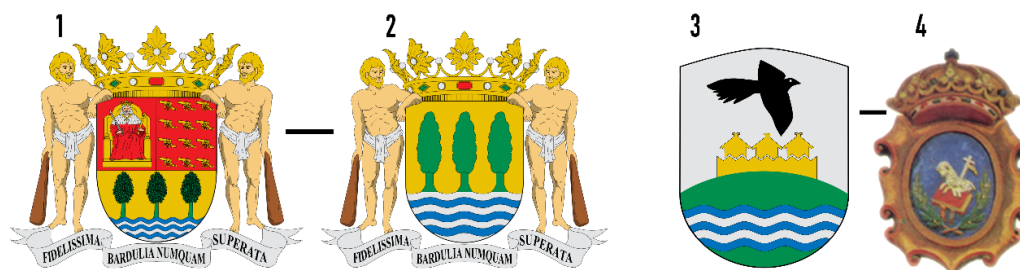


Figure 5. 1: Coat of arms of Gipuzkoa (1513-1979). 2: Coat of arms of Gipuzkoa (1979-). 3: Coat of arms of Anoeta (Gipuzkoa) (2010-). 4: Coat of arms of Anoeta (Gipuzkoa) (1868-2010). Source: Wikipedia.org.

Firstly, we will talk about the coat of arms of the municipality of Anoeta (Gipuzkoa), which was substantially modified in recent decades until it took on its current form, following a public process, promoted by the city council, implemented by the Aranzadi Science Society and ratified by the local residents. The original coat of arms consisted of a lamb holding a book that symbolised Saint John the Baptist (Fig. 5), but the current municipal coat of arms, adopted in 2010, consists of a grey background with a representation of the river Oria, which flows through the aforementioned municipality, and above it we can observe Mount Basagain with a series of yellow huts. Finally, there is a cuckoo above all these elements, as the inhabitants of the town are called after it (Fig. 5). In short, the elements that represent the village today are its river, its mountain, the colloquial demonym and some huts that depict the hillfort of Basagain, dating back to the Iron Age where excavations have been carried out since 1994 under the direction of Peñaler Iribarren (Peñalver Iribarren & Uribarri Agirrebengoa 2022). This site has become a source of pride and self-representation for the people of the village and has become part of the local imaginary as the origin of the municipality. In short, the population has changed Christian symbolism for secular historical elements, a trend parallel to that of Basque society as a whole, where the number of practising Catholics is decreasing day by day, according to data from the Basque Government, *Euskadi.eus*.

Secondly, we will deal with the coat of arms of the Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa, the administration in charge of the region's government of the same name belonging to the Basque Country and whose capital is Donostia-San Sebastián. This region, Gipuzkoa, is one of the most industrialised regions of the Iberian Peninsula with the headquarters of large companies, which is why the elements that represent it acquire major importance in a globalised capitalist world. The coat of arms of Gipuzkoa is made up of three green trees that stand over a representation of a river course on a golden background. Outside the margins of the coat of arms there are four elements (Fig. 5): a crown (above), a ribbon (below) and two people flanking the coat of arms with truncheons. We will focus on the two individuals and the ribbon flanking the shield, the latter has a sentence in which the following phrase can be read in Latin: *Fidelessima bardulia numquam superata*, which translates as: Faithful *Bardulia* never to be surpassed. To understand this sentence, it is necessary to acquire some minimal knowledge about what *Bardulia* is, this term alludes to several quotations from classical authors, Strabo III-3-7, Strabo III-4-12, Pomponius Mela III-1-14/15, Pliny Nat.His. III-26 and Plutarch 43 (Larrañaga Elorza 2007), which relate it to the territory inhabited by the *Barduloi*, who are roughly located between the pre-Roman peoples of the Cantabrians and the Basques on the shores of the Cantabrian Sea and as far west as the Pyrenees. In other words, they would occupy an area similar to that occupied by Gipuzkoa today, which is why some authors see these people as the ultimate origin of the region. It should be mentioned that we do not know the use of *Bardulia*, *Vardulia* or *Vardullia* by these same people, and archaeology has not managed to elucidate much about this ethnonym too, although it continues in use as other similar ethnonyms (Moore 2011). Therefore, we only have the vision of the Roman world to clarify the social reality that the word *Bardulia* may have contained, collected by classical authors who were clearly influenced by the Augustan

colonising propaganda, which simplified and caricatured the local peoples, in the context of a regime change in Rome (Salinas de Frías 1998). This promotes omissions or alterations of the characteristics, such as ethnonymy, of the native people in order to serve the interests of Rome (López Jiménez 2004, Moore, 2011). Thus, the descriptions of these people were made from a certain negativity, emphasising the barbarity of the different peoples such as the *Barduloi*, as shown by Solana Sáinz (2003) in his compilation of various quotations on this ethnonym:

“Such is the life of the inhabitants of the mountains, I am referring to those who border the northern side of Iberia, the Galicians, Astures and Cantabrians up to the Vascones and the Pyrenees, since the way of life of all of them is similar. I will refrain from going into enumerations in order to avoid the deformity of the names, unless someone is pleased to hear about the Plentaurs, Barduites and Allostiges and other worse and more unintelligible names...” (Strabo, III, 3, 7).

Maybe this is the reason why the vision of these people has lasted until a few decades ago, as it can be seen in the regional coat of arms from the end of the 15th century to the current days, which reflects part of the vision of the barbarian that matured in the heart of the Roman world. This representation is based on the dichotomous discourse of the barbarian/civilised (Wolf 2011), which has often been undermined and dissociated in order to support the discourse of the barbarian against the Roman, as it happens with contemporary Celtic identities such as Asturias (Marín Suarez 2004, Marín Suarez et al. 2012) or Cantabria (García Sanchez 2009, 2016).

Crossed presents

The diverse elements of the Iron Age that accompany us in our daily lives in the Basque country have been transformed and readapted. Otherwise, their memory would have been lost. This is the reason that pushes many scholars to study the moments of stratification of this memory as a step to understand the reality that surrounds (political) life in the Basque Country today. One of these present moments, is the transition from the Middle Ages to the Modern Age, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, for it is here that discourses are reorganised.

A conflict marks the transition from the Late Middle Ages to the Modern Basque Age called the War of the Bands (fourteenth/fifteenth century) (Díaz de Durana 1998, Fernández de Larrea Rojas 2009), where two sides, the *Gamboínos* and the *Oñaicinos*, who brought together different families together, fought for a more significant influence in the territory. These conflicts were a feudal reaction to the constant decline of the local rural elites to the detriment of the cities or towns, with which the monarchy was strengthening its position (Díaz de Durana 1998). To all this must be added the last throes of the destabilisation caused by the Black Death and the efforts to capitalise and monopolise the succulent profits from Basque production in the 14th and 15th centuries (Aragón Ruano 2003), such as the iron foundries (Vitores Casado 2017) or whaling in Newfoundland (Canada) (Escribano Ruiz et al. 2015). It is in this context that the Basque elites saw in the Hispanic Monarchy the perfect opportunity to expand their lucrative businesses, as well as to substantially reinforce their positions, closing the quarrels of the past. Thus, a policy of promotion of the Basque elites in the Hispanic Monarchy begun (Imízcoz Beunza 2008) began, based on the promotion of relatives or acquaintances through the

influence of the Basque clusters established around the court and the privileges obtained by a recent successful discursive device. This context was taking advantage of the conditioning factors of the time, the discourse of the Counter-Reformation or purity of blood, among others, arguing that the Basques were old Christians who did not mix with foreign elements. They also had their own ancient laws, called *fueros*, and an ancient language, Euskera or Basque. All this made them worthy of certain privileges such as universal nobility, tax advantages or exemption from certain duties and obligations to the crown. This discourse crystallised throughout the Modern Age in an ideology known as Tubalism, i.e., the belief that the Basques were descendants of the biblical character Tubal (Imízcoz Beunza 2008), who according to the first-century chronicler Titus Flavius Josephus repopulated the Iberian Peninsula after the biblical flood, and it was even said that the language spoken in the biblical landscapes was Basque.



Figure 6. Left: poster describing a music band as Bardulia rock OI. Right: Poster of the Holidays in....Bardulia! 2012. Source: Facebook.com.

The purity of Basqueness was argued with the continued survival in the same territory of the people and their traditions, which went back to the *Barduloi* of the Iron Age, being the original inhabitants of Gipuzkoa, and that is why since 1513 they have appeared on the regional coat of arms reinforcing this idea. In other words, the idea of a kind of Basque Pompeii syndrome developed (Olivier 2020), in which the Iron Age was directly linked to the Modern Age. This belief lasted until the nineteenth century when, under the influence of nationalism and romanticism, an epic national narrative began to be constructed, associating durability with the idea of the people's resistance. This idea of resistance, together with the lack of Roman sites until almost the second half of the twentieth century (Urteaga Artigas 2012), gave birth to a belief in the worldview or imaginary of the Basque people that there

was little Roman influence in our environment, a myth that archaeology has been dismantling in recent decades, with the discovery of sites such as Aloria (Cepeda Ocampo 1999), Forua (Martínez Salcedo 2019) or Oiasso (Urteaga Artigas 2012), among others. This idea of Basque resistance lasted until the twentieth century when it became intertwined with the Basque pro-independence left, and even today it resonates strongly in many Basque cultural discourses and activities, as Asturias (Marín Suárez et al. 2012, Marín Suárez 2005, Alonso González & González Álvarez 2013), Galicia (Díaz Santana 2002) or other European regions such as Ireland (Cooney & Grogan 1991). A clear example of this is that part of the combative music scene in the Basque Country has been celebrating until a few years ago the festival “Holidays in... Bardulia!” (Fig. 6), where this idea of resistance and permanence in the territory of Basque culture is vindicated, so much so that the promotional poster makes use of the coat of arms of the region with the representation of the two figures of the *Barduloi*.

In short, a discourse conceived as the promotion of a Modern Age elite with insatiable ambitions was assimilated by society, adapting it as a national epic. For this purpose, an altered Iron Age reality of classical authors was used as the driving force of its historical legitimacy, similar to the process that happened in Galicia (González Ruibal 2007) or France (Dietler 1994), among others. This discourse has been readapted over time, allowing its memory to live on to the present day. Thus, a stratification of different elements is generated, such as the *Lauburu*, the landscapes of the Basque Country or some elements of official Basque heraldry, which articulate it through very disparate presents. This makes the current Basque identity and self-representation discourse a clear example of what we have been calling *crossed presents*, as it crosses the Palaeolithic, Iron Age, the Roman world and the Modern Age into contact with each other from contemporary times. In these crossings, each present retains its specific cultural, social, and economic characteristics, thus re-signifying other presents, forming its specific one, based on very diverse elements, as in the Basque case.

However, these crossings aren't even homogeneous, as collective memory is lax and flexible, adapting to the changes of time. As a result, gaps and asymmetries are created in the relevance of the memory of specific moments, directly proportional to the depth of the processes of each present. In the specific case of the Basque Country, the analysis of the *crossed presents* in the current identity discourse allows us to elucidate that there are three different moments, Palaeolithic, the Iron Age and the Modern Age, which are of singular importance. On the one hand, we have the Modern Age because this is when the reorganisation of different classical symbols or narratives took place, thus forming a narrative that will be used by the elite of the time. On the other hand, we have the Iron Age because this is the final moment in which the bases of this discourse are generated, such as the *Barduloi* and *Vascones* people or the Iron Age stelae with their different motifs.

Conclusions

It is possible to carry out an archaeology configured by diverse moments that form each specific reality. This archaeology treats time in a flexible and not hermetic way as done in modern historiography. Archaeology is the science that studies the memory of objects that have reached our days (Olivier 2020) and this is formed with the stratification of the present over time. This line of work is not new; authors such as Witmore (2007), González-Ruibal (2007), Olsen (2007) and Olivier (2004, 2020) have been working on it for several decades, under the umbrella of the so-called Symmetrical Archaeology, but its potential has yet to be developed. That is why in archaeological study the idea of *crossed presents* is strictly necessary in order, among other things, to unravel the present in which we live.

The Basque Country is a paradigmatic case of *crossed presents*, since many current ideological elements, symbols of social self-representation, and landscapes or beliefs, are a stratification of moments, as we have observed throughout the text. For all these reasons, it is necessary to decolonise the Basque past to unravel the knot of our times, which in the case in question is still latent after recently emerging from an armed conflict that has lasted fifty years.

Finally, this type of analysis of *crossed presents* serves to give a voice to reality, the Basque Atlantic Iron Age, which in many cases is mute due to its material sparseness and the lack of research efforts, but which, even so, has maintained part of its memory, surviving the passage of time. Additionally, these analyses also involve connecting today's society with the Iron Age, since by analysing the different elements that make up the current Basque identity discourse, which society has kept within itself, it can understand them and link itself to them, as has been seen previously in the case of the municipality of Anoeta or a Basque music band, where a group of people have made both a fortified settlement and the ancient *Bardulia* part of their own present.

References

- AGAMBEN, G. 2015. *¿Qué es un dispositivo? Seguido de El Amigo y de La Iglesia y El Reino*. Barcelona: Editorial Anagrama, S. A.
- ALMAGRO GORBEA, M. 2005. Etnogénesis del País Vasco: de los antiguos mitos a la investigación actual. *Munibe* 57: 345–346.
- ALONSO GONZÁLEZ, P. & GONZÁLEZ ÁLVAREZ, D. 2013. Construyendo el pasado, reproduciendo el presente: identidad y arqueología en las recreaciones históricas de indígenas contra romanos en el Noroeste de España. *Revista de Dialectología y Tradiciones Populares* 68: 305–30.
- ANDREU PINTADO, J. & PÉREX AGORRETA, M. J. 2009. Los Vascones de las fuentes clásicas en época romana, in: ANDREU PINTADO, J. (ed.), *Los Vascones de las fuentes antiguas: en torno a una etnia de la antigüedad peninsular*. Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona: 147–168.
- ARAGÓN RUANO, A. 2003. La importancia de los montes comunales en el desarrollo de la sociedad urbana vasca en el tránsito del medievo a la modernidad (siglos XV y XVI). *Boletín de la Real Sociedad Bascongada de Amigos del País* 59: 59–104.

- ARNOLD, B. 1990. The past as propaganda: totalitarian archaeology in Nazi Germany. *Antiquity* 64: 464–78.
- AYÁN VILA, X. 2013. Todo queda en casa. Espacio doméstico, poder y división social en la Edad del Hierro del NW de la Península Ibérica, in: GUTIÉRREZ, S. & GRAU, I. (eds.), *De La Estructura Doméstica Al Espacio Social: Lecturas Arqueológicas Del Uso Social Del Espacio*, Alacant/Alicante: Universitat d'Alacant / Universidad de Alicante, Servicio de Publicaciones: 39–56.
- CAMINO MAYOR, J. 1995. *Los castros marítimos en Asturias*. Oviedo: Real Instituto de estudios asturianos.
- CEPEDA OCAMPO, J. J. 1999. Asentamiento romano de Aloria en Arrastia (Amurrio): IX Campaña de excavaciones. *Arkeoikuska* 1999: 33–37.
- CIANCIOLO, G. 2018. La ciudad efímera y eterna. El tiempo como multiplicador de Pompeya, in: CASTÁN, A., LOMBA C. & POBLADOR, M. P. (eds.), *El tiempo y el arte: reflexiones sobre el gusto IV*. Zaragoza: Institución Fernando el Católico: 419–432.
- COONEY, G. & GROGAN, E. 1991. An archeological solution to an Irish problem. *Emania* 9: 33–43.
- DE PABLO CONTRERAS, S. 2009. El lauburu. Política, cultura e identidad nacional en torno a un símbolo del País Vasco. *Memoria y civilización* 12: 109–153.
- DÍAZ-ANDREU, M. 1995. Archaeology and nationalism in Spain, in: KOHL, P. L. & FAWCETT, C. (eds.), *Nationalism, Politics and the Practice of Archaeology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 39–56.
- DÍAZ DE DURANA, J. R. 1998. *La lucha de bandos en el País Vasco, de los parientes mayores a la bidalgúa universal: Guipúzcoa, de los bandos a la provincia (siglos XIV a XVI)*. Leioa: Servicio Editorial de la Universidad del País Vasco/ Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea.
- DÍAZ SANTANA, B. 2002. *Los celtas en Galicia: arqueología y política en la creación de la identidad gallega*. Noia: Tosoxoutos (Serie Keltia; 18).
- DIETLER, M. 1994. “Our ancestors the Gauls”: archaeology, ethnic nationalism, and the manipulation of Celtic identity in modern Europe. *American Anthropologist*, 96: 584–605.
- DIETLER, M. 2006. Celticism, Celtitude, and Celticity: The Consumption of the Past in the Age of Globalization, in: RIECKHOFF S. (ed.) *Celtes et Gaulois dans l'histoire, l'historiographie et l'idéologie modern*, Glux-en-Glenne: Bibracte, Centre Archéologique Européen: 237–248.
- EDESO FITO, J. M., GOIKOETXEA ZABALETA, I., LOPETEGI GALARRAGA, A., ARÉVALO MUÑOZ, E., ORUE BELTRÁN DE HEREDIA, I., ZALDUA, L. M. & MUJICA ALUSTIZA, J. A. 2016. Contribution to the study of the geographical distribution of Pyrenean funerary stone circles (baratzte, cromlech) in the western Pyrenees. *Zephyrus: Revista de prehistoria y arqueología* 77: 193–205.
- ESCRIBANO RUIZ, E., LOEWEN, B., BARRACHINA, C. P., NUÑEZ MARCÉN, J. & MONETTE, Y. 2015. Basque fishing crews' pottery in Canada a transatlantic evaluation of ceramic remains left by an Early Modern global Enterprise, in: BUXEDA, J., GARRIDOS, I., MARISOL, M., MADRID, I. & GARCÍA IÑÁÑEZ, J. (eds.), *Global Pottery 1*. Oxford: Archaeopress: 205–221.
- FÁBREGA ÁLVAREZ, P. 2004. Poblamiento y Territorio de la Cultura Castreña en la comarca de Ortegal. *CAPA: Cadernos de Arqueoloxía e Patrimonio* 19: 1–82.

- FERNÁNDEZ DE LARREA Y ROJAS, J. A. 2009. Las guerras privadas: el ejemplo de los bandos oñacino y gamboino en el País Vasco. *Clío & Crimen* 6: 85–109.
- GARCÍA-CAMINO, I. 2003. Las transformaciones en la organización territorial de la cuenca media del Nervión provocadas por el nacimiento de Bilbao. *Bidebarrieta* 12: 155–167.
- GARCÍA SÁNCHEZ, J. 2009. Political use of archaeological remains: the Cantabrian giant steles. *SALDVIE* 9: 249–263.
- GARCÍA SÁNCHEZ, J. 2016. El Lábaro cántabro, la construcción de una comunidad. *Arqueoweb: Revista sobre Arqueología en Internet* 17(1): 115–127.
- GONZÁLEZ MORALES, M.R. 1994. Justificando las raíces: política y arqueología en la España autonómica. *Arqcrítica* 8: 8–10.
- GONZÁLEZ-RUIBAL, A. 2007. Arqueología simétrica. Un giro teórico sin revolución paradigmática. *Complutum* 18: 283–285.
- GONZÁLEZ-RUIBAL, A. 2008. Los pueblos del noroeste, in: F. GRACIA ALONSO (ed.) *De Iberia a Hispania*, Madrid: Ariel: 899–930.
- GONZÁLEZ-RUIBAL, A. 2012. The Politics of Identity: Ethnicity and the Economy of Power in Iron Age Northwest Iberia, in: CIFANI, G. & STODDART S. (eds.), *Landscape, Ethnicity and Identity in the archaic Mediterranean Area*. Barnsley: Oxbow Books: 245–266.
- GREGG, G. S. 1991. *Self-representation: Life narrative studies in identity and ideology*. Greenwood Press.
- HIDALGO-MASA, J. 2020. Análisis de las estructuras visibles del yacimiento arqueológico de Malmasin (Arrigorriaga, Bizkaia): aportación de las imágenes LIDAR. *CQK Quaternary Studies* 10: 45–59.
- IMÍZCOZ BEUNZA, J. M. 2008. Las élites vasco-navarras y la monarquía hispánica: construcciones sociales, olíticas y culturales en la edad moderna. *Cuadernos de Historia Moderna* 33: 89–119.
- JIMENO MARTÍNEZ, A. & DE LA TORRE ECHVÁRRI, J. I. 2005 *Numancia, símbolo e historia*. Tres Cantos: AKAL Editorial.
- JORDÁ-PARDO, J. F., REY CASTIÑEIRA, J., PICÓN PLATAS, I., ABAD VIDAL, E. & MARÍN SUÁREZ, C. 2009. Radiocarbon and Chronology of the Iron Age Hillforts of Northwestern Iberia, in: KARL R. & LESKOVAR J. (eds.) *Interpretierte Eisenzeiten. Fallstudien, Methoden, Theorie*. Tagungsbeiträge der 3 Linzer Gespräche zur interpretativen Eisenzeitarchäologie, 22. Linz: Oberösterreichischen Landesmuseum. (Studien zur Kulturgeschichte von Oberösterreich; 22): 69–86.
- LARRAÑAGA ELORZA, K. 2007. *El Hecho Colonial Romano en el Área Circumpirenaica Occidental*. Leioa: Servicio Editorial de la Universidad del País Vasco/ Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea.
- LIPOVETSKY, G. 2014. *Los tiempos hipermodernos*. Barcelona: Editorial Anagrama, S. A.
- LÓPEZ JIMÉNEZ, O. 2004. Las fuentes antiguas y la creación literario de la Vetonia. *Gerión* 22: 201–214.
- MARÍN SUÁREZ, C. 2004. Historiografía de la Edad del Hierro en Asturias. *Complutum* 15: 75–97.
- MARÍN SUÁREZ, C. 2005. *Astures y asturianos. Historiografía de la Edad del Hierro en Asturias*. Noia: Toxosoutos.

- MARÍN SUÁREZ, C., GONZÁLEZ ÁLVAREZ, D. & ALONSO GONZÁLEZ, P. 2012. Building nations in the XXI century. Celticism, Nationalism and Archaeology in northern Spain: the case of Asturias and León. *Archaeological Review from Cambridge* 27: 11–31.
- MARTÍN-VISO, I. 2016. *Asentamientos y paisajes rurales en el occidente medieval*. Madrid: Editorial Síntesis S. A.
- MARTÍNEZ SALCEDO, A. 2019. Poblado romano de Forua: XXXII Campaña. *Arkeoikuska* 2019: 280–286.
- MORRISON, K. D. 2001. Sources, approaches and definitions, in: ALCOCK, S. E., D'ALTROY, T. N., MORRISON, K. D. & SINOPOLI, C. M. (eds.), *Empires: perspectives from archaeology and history*: 1–9. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- MOORE, T. 2011. Detribalizing the later prehistoric past: Concepts of tribes in Iron Age and Roman studies. *Journal of Social Archaeology* 11: 334–360.
- MUJICA, J. A., PEÑALVER, X., SAN JOSÉ, S., LOPETEGI, A., EDESO, J. M., ARÉVALO, E., PÉREZ, S., RUIZ, M., GOIKOETXEA, I. & FERNÁNDEZ, T. 2017. Los enterramientos en cista en el Pirineo Occidental y su entorno durante la Edad del Bronce., in: FERNÁNDEZ, J., MUJICA, J. A., ARRIZABALAGA, A., GARCÍA, M. & ZAPATA L. (eds.), *Miscelánea en homenaje a Lydia Zapata Peña: (1965-2015)*. Leioa: Servicio Editorial de la Universidad del País Vasco/ Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea: 495–520.
- OLIVIER, L. 2004. *The past of the present. Archaeological memory and time*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- OLIVIER, L. 2020. *El oscuro abismo del tiempo. Memoria y arqueología*. Madrid: JAS Arqueología S.L.U.
- OLSEN, B. 2007. Genealogías de la asimetría por qué nos hemos olvidado de las cosas. *Complutum* 18: 287–291.
- OTEIZA EMBIL, J. 1993. *Quousque tandem...! Ensayo de interpretación estética del alma vasca*. Pamplona-Iruña: Editorial Pamela.
- PARCERO OUBIÑA, C. 2002. *La construcción del paisaje social en la Edad del Hierro del Noroeste Ibérico*. Santiago de Compostela: Fundación Ortigueira.
- PARCERO OUBIÑA, C., ARMADA-PITA, X.L & AYÁN VILA, X.M. 2017. Castros en la escalera: el Noroeste entre la normalidad y la indiferencia, in: CELESTINO PÉREZ, S. (ed.), *La Protohistoria en la península ibérica*. Madrid: Istmo: 813–878.
- PEÑALVER IRIBARREN, X. 2005. *Orígenes*. Tafalla: Txalaparta.
- PEÑALVER IRIBARREN, X. & URIBARRI AGIRREBENGOA, E. 2022. *Basagain. Un poblado fortificado indígena de la Edad del Hierro (Anoeta, Gipuzkoa)*. Donostia-San Sebastián: Diputación Foral de Gipuzkoa.
- RUBIO POBES, C. 1996. *Revolución y tradición. El País Vasco ante la Revolución Liberal y la construcción del Estado español, 1808-1868*. Madrid: Editorial Siglo XXI.
- RUBIO POBES, C. 2003. *La identidad vasca en el siglo XIX, discurso y agentes sociales*. Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva.
- RUIZ ZAPATERO, G. 2002. Arqueología e identidad. La construcción de referentes de prestigio en la sociedad contemporánea. *Arqueoweb: Revista sobre Arqueología en Internet* 4 (1): [<http://pendientedemigracion.ucm.es/info/arqueoweb/pdf/4-1/ruizzapatero.pdf>].

- RUIZ ZAPATERO, G. 2006. The Celts in Spain. From archaeology to modern identities, in: RIECKHOFF, S. (ed.) *Celtes et Gaulois, l'Archéologie face à l'Histoire, I: Celtes et Gaulois dans l'histoire, l'historiographie et l'idéologie moderne*. Actes de la table ronde de Leipzig, 16-17 juin 2005. Glux-en-Glenne: Bibracte, Centre archeologique européen: 197–218.
- SALINAS DE FÍAS, M. 1998. La guerra de los cántabros y astures, la etnografía de España y la propaganda de Augusto, in: M.J. HIDALGO, D. PÉREZ & M.J.R. GERVÁS (ed.) *'Romanización' y 'reconquista' en la Península Ibérica: nuevas perspectivas*, Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca: 155–170.
- SAYAS ABENGOCHEA, J. J. 1999. De vascones a romanos para volver a ser vascones. *Eusko Ikaskuntzen nazioarteko aldizkaria* 44: 147–184.
- SERNA GANCEDO, M. L., MÁRTINEZ VELASCO, A. & FERNÁNDEZ ACEBO, V. 2010. *Castros y Castra en Cantabria. Fortificaciones desde los orígenes de la Edad del Hierro a las guerras con Roma. Catálogo, revisión y puesta al día*. Santander: ACANTO y Consejería de Cultura, Turismo y Deporte del Gobierno de Cantabria: 379–386.
- SOLANA SÁINZ, J. M. 2003. Vardulos. *Hispania Antiqua* 27: 43–79.
- TAMM, M. & OLIVIER, L. 2019. *Rethinking Historical Time. New Approaches to Presentism*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.
- TELLERÍA JULIAN, I., SUSPERREGI, S. & URTEAGA ARTIGAS, M. 2020. Estudio sobre el origen del caserío vasco mediante el análisis de estructuras medievales en madera, in: GRAU SOLOGESTOA, I. & QUIRÓS CASTILLO, J. A. (eds.), *Arqueología de la Edad Moderna en el País Vasco y su entorno*. Oxford: Archaeopress Publishing LTD: 86-102.
- URTEAGA ARTIGAS, M. & ARCE MARTÍNEZ, J. 2012. *Arkeologia 0.4-Arqueología romana en Gipuzkoa*. Donostia: Gipuzkoako Foru Aldundia.
- VALDALISO GAGO, J. M. 2013. Las estrategias de desarrollo económico del País Vasco. Una perspectiva histórica. *Ekonomia: Revista vasca de economía* 83: 146–174.
- VITORES CASADO, I. 2017. Agentes económicos e instituciones públicas en la configuración del mercado del hierro vasco (siglos XIV-XVI). *En la España Medieval* 4:191–247.
- WITMORE, C. 2007. Arqueología simétrica: un manifiesto breve. *Complutum* 18: 305–313.
- WOOLF, G. 2011. *Tales of the Barbarians. Ethnography and Empire in the Roman West*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- WULFF, F. 2009. Vascones, autoctonía, continuidad, lengua: entre la Historia y la Historiografía, in: ANDREU PINTADO, J. (ed.) *Los vascones de las fuentes antiguas en torno a una etnia de la antigüedad península*. Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona: 303–338.