

Bulletin for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies

Journal of the Association for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies

Volume 48

Issue 1

Article 2

2023

Death in the Indies: Basque Immigration and Memory in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

Amanda Scott
als7146@psu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://asphs.net/journal/>

Recommended Citation

Scott, Amanda (2023) "Death in the Indies: Basque Immigration and Memory in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *Bulletin for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies*: Vol. 48 : Iss. 1 , Article 2.

Available at:

<https://asphs.net/article/death-in-the-indies-basque-immigration-and-memory-in-the-sixteenth-and-seventeenth-centuries>

This **article** is brought to you for free and open access by the Association for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies. It has been accepted for inclusion in the Bulletin for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies by an authorized editor of the Association for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies. For more information, please contact bulletineditor@asphs.net.

Death in the Indies: Basque Immigration and Memory in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries¹

Amanda Scott

In 1624, the Spanish galleon San Juan Bautista y Santa Clara finally approached Seville after her long transatlantic voyage from Cartagena de las Indias. Aboard was Pedro de Echeberría, native of Pueyo, a small town just north of Tafalla, Navarre. Echeberría had made the long journey to the Indies at least once before, and though this transatlantic business had been lucrative, it had also meant that he had not been able to visit his family in Pueyo in over a decade. Now in 1624, Echeberría realized that he would probably never return to his native home. Never again would he visit the parish church where his parents were buried, nor see his brothers and sisters, nor would he ever meet the nieces that had been born during his absence. Echeberría fell ill before reaching Seville, and while still at sea, he summoned a notary and made his last will and testament.²

Though his ties to his native Navarre were frayed by a decade of absence, Echeberría spoke of his hometown with immediacy and familiarity; his years abroad enhanced the affiliations he felt with people, places, and pious institutions. Moreover, his years working and living in the Indies and in Seville also provided him with the means to turn these abstract sentiments into physical memorial. In his will, Echeberría left bequests to friends and institutions in Seville and in New Granada, but the bulk of his memorials were left to family members he had never met and churches he had not seen in years, all of which were in his native Pueyo and Tafalla.

In this act, Echeberría joined countless other Spanish, Navarrese, and Basque immigrants who wrote testaments or drew up legal provisions for disposing of their estates should the Americas be their final earthly destination.³ Testaments were complex legal documents, but also spiritual statements whose emotional power is hard to express in modern terms: they were performative acts of filial piety, entrances into the intricate webs of the early modern spiritual economy, and

¹ I would like to thank, above all, the two anonymous reviewers whose feedback helped strengthen key areas of this paper. The collections at Center for Basque Studies at the University of Nevada Reno were invaluable in researching this paper, as was the help of Iñaki Arrieta Baro. Gratitude also to the members of Premodern Iberianists of the Mid-Atlantic (PIMA) for their comments on a final version of this paper, and to Lu Ann Homza, Allyson Poska, and Emma Otheguy for their reflections and encouragement on the earliest iteration of this paper, now given many years ago at the 2015 Renaissance Society of America meeting in Berlin.

² Archivo Diocesano de Pamplona, Tribunal Eclesiástico, Sección Procesos (hereafter referred to as ADP), C/550 N.9.

³ Throughout this essay, I use Basque to refer to some immigrants from Navarre, emphasizing a shared culture and language of these two politically distinct but neighboring regions.

physical attempts to reach forward in time, past death to touch the future lives of friends and families. Practically speaking, testaments allowed immigrants to express pious and economic affiliations with their new homes, while at the same time recalling attachments to shrines, parish churches, and charitable institutions that had shaped them in their youth.

In dictating his will, Echeberría was far from exceptional; however, there are several factors that make wills like his special and which mark them as useful in understanding immigration and memory as they were experienced at the individual level. Placed within the context of scholarship on the development and experience of early modern immigration, trauma, and development of the Basque Diaspora, these wills provide a snapshot into how both immigrants and their relatives understood transatlantic absence, especially during the earlier colonial period. Over the course of a decade or more of absence with little or no communication with one's hometown, an immigrant's perception of how well he had maintained ties to his native land might diverge considerably from how his relatives perceived his continued affiliation.⁴ These testaments also demonstrate the ways in which these affiliations—real and imagined—did not diminish over time, but rather were augmented through the incorporation of American commodities like Mexican gold, Andean emeralds, or enslaved people. Finally, after decades of absence, plus years more to actually remit the testament back to the Basque country or Navarre, beneficiaries frequently struggled to determine the exact intention of their long-lost relatives, let alone the feasibility of carrying out their wishes.

Drawing from the collection of testaments in the Diocesan Archive of Pamplona—which ended up there because they were litigated or disputed—this article argues that testamentary bequests conceal and indeed, entomb, memories. Litigated because they were not executed, these testaments are whispers of the hopes and plans that were extinguished with their writers. In other words, legal disputes over these testaments reveal a forking of memory, in which the immigrant carried forth one memory of his village, while his family and friends inhabited a very different one, continuing down a separate path of real experience and personal interaction. Two worlds exist in these litigated testaments, both very real, and

⁴ Though I recognize what some scholars refer to as “affect” here, I am also interested in the ways emotion intersected with fluid memory, and how memories were built and rebuilt each time they were retrieved over time, finally taken a permanent form in a testamentary bequest. For some recent scholarship on how affective emotions were “managed” and controlled, see Susan Broomall, ed., *Gender and Emotions in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Destroying Order, Structuring Disorder* (New York: Routledge, 2015); on how acts of feeling were “practiced” in pre-modern Europe, Andreea Marculescu and Charles-Louis Morand Métivier, eds., *Affective and Emotional Economies in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018); and the foundational work on the experience and construction of emotion within (and for) groups, Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006).

neither achieving embodiment. Having left his native village ten, twenty, thirty or more years earlier, the immigrant departed with one memory of important religious sites or esteem for certain religious personnel. These memories were then constantly altered, recrafted, and reinforced through wistful conversation with other Basque immigrants over the years. In contrast, villagers who continued to live alongside local clergy might develop very different feelings about them, especially as more difficult personality traits emerged over the years. When family members refused to honor the bequests of their long-lost family members, the diocese sued, creating a unique category of trial records that reinforce the ways in which memory, migration, and lived experience diverged.

The Basque Immigration and Diaspora

Glimpses of the dangerous reality of transatlantic travel, like that of Echeberría, offer us an invaluable mechanism for approaching the emotional experience of immigration. Decades of studies on the logistics of immigration—including detailed itineraries, cargo lists, ticket prices, and royal regulation—demonstrate how early modern Iberian immigration was a close reflection of the highly bureaucratized Spanish state.⁵ Economic figures tell us that much of early modern Iberian immigration was related to dire economic circumstances and deteriorating opportunities; they also show us how consequential remitted wealth was to individual families and small villages across the peninsula, and how these ties were built and maintained.⁶

Though their experiences immigrating overlap with the experiences of other Iberians, the cultural and linguistic cohesion of Basques helps shed light on the formation of emotional communities and their role in forging memories of home.⁷ Many of their experiences can thus stand in for broader experiences of other Iberian immigrants to the Indies, while also providing a semi-cohesive unit by which to consider the lives of early modern immigrants. In this context, Basque immigration

⁵ Carlos Martínez Shaw, *La Emigración española a América (1492-1824)* (Gijón: Fundación Archivo de Indianos, 1994).

⁶ See Ernesto García Fernández, “La herencia del indiano guipuscoano Martín de Umansoro: los entramados sociales y financieros en el tránsito del medievo a la modernidad,” in *Del espacio Cantábrico al mundo americano: Perspectivas sobre migración, y retorno*, eds. Óscar Álvarez Gila and Juan Bosco Amores Carredano (Bilbao: Universidad del País Vasco, 2015), 15–69; and Ida Altman, *Transatlantic Ties in the Spanish Empire: Brihuega, Spain, and Puebla, Mexico, 1560-1620* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

⁷ The importance of the Basque language to Basque identity in the Basque Country and Navarre must have also reflected the only recent conquest of large swaths of the cultural Basque provinces into the Spanish royal kingdoms. Peio Monteano Sorbet has written extensively on both the conquest of Navarre between 1512-1529, and the pervasive use of the Basque language throughout Navarrese society into the early modern period. Among others, see Peio Monteano Sorbet, *El iceberg navarro: Euskera y castellano en la Navarra del siglo XVI* (Pamiela: Pamplona, 2017).

was critically important to early modern colonialization and globalization.⁸ Archaeologists and anthropologists have documented Basque ironwork and other material goods among Indigenous Canadian trade-networks as early as the beginning of the sixteenth century, as well as linguistic evidence of contact within Iroquois language.⁹ This is perhaps less surprising considering that Basque whalers and fishermen were comfortable navigators in the north Atlantic already for centuries, and easily could have made (and maintained) American contact for generations.¹⁰ Basques (along with the Portuguese) were considered the best shipbuilders money could buy, and indeed, Basque expertise in navigation and other maritime trades was so well-regarded and even pervasive in early modern seafaring that Basques were included in a variety of critical roles on all the earliest Spanish expeditions to the Americas from Columbus onward.¹¹ Similarly, Basques were renowned for their skill in mining and ironworking; they were actively recruited to the powerful mining regions in colonial Latin America.¹² The Navarrese chose to join their Basque neighbors in these regions, and strongly preferred to migrate to Peru and Mexico: 58.5% of Navarrese emigrants went to Peru and 41.5% went to New Spain, whereas only 36% and 33% of Castilians chose these regions respectively.¹³

⁸ Until recently “there was little incentive for colonial historians to think in terms of, say, “Basques in Peru”: a Basque in the New World was first a *criollo* or a *peninsular*, and “the Basqueness” of prominent colonists, viceroys, or prelates “was rarely noted, let alone investigated.” William A. Douglass, “Foreword,” in José Manuel Azcona Pastor, *Possible Paradises: Basque Emigration to Latin America*, trans. Roland Vazquez (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2004), xiii.

⁹ Peter Bakker, “The Language of the Coast Tribes is Half Basque”: A Basque-American Indian Pidgin in Use between Europeans and Native Americans in North America, ca. 1540-ca. 1640,” in *Anthropological Linguistics* 31, n. 3–4 (1989): 117–147; and Brad Loewen and Vincent Delmas, “The Basques in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and Adjacent Shores,” in *Canadian Journal of Archaeology/ Journal Canadien d’Archéologie* 36, n. 2 (2012): 213–266.

¹⁰ Juan Javier Pescador discusses this historic expertise in the context of motivation for immigration: following economic crises in the seventeenth century, Basque families who had previously derived prestige and power from the iron and shipbuilding industries were able to translate their economic power in the Atlantic world to the colonial context. Juan Javier Pescador, *The New World Inside a Basque Village: The Oiartzun Valley and its Atlantic Emigrants, 1550–1800* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2004), 24–25.

¹¹ José Manuel Azcona Pastor, *Possible Paradises: Basque Emigration to Latin America*, trans. Roland Vazquez (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2004), 6 and William A. Douglass, *Basque Explorers in the Pacific Ocean* (Reno: Center for Basque Studies Press, 2015), 29–48.

¹² Due to its lack of phosphorus, Basque ironwork was more malleable and less fragile than that produced in other parts of Europe. Consequently, rising empire-states like England were huge importers. Bilbao had initially been considered as the port of entry from the Americas, but Seville was ultimately chosen due to the shorter distance and because of existing infrastructure. Azcona, *Possible Paradises*, 4, 76.

¹³ José Miguel Aramburu Zudaire, *Vida y fortuna del emigrante navarro a Indias (siglos XVI y XVII)* (Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra, 1999), 50.

Migration was not forced for most white Iberians, but it was never exactly totally spontaneous either. Instead, immigration was closely controlled through law and restrictions imposed by the crown, and intended to create a society dominated by Europeans, but without the religious conflict that tore Europe apart during the early modern period.¹⁴ Moors, conversos, heretics, foreigners, *gitanos*, and a range of others were all technically forbidden from migrating, though as many scholars have shown, actual migration was far more porous and far harder to control than the idealized version promoted by Spanish bureaucrats.¹⁵ Similarly, the Spanish state attempted to control for gender and status, strongly preferring to issue migration permits to married men in the company of their wives and to single—but accompanied—women.¹⁶ Still, most Basque and Navarrese migrants were young men (in their twenties) and unmarried at the time of departure. Moreover, many appear to have been younger sons, untrained in specific trades, but prepared to work under the loosely defined category of *criado*, or servant: that is, many seem to have viewed immigration as a way to ally themselves with men and families of means by working closely in their households or joining their existing trades.¹⁷

Like other Iberians, and certainly modern immigrants as well, early modern Basque migration was at least in part a calculated economic strategy. In the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Basque Country, as well as parts of Navarre, local demographic structure was dominated by the rural household, or *baserri*. The *baserri* covered both the physical multi-person household that the Basque family centered around, as well as all the extended family associated with the homestead, as well as animals and other properties. In the early modern period, Basque families worked collectively for the purpose of protecting the *baserri*, and individual members were expected to subordinate their own interests for the good of the *baserri*. Notably, only one sibling inherited legal control over the *baserri*, though other siblings were able to claim perpetual protection and live in the household for the rest of their lives. Heirs could be either men or women, younger or older siblings, usually the one that their parents had deemed “the best” sibling. Other siblings continued to work for the good of the *baserri*, or were channeled into

¹⁴ Aramburu, *Vida y fortuna*, 38. See also Angel Mari Arrieta, *La emigración alavesa a América en el siglo XIX (1800–1900)*; and Consuelo Soldevilla Oria, *La emigración de Cantabria a América: Hombres, mercaderías, y capitales* (Santander: Colección Pronillo, 1996).

¹⁵ Aramburu, *Vida y fortuna*, 38.

¹⁶ Aramburu, *Vida y fortuna*, 38; on licensing, and the general problem associated with enforcement, see Martínez, *La emigración española*, 32–35, 38.

¹⁷ For instance, of Navarrese immigrants in the sixteenth century for whom we know their trades, 77 were listed as servants, followed by eight priests, four merchants, two accountants, and two scribes or notaries. All the rest were a miscellaneous grab bag, such as: a doctor, a sailor, a judge, a musician, a commercial agent, a viceroy, and one very ambitious self-described “conqueror-settler” (conquistador-poblador). In the seventeenth century, there were 104 servants, 41 priests, monks, and nuns, 39 merchants, and the rest were administrators. Aramburu, *Vida y fortuna*, 61.

honorable, if un-reproductive roles like the clergy or seroras. In the later sixteenth- and continuing into the seventeenth century, more and more sons, either primary heirs or non-inheriting siblings were pushed by their families to emigrate. Emigration had extensive positive repercussions, though it also exacerbated gendered tensions, as women took over more traditionally masculine roles in the absence of their husbands, fathers, and brothers.¹⁸

Many families elected to send their sons to the Indies as part of long-term calculations to pay off debts, a practice which became so commonplace that anthropologist William A. Douglass still documented the practice in his study of twentieth-century Basque villages.¹⁹ Other motivations for immigration tended to group in unsurprising ways: most migrants seem to have made the final decision to leave their homes to make their fortunes or find adventure; to escape a debt (or escape some sort of related social pressure, like an unwanted marriage); or to track down long-absent family members who had immigrated within one of the above two categories. Immigrants seem to have been aware of these stereotypes, sometimes trying to deflect actual motivations by claiming one of the more established reasons. For instance, Navarrese men who migrated without their wives sometimes claimed vague offenses of honor in order to justify abandoning their families, even when they clearly benefited by abandoning monetary debts at the same time.²⁰ Of course, given that married individuals traveling alone were required to have a document from their spouses consenting to the voyage, it seems likely that these explanations could have further served a legal fiction to justify domestic separation.²¹

Even when migration was socially, economically, or domestically expedient, immigrants seem to have clung to the idea that it was a temporary state, no matter how long it lasted. Ida Altman and others have established that one-directional immigration was far from the norm: like Pedro de Echeberría whom we met at the beginning of this article, many immigrants made several journeys back and forth over their lifetimes for a variety of reasons including attending to business, to visit family, or to chaperone relatives back across the Atlantic from

¹⁸ On Basque social structures, see the classic work by Julio Caro Baroja, *De la vida rural vasca*, 2nd ed. (Donostia: Editorial Txertoa, 1986). See also, Pescador, *New World*, 47–48; and for similar arguments on the spaces that opened up for women following male migration, see Allyson Poska, *Women and Authority in Early Modern Spain: The Peasants of Galicia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹⁹ William A. Douglass, *Echalar and Murelaga: Opportunity and Rural Exodus in Two Spanish Basque Villages* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1975). See also, Pescador, 49.

²⁰ Aramburu, *Vida y fortuna*, 117–119.

²¹ Azcona, *Possible Paradises*, 124. On gender and immigration in a slightly later period than the one under consideration here, and for the contexts in which women immigrated, see Allyson Poska, *Gendered Crossings: Women and Migration in the Spanish Empire* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2016).

Spain.²² The voyage from Seville to Veracruz or Panamá in the sixteenth century could be as long as 75–95 days, depending on a variety of factors including weather, natural catastrophes, and pirates. Remitting money or goods from the Americas back to family in Spain could take as much as two years with customs delays, meaning that some immigrants found it quicker and more secure—if uncomfortable and dangerous—to make the journey themselves.²³ The length, in addition to the discomfort of the voyage and the dangers of illness or violence aboard the ships make the reality of multi-directional migration all the more impressive. Of course, multi-directional migration—including the intention to do so, even if that hope did not actually materialize—was a privilege of voluntary European immigrants, and not an option for the millions of African slaves who were forcibly kidnapped and transported in the same centuries.

Many immigrants seem to have genuinely intended on returning home, maintaining this fervent hope over decades, promising relatives back home that they were about to return, even if they never actually achieved these goals. Financial hardship, unspecified delays, and economic dreams that never panned out effectively trapped many immigrants in a new land in similar or only marginally better economic circumstances than those that they had left back in Spain. This is particularly the case with males, many of whom stayed unmarried in their new American homes (though importantly, unmarried does not necessarily mean they were single, and many would have had extralegal sexual partners). In their testaments, they spoke of their intentions to return home at some point and find a spouse, but their unmarried statuses at the time of their deaths underscore a different reality.²⁴ As José Miguel Aramburu Zudaire calculates in his extremely valuable study of Navarrese testaments from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, only 18.3% of immigrant men to the New World were married at the time they composed their last wishes.²⁵ These bachelors in turn sparked a subsequent wave of more bachelor immigrations as they realized that their unmarriedness was unlikely to be remedied and demanded that younger male relatives join them: for instance, in 1589, Alonso Martínez de Lacunza, property owner in Mexico City, wrote to his brother in Pamplona, requesting that he send to Alonso one of his younger nephews, since as “an orphan, without a wife, nor sons or daughters [of his own]” he very

²² Altman, *Transatlantic Ties*; see also, Altman and Horn, “*To Make America*”: *European Emigration in the Early Modern Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), and Ida Altman, *Emigrants and Society: Extremadura and Spanish America in the Sixteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

²³ Aramburu, *Vida y fortuna*, 146–147.

²⁴ Enrique Otte also observes that this was a common sentiment in personal correspondence from the Indies, though many personal letters were very biased and written to elicit sympathy (or action) from their recipients. Enrique Otte and James Lockhart, eds., *Letters and People of the Spanish Indies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), x–xi.

²⁵ Aramburu, *Vida y fortuna*, 225, 238.

much needed a nephew to inherit his property “because otherwise he has no one.”²⁶ Having held onto the hope that he would one day return home to his native Pamplona a wealthy man, Martínez had failed to settle down and reach certain life benchmarks such as getting married and starting a family of his own.²⁷ Towards the end of his life, he realized that the years had slipped by and that these goals were no longer likely to materialize. Yet without an heir, what was the point of the decades he had spent apart from his brothers and his native city? Like so many others, he turned to the now established routes of immigration to help him find an heir outside of marriage and domestic life.²⁸

In Martínez’s case, his need for an heir merged with a sense of almost defeat. Years spent laboring in the New World had done little to improve his material circumstances, and had instead only meant that he remained separated from the friends and family he deeply missed. Consistent across the testaments written by Navarrese and Basque immigrants is a deep sense of nostalgia and longing, no doubt one of the reasons that modern Basque scholars have been so attracted to the experience of exile by their early-modern forebearers. Like modern immigrants, early modern Basques and Navarrese tended to search out communities of their own in the Americas, creating cultural colonies within colonies, and reinforcing a sense of lost home among other immigrants. Speaking Basque, and reminiscing about distant friends, churches, or geographic sites helped preserve a collective memory.

These cultural communities served as surrogate families, and some Basque immigrants used them as recipients for their testamentary bequests. They made tepid gestures to their new homes through bequests to religious institutions, but this

²⁶ Indeed, these were not problems only of Basque immigrants. See Otte and Lockhart, *Letters and People*, 128–131 for another uncle imploring that his nephew and niece join him in the Indies; and for the above citation, Aramburu, *Vida y fortuna*, 121.

²⁷ In Basque and Navarrese society, many younger sons were not expected to get married, or indeed, expected to remain unmarried if they stayed at home. Traditional inheritance customs followed ungendered entailment, in which a sole child—male or female—was selected to inherit the family estate. Extra sons could live under the protection of their married sibling, though many were encouraged to pursue paths of study or enter the Church in some capacity. Unmarried daughters could likewise remain at home, and some chose to become devout laywomen called *seroras*. Cultural pressures meant that unmarried Basque women were unlikely to immigrate without their families, but many sons immigrated with the full support of their parents and married siblings. Importantly, Basque social custom did not preclude illegitimate children from regularly inheriting family estates, even over their legitimate siblings. Ultimately, families chose “the best” child, rather than the eldest or male. See Pescador, *New World*, esp. 70.

²⁸ Choosing to call up a nephew was a choice: by the end of the sixteenth century, there were plenty of Spanish women in Mexico Martínez could have married. Instead, however, it appears he preferred to marry a Basque or not marry at all, reflecting both personal, cultural, as well as commercial choices. A Basque nephew with his own connections back to Pamplona may have helped solidify his life’s work as a merchant.

largely had to do with the inescapable fact that testators would be interred in churches throughout the far-flung empire. Far more, however, chose to send the bulk of their money back home to the family members, friends, and religious institutions that they had left behind years before. These remittances further reflect the sorrow of having failed to return home themselves, and even a sense of guilt that only their monetary wealth would return to their natal villages. Sending remittances was costly (usually between 13–17% of the total gift, and potentially much more for couriers and attorneys to handle transport and distribution).²⁹ However, these gifts were also deeply meaningful to families and individuals back home: most money, testamentary or otherwise, was sent to relatives, and above all to female family members such as to sisters and nieces for dowries or to widowed mothers for family home repairs.³⁰ These gifts have also left a distinctive artistic and architectural imprint on Basque and Navarrese cities today: the elaborate town halls of even the smallest Basque villages, to the sculpted church porticos and interior frescoes, to the lavish family estates, are lasting reminders that though many immigrants themselves never made it home, some of their wealth did.³¹

Plans Laid and Plans Mislaid

Though there was no one experience by Basque and Navarrese immigrants to the Americas, their testaments, correspondence, and remittances speak to a least a widely felt sense of loss, detachments, and yearning for their native villages. These sentiments were reinforced through collective remembering with other immigrants, who in the face of disappointments, loneliness, or other hardships of transatlantic migration began to remember their homes in rosier terms, filling them not with unemployment, famines, and limited opportunities, but rather with cheerful family members who missed them equally. Testaments present their own methodological hurdles, particularly those which are more formulaic and less emotive. Yet when we peel back the layers of notarial guidance and template, we can still hear the voices of individual immigrants who straddled two worlds. In composing a testament thousands of miles from home, immigrants confirmed their sense of connection to place, and documented a particular kind of memory shaped by hopes, dreams, and plans, many of which had failed to materialize over their decades of absence. Guilt, loneliness, and frustration, as well as modest successes,

²⁹ In one outrageous example, Aramburu calculates that a remittance of 72000 reales sent to the Navarrese village of Barasoain at the beginning of the seventeenth century had dwindled to only 24080 reales upon arrival. The costs of the flotilla, import fees, the king's fifth, notaries, couriers, and others involved in the process ate up most of the original gift. Aramburu, *Vida y fortuna*, 391.

³⁰ Ana Zabalza Seguí, "de la Península al Istmo: El origen de los comerciantes navarros en América central (xvii–xviii)," in *Navarra y el Nuevo Mundo*, ed. María del Mar Larraza Micheltoarena (Pamplona: Editorial Mintzoa, 2016), 36, 38.

³¹ Pilar Andueza Unanua, "Huellas Indianas en el patrimonio artístico de Navarra durante el antiguo régimen," in *Navarra y el Nuevo Mundo*, ed. María del Mar Larraza Micheltoarena (Pamplona: Editorial Mintzoa, 2016), 123–157.

new friendships, and glimmers of belonging and contentment exist comfortably side by side. Ultimately, these testaments were all part of a longer European tradition of the good death: if dreams and promises had been unmet in life, then at least an immigrant could make some amends in death.

A common feature of these transatlantic testaments—as it was a common feature of many contemporary Iberian wills—was to fund pious works. One of the most popular types of pious bequests (for individuals who could afford it) was to establish a chaplaincy, or a *capellanía*. The urge to found chaplaincies was not unique to transatlantic testators, and in fact, in founding chaplaincies immigrants reached back to their roots, undoubtedly joining living relatives back home who were doing the very same thing. Benefactors might specify the construction or decorations of a physical chapel to accompany a *capellanía*, but in most cases *capellanías* simply provided a small stipend to pay for a priest to say a series of masses in a specific church or shrine in perpetuity. Such bequests ranged from the very formulaic to the pedantically explicit. For instance, some testators opted to leave much of the decision-making power in the hands of executors, as did Pascual Fernández, native of Larraga, Navarra, who died in Nombre de Dios, Panamá. Pascual had a number of ideas of what he wanted to have happen after his death, but he chose to leave the specifics up to his heirs and executors. He claimed to have “always had the intention of establishing a *capellanía* [in Larraga];” however, other than dictating that he wanted this *capellanía* to consist of two masses said every week in the parish church of Larraga, he left the details up to his heirs, providing “they complete the said *capellanía* as quickly as possible...or within four months.”³²

Yet more often, testators chose to err on the side of caution, and left their executors with detailed (if not always clear) instructions. For example, when the Gipuzkoan Domingo de Arangúti composed his testament and later died in Mexico, he had planned ahead. He began in the usual way: nine masses were to be said for his soul in the main church of his adopted city, as well as the usual requiem and anniversary masses. The typical Basque grave offerings of wine and wax were to be left at his grave and funerary arrangements were left to his two favorite confraternities. However, following these standard requests, Domingo got creative. Even though his parents had never set foot in Mexico, nor were they known to anyone there, Domingo ordered fifty masses said in memory of their souls in Mexico. Then, reorienting his mind back across the Atlantic, Domingo turned his attention to what he perceived as the immediate spiritual needs of his former community. The masses he had planned in Mexico were few compared to what he arranged for his native Azkoitia. Left in the hands of “whatever closest relation” was still alive, Domingo envisioned the creation of not one, but six different

³² ADP, C/571 N.19, fols. 18r–25v.

capellanías. Operating on a complicated rotational schedule, these capellanías were ordered to attend to a variety of different themes depending on the day of the week. Masses said on Saturdays, for example, honored the Virgin Mary, while most weekdays were specifically devoted to souls under Domingo’s care (many of whom he was only assuming must dead). Confusingly, the mass schedule was supposed to change week to week, and the place of each capellanía was not fixed, but able “move to wherever was most convenient on that day of the week.”³³

The Mexican notary who recorded Domingo’s testament was not from Azkoitia and he could have only understood Domingo’s visions for his pious bequest in the abstract. Yet to Domingo, the religious landscape which he had left behind was alive and still very tangible, even if the people within it had changed. His rotational and movable mass schedule shows how even after years in Mexico, Domingo was still able to visualize the complexities and local pressures of Azkoitia’s spiritual geography. Much in the same way, many immigrants recalled vivid devotions they had had to local shrines, and specifically remitted money and alms to these popular sites of Basque religious life. Testators hailing from the Gipuzkoan port town Getaria, for example, recalled special attachments to a shrine that specialized in protecting seafarers; likewise, Joanes de Biziola of Zumarraga spoke of the “great devotion he maintained [over the years] to the shrine of Nuestra Señora de Zufiaurre,” its image of the *Andra Mari*, and to its seroras.³⁴

However, even as testators might be able to clearly visualize the religious landscapes they had left behind, they could not always be prepared for the social landscapes of present. One of the greatest obstacles to executing a bequest of a capellanía was the logistics arranging for its care and patronage. Capellanías and other pious establishments like hospitals—unlike limited sets of funeral masses or requests for special prayers—had to be entrusted to a patron, carefully managed overtime, and later passed down to the heirs of that patron. Patrons named to capellanías were in charge of selecting and naming chaplains, remitting payments, maintaining account books, and responding to the occasional diocesan inquiry. Since capellanías were ideally created in perpetuity, inheriting a capellanía might in certain circumstances present honors and prestige; however, it could likewise be an unasked-for burden.

Consequently, conflict concerning transatlantic testaments frequently arose between the diocese and individual named as patrons to execute the bequests. Repeatedly, the diocese’s *cura de almas* brought suit against reluctant, incompetent, or otherwise uncooperative heirs. All sorts of obstacles might present themselves, which made executing anything more than simple masses difficult.

³³ ADP, C/597 N.17, fols. 47r–49r. For a related discussion of bequests to Azkoitia and nearby Azpeitia, see Amanda L. Scott, “Sisters and *Seroras*: Basque Women and the Early Jesuits,” *The Journal of Jesuit Studies* 9, no. 4 (2022): 490–510.

³⁴ ADP, C/598 N.1, fols. 21v–24v, esp. 22r, and ADP, C/466 N.12, 3r–4r, esp. 3r.

What testators might calculate would be a sufficient investment for perpetual rites might fall considerably short, once the money actually reached home. Prices for oil and wax, as well as costs of living for chaplains, might rise considerably over the course of an immigrant's absence, creating financial burdens for heirs trying to follow testaments to the letter.

More often, however, heirs protested the amount work involved in establishing a capellanía. In 1643, for example, the cura de almas sued Domingo de Arbestain, accusing him of unaccountable delays and fraud. Domingo's brother Santiago had died some eight years earlier in Puerto de Callao, Peru, naming Domingo his principal heir and patron of a number of pious works in Zarautz, Gipuzkoa. Initially, Domingo began the project with enthusiasm: upon receiving his brother's testament, Domingo quickly named a chaplain to the capellanía. However, eventually his diligence flagged: not only did the 3842 pesos that Santiago had left for the capellanía take years to arrive in Zarautz from Peru, but Domingo had additionally been burdened with paying fees and taxes on the remittance in Seville and hiring a third party to fetch it. By the time the money had finally arrived in Zarautz some eight years after Santiago's death, the project no longer seemed so urgent and Domingo had lost interest.³⁵

The diocesan court records do, of course, tend to exaggerate conflict between heirs, patrons, and the clergy. Countless and now-forgotten testaments were undoubtedly carried out by diligent heirs; in these cases, the diocese had no reason to sue heirs, and no cases were registered, meaning we have no archival documentation. However, when the diocese did bring suit against heirs for not fulfilling a capellanía, the odds were in its favor. Indeed, in other kinds of cases too, in suing in its own court, the diocese most often emerged victorious. This was regardless of the reason or excuse: the heirs of Pedro de Echeberría (who we met at the beginning of this article), for example, were ordered to fulfill his plans to establish a capellanía even though the money had never made it north from Seville. And in Rentería in 1635, the very aged widow Madalena de Idiazábal and her elderly daughter were ordered to complete a capellanía left by Madalena's husband Santiago *nearly seventy years earlier*. Santiago had emigrated to Quito, though had also had business in Potosí. Most of the money that had been left for the capellanía had been tied to the labor of a group of Peruvian Indians, who promptly ran away following Santiago's death. Effectively, only a small portion of the money Santiago remitted made it back to Rentería, and what did arrive had been "spent by [the impoverished] Madalena, who said she needed the money to survive." Nonetheless, the diocese ordered Madalena and her daughter complete the capellanía on the penalty of excommunication.³⁶

³⁵ ADP, C/569 N.38, for the testament, fols. 27v–36v; and for the charges, fols. 1r and 15r.

³⁶ ADP, C/352 N.9, for the testament from Quito, fols. 9–54v; for the dispute, 55r, 60r, 64r, 82v, 86r, 94v, and 97v; for the quote, fol. 65r.

In fact, of the cases concerning the execution of testaments of Basque immigrants between 1550 and 1650, in only one case does the diocese of Pamplona totally absolved heirs of their involvement in completing pious bequests, and this one case was based on a misunderstanding. In 1631 in Getaria, the capellan Don Juan Pérez Basurto sued Doña Ana de Uskanga for years of back-payments for a capellanía founded by her late husband Cristobal de Basurte, who had died in San Luis de Potosí. Before departing to the Americas, Cristobal had apparently told everyone that he would remit money to establish a capellanía, so following news of his death, Don Juan embarked upon the masses. Oddly, no one seemed to have bothered to read Cristobal's testament very carefully, because upon further examination (and after twenty years of masses), it turned out that he had *not* in fact left money for a capellanía. In this case, the mutual expectations of the community and its American immigrant diverged considerably; after twenty years of absence, memories were fuzzy and the details of the bequest far from clear.³⁷

Of course, not all problems rested solely with reluctant heirs or misinformation. The logistics of remitting both liquid capital back to Spain and then up to the Basque Country—let alone specific token items—was complicated and could be both costly and risky. Items and allowances could be insured or sent by courier, but this presented further costs. As Domingo de Arbestain found, the costs of fetching the money his brother had left from Lima via Sevilla significantly ate away at the original bequest, making the completion of his testamentary plans much more difficult than he had foreseen.³⁸ Similarly, when Pascual Fernández died in Nombre de Dios, he could have planned to have his property sold and turned into liquid capital; however, like many other testators, he felt that token gifts were more personal and better expressed his devotion and affiliation to places and people in his native Larraga. Though it was more complicated and costly, Fernández chose to send back to his parish church what historian Juan Javier Pescador terms one of “the silent travelers” of the Atlantic world, or ubiquitous symbolic and costly luxury goods: in this case, a heavy Mexican gold chain and a gold medallion with four Peruvian emeralds.³⁹ Domingo de Izeta who died in Mexico, similarly elected to send silent travelers in his place: he noted in his will that he owned a silver lamp which “because of his great devotion” he wanted installed in his parish church in Getaria.⁴⁰

Fees and taxes aside, many times only part of the allotted funds actually arrived. There seems to have often been a great deal of uncertainty concerning what actually happened to remittances, and heirs and executors frequently tried to excuse themselves of responsibility by claiming that not all of the expected funds had

³⁷ ADP, C/414 N.2.

³⁸ ADP, C/569 N.38.

³⁹ Pescador, *New World*, 37–38; and ADP, C/571 N.19, fols.18r–25v.

⁴⁰ ADP, C/598 N.1., fol. 21v.

arrived (though claiming as much may have been at least in part a strategy employed by harassed heirs). Nonetheless, transatlantic shipments—and consequently pious foundations—were at the mercy of delays, customs embargoes, foul weather, shipwreck, and piracy.

For wills dictated in Lima, Potosí, Mexico City, Habana, or even as far away as Manila, certain parts of pious bequests were necessarily the responsibility of local friends and executors. Even if bequests were modest and straightforward, executors still had the added work of contacting relatives back in Basque parishes and remitting money and instructions. Confusion and delays involving local executors delayed the execution of the Governor General Miguel López de Legazpi's testament and pious bequests.⁴¹ The complications involving sending money halfway around the world from the Philippines to Zumarraga, Gipuzkoa, meant that some sixty years after his death, his relatives were still fighting with the diocese and *cabildo* over what the General had meant by “perpetual masses” if he had only left for them a mere 80 ducats.⁴²

Yet, even if a testator's will was straightforward, the funds well-budgeted, and the executors diligent, this did not necessarily guarantee smooth-sailing. In a particular extreme example from 1640, Miguel de Orenderri found himself involved in a nasty lawsuit with the cura de almas of Pamplona. Miguel had been named heir of his brother Pedro de Fanoaga and patron of a capellanía he had planned for San Sebastián, Gipuzkoa. However, this was not all. Pedro, in turn, had been the executor of his nephew Sebastián de Aritequieta's will, but had unfortunately died before completing all of Sebastián's bequests in Cartagena and in Gipuzkoa. Consequently, Miguel became patron and executor of not only his brother's will, but also this more distant-relative's testament. And to complicate matters yet further, the nephew Sebastián had been a large slave holder in Cartagena, owning ninety-one black enslaved people, all of whom Sebastián ordered to be sold upon his death. These slaves—ranging in age, occupation and background—worked Sebastián's mining claims, as well as on several haciendas.

⁴¹ The historiography on Basques in the Philippines is especially problematic and often apologist. Marciano de Borja, for instance, goes so far as to argue that the Basques contributed to a happy society in the Philippines, and that their long lasting social, financial, and economic contributions to Philippine society were so positive that it was not really a conquest at all. This is a shocking characterization, since in this system, colonizers reaped so much power from the system that they were able to set up a system that established privilege to the current day, making it even harder to trace underlying violence and inequity. Marciano R. de Borja, *Basques in the Philippines* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2005). For a more exhaustive account of the stages of the conquest, see Manuel Merino, ed., *Conquistas de las Islas Filipinas (1565-1615)* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1975); and for correspondence during the early period, especially from religious orders, see Carlos Sanz, *Primitivas Relaciones de España con Asia y Oceanía* (Madrid: Librería General, 1958).

⁴² ADP, C/574 N.26, esp. fols. 1r, 3r, 7r, and 8r.

Each slave's name, age, and abilities were recorded, following which they were sold at auction with the rest of Sebastián's belongings; however, Sebastián had a number of debts and sums owed to him in Cartagena that had to be paid off before the final sums could be remitted to his heirs, be they in the Americas or in the Basque Country. Ultimately, Miguel found him saddled with a set of complicated pious bequests spanning two generations across the Atlantic, a detailed list of the ninety-one slaves who would be funding the pious bequests, a diocesan lawsuit for not completing the capellanía, but still none of the funds which had theoretically been set aside for its foundation.⁴³

These cases constitute a special subset of transatlantic testaments that were litigated: either do to misunderstanding, poor directions, lack of funding, or resistance by heirs.⁴⁴ In other words, something broke down between the moment the immigrant left his homeland, to when he tried to send goods back or plan complicated religious bequests. For unwilling heirs who could barely remember their long-lost relatives, these bequests were likely more of a burden than a blessing. Even for those that had maintained what contact they could with their wayward brothers, uncles, or cousins, the length of absence complicated and obfuscated what might have seemed to be straightforward plans. It is here that the real value of these special testaments emerges: as instances in which heirs could not or would not execute the plans of their long lost relatives, these testaments indicate a discrepancy in emotional attachment between immigrants and their native communities. Upon leaving, emigrants carried with them one memory of home, which among a community of other world-worn Basques, changed ever so slightly time after time. In the context of nostalgia, trauma, and loss, an immigrant's memory of home was enhanced, and his feelings of connection augmented.

Trauma, Emigration, and Memory

Immigrants like Pascual Fernández, Santiago de Arbestain, Domingo de Arangúti, and others mentioned above were individuals, but as historians are increasingly more aware, we need to be careful about mapping on our own ideas

⁴³ ADP, C/786 N.7. For the list of enslaved people, see 25r–26r. I think it is important to include their names for the record and because they would otherwise be unremembered and unknown. Their names and listed *castas* and/or ethnicities are: Andres, Criollo Capitan; Antonio, Gaza, Biafara; Anton, Biadara; Joan, Primero Bran; Domingo, Biagara; Perico, Cocoli, Anton, Bañol; Bernarte, Biafara; Augustuno, Casarga; Anton, Malusastre; Anton, Bran Javalero; Domingo, Biafara Rangam; Joan, Congo; Jacinto, criollo de ocho años; Faustina, de dos años hija de Esperanza; Antonio, de dos años hijo de Mariana; Maria, mandiga, Clara, criollo; Antonico, Bran Page; Francisco, Casanga Capitana; Francisca, Biafara; Maria, Folupa; Catalina, Folupa; Ana, Sape; Cristiana, Mandinga; Ysabel, Bran; Maria, Folupa Parida; Esperanza, Balanta; Bitoria, Angola; Gracieta, Angola; Catalina, Angola; and Susana, Angola.

⁴⁴ A distinct, but equally fascinating collection of documents handling the goods of immigrants who died intestate is held in the Archivo General de Indias in Seville.

about individuality onto the people of the past. Rather than individuals floating disconnected about an ever-expanding early modern empire, Basques were individual members of Diasporic communities. They sought out other far-flung Basques, emigrated to areas where there were already numerous Basques, and built social and emotional ties with these communities, drawing a sense of self from their participation within these groups. Their participation within these groups also speaks to the range of emotions they felt about their prolonged absences. Immigrants were expected to return home rich, and it was a shameful disappointment when they did not; as they described their various debts in their testaments, immigrants seem to have struggled with this sense of social failure.⁴⁵ Failing to make it big in the Indies had additional social consequences within American communities: many critical mechanisms for forging social connections, such as many of the elite *confradías*, were exclusive to important functionaries in the Indies, or in other words, those who were rich.⁴⁶ Under these additional social pressures, Basque immigrants further turned into themselves, seeking out other countrymen, and particularly those who spoke Basque. Reminiscing in Basque was an important way to maintain and reinforce memories of home, though immigrants still worried that it might not be enough: for instance, writing somewhat later in 1803 from Mexico, Juan Martín Lehetechipía of Sara (in the French Basque Country) worried to his sister that “I don’t know if you will even fully understand me in this letter, because I have almost forgotten Euskera (Basque).”⁴⁷ This fear is further striking given that Juan Martín lived in a community of Basques in the mining capital of Zacatecas, which indeed had been founded and heavily settled by Basques for two and a half centuries at this point. He likely spoke Basque daily, but the geographic separation with his homeland fed a fear of extensive cultural loss.

Some immigrants sought to remedy the perceived effects of absence on language—and by extension, cultural identity—more directly. Writing from Veracruz in 1652 to his sister Doña Barbara who lived in Puente de la Reina, Navarre, the immigrant Martín the Artadia expressed his anxieties about separation and forgetting with touching urgency as well as striking dissonance: in his jumbled memorandum to his sister, Martín began by stating how much he missed his nieces and sister, and then rapidly moved onto news about the flotilla. He included business news from Veracruz, as well as details about money that had been remitted, and instructions on what to do with “a bag inside which is a silver chain

⁴⁵ Alberto Angulo Morales and Álvaro Aragón Ruano, “Hombre rico, hombre pobre: Reflexiones sobre los retornos migratorios a finales del Antiguo Régimen en el Norte peninsular,” in Óscar Álvarez Gila and Juan Bosco Amores Carredano, eds., *Del espacio Cantábrico al mundo americano: Perspectivas sobre migración, y retorno* (Bilbao: Universidad del País Vasco, 2015), Angulo and Aragón, “Hombre rico, hombre pobre,” 116–117.

⁴⁶ Angulo and Aragón, “Hombre rico, hombre pobre,” 115.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 116–117.

and six rosaries and some cloth.” This “little gift” was being sent in care of Martín’s son Miguel de Artadia, who had presumably been born in the Indies and now worked as a merchant with his father.⁴⁸

However, despite Martín’s close affective ties with his sister, and his own memory of his homeland, he worried that his son was missing something important that could only be truly learned back in Navarre. With the gifts in hand, Martín requested that his sister Doña Barbara welcome her nephew with open arms, and specifically guide him in “learning the customs [of Navarre] and learning to speaking *basquence*.”⁴⁹ Following these lessons, and his acquaintance with the relatives he had never met, Miguel would return back to Veracruz to continue working with his father. His own Basque identity nurtured and strengthened by learning Basque with his aunt and cousins in Navarre, Miguel could return to Mexico, prepared to help reinforce Mexican Basque identity among other immigrants. His new language skills would help him work with his father’s existing business associates, as well as relate to a broader swath of the community, veteran and new arrivals alike. It would also provide him a sense of place that his father could not give him in Mexico.

Speaking with other Basques in Basque helped preserve and reinforce memory in the Americas. Immigrants reminisced about sites, people, customs, and religious practices from their youth in the Basque Country, that after decades of absence only lived on through social recall. However, reinforcing memory among Basque communities in the Americas also further served to solidify memories in ways which diverged markedly from experiences and memories back in the Basque Country. As cognitive psychologists demonstrate, collective social groups—and particularly those from a common geographic area—tend to overclaim historical influence for their own ingroups through a process called “ingroup inflation.” This has special repercussions for groups that practice collective memory retrieval, or reminiscing. The ways in which groups tend to inflate their own memories—or indeed misremember, or exaggerate—is directly tied to retrieval fluency, or the frequency in which memories are recalled as a group.⁵⁰ In the case of the Basque immigrants discussed above, particularly those who sought out other Basques in the Americas, retrieval fluency would have been high: each time they reminisced collectively, memories would have been retrieved, modified, reinforced through conversation, and then repackaged and stored in a slightly modified way.

Of course, applying modern psychology to people of the past is methodologically problematic. To what extent can we assume that people of the

⁴⁸ Thank you to Peio Monteano Sorbet for alerting me to this source. Archivo General de Navarra (AGN), Tribunales Reales, 256198, fol. 9r.

⁴⁹ AGN, 256198, fol. 9v.

⁵⁰ Jeremy K. Yamashiro and Henry L. Roediger III, “Biased collective memories and historical overclaiming: An availability heuristic account,” in *Memory & Cognition* 49 (2021): 311–322.

past think like us, let alone practice memory retrieval in any similar way that warrants comparison? As Kate Chedzoy, Elspeth Graham, Katharine Hodgkin, and Romana Wray observe, researching the history of memory is necessarily interdisciplinary, and any study of memory must rely upon a diverse range of methods and objects to begin to even approach what the experience and culture of memory is in the past, as well as the present. For historians, they argue, “memory has offered a means of thinking about the complex processes of change and resistance” that shaped the early modern period. Critically, people of the past seem to have understood memory practices (whether these be public performances, collective commemorations, *memento mori*, to name just a few), as ways to “reconceptualize the relationship between past and present.” Even if people of the past may have practiced memory retrieval in ways different from our own, “memory cultures were complex, self-conscious and highly mediated, rather than organic and unreflective.”⁵¹ That is to say, all sources indicate that people of the past knew what they were doing when they thought about or practiced memory retrieval or reinforcement. Faced with the prospect of “erasure from life, agency, and visibility,” they sought to be remembered, enjoining witnesses in this process. They were consciously crafting and recrafting memories, much as we (of the present) do.⁵²

“Erasure from life” was necessarily on the mind of any early modern testator, and the act of composing a testament was in of itself an act of collective memory making and documentation. Writing a testament was a collaborative process, both insofar as numerous people from witnesses, to notaries, to priests, to the actual testator themselves were involved, but also insofar as testaments included and documented kin, friends, and debtors that circled and formed the testator’s community. Ingroup overclaiming and collective bias came to a halt at the moment of crafting a testament, and in the case of the Basque immigrants, this was also the moment in which we can most clearly see how memories forked and diverged during their decades of absence.

As historians of memory assert, early modern cultural practices of memory formation—like writing testaments—were enhanced by episodes of trauma and nostalgia.⁵³ These fracturing emotional experiences altered the “linear nature of time and memory,” effectively helping to place more weight on certain memories and helping bury other parts.⁵⁴ Nostalgia implies a loss of place, as well as a loss

⁵¹ Kate Chedzoy et. al., “Researching memory in early modern studies,” in *Memory Studies* 11, no.1 (2017): 6, 7.

⁵² Of course, one of the biggest differences is the degree to which past people attributed divine providence to events and causes, which has repercussions in the importance attributed to certain aspects of shared memories. Chedzoy, “Researching memory,” 8, 12.

⁵³ Erika Kuijpers, Judith Pollmann, Johannes Müller, and Jasper van der Steen, eds., *Memory Before Modernity: Practices of Modernity in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

⁵⁴ Chedzoy, “Researching memory,” 11.

of time or missed experiences. In other words, for Basque immigrants who could only imagine the events that they had missed back in their native villages and the milestones for their siblings, younger relatives, or childhood friends, nostalgia for a lost place and a missed lifetime led to over-emphasizing the importance of these events, creating almost a closer sense of friendship and familiarity than otherwise might have existed. Basque immigrants documented these feelings of attachment and intense loss in their testaments, which were necessarily one-sided.

In immigrating, Basque merchants, functionaries, explorers, and servants carried with them one last memory of time and place from home. These were occasionally supplemented by correspondence with family members back home, but letters could take a year or more to arrive, if they did at all.⁵⁵ Moreover, sometimes family members were anxious to receive letters or remittances, and delays (or the inability to send money) could cause resentments and bad blood.⁵⁶ All of these worked to create a sense that home was lost, and that an immigrant's past life before migrating was irretrievable. These sentiments come across vividly in Basque testaments from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, reflecting a modern clinical condition called the "Ulysses Syndrome." Coined by Basque psychologist Joseba Atxotegi, the Ulysses Syndrome draws its name from the famous travels of Homer's Odysseus as he struggles to return home following years away, but ultimately finds that the home he left is locked in the past.⁵⁷ As it pertains to immigrants and modern political exiles, the syndrome is characterized by a disparate and sometimes subtle range of symptoms stemming from a combination of loneliness, failure, and extreme hardships, and enhanced by multiple stressors. Though it manifests with both physical and psychological symptoms, it is further characterized by specific kinds of grief due to: loss of friends and family, language

⁵⁵ Lost mail was a constant problem, and we can assume that at least some of the immigrants' fervent pleas that their relatives write to them have to do with letters getting lost in transit. To this end, many of the letters edited in the classic volume by James Lockhart and Enrique Otte are preserved because they were lost in transit, ending up in Seville. Otte and Lockhart, *Letters and People*, ix–xi. For a somewhat eclectic study of how correspondence between early modern immigrants and their family members could be presented as legal evidence in a range of domestic litigation, see Jesús María Usunáriz, "Cartas de amor y cartas de emigrantes como prueba judicial en España (siglos XVI-XVIII)," *Hispanic Research Journal* 16, no. 4 (2015): 296–310.

⁵⁶ Angulo and Aragón, "Hombre rico, hombre pobre," 116–117.

⁵⁷ Joseba Atxotegi, *The Ulysses Syndrome: The Immigration Syndrome with Chronic and Multiple Stress* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2014), and Joseba Atxotegi, ed. *Ulysses Syndrome: The Psychology of Basque Migrations* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2021). Atxotegi is not the only one to observe parallels between the Basque immigrant experience and the Odyssey: Juan Javier Pescador likewise refers to the women left behind as Basque Penelopes. Pescador, *New World*, 47–80.

barriers, missing ones' homeland, social status, status in peer group (including racism and xenophobia), and physical risk or danger.⁵⁸

Though Atxotegi's primary psychological research focused on the traumas and isolation experienced by Basque shepherds in the modern Western United States, the clinical symptoms of the syndrome have been widely examined in the context of many other kinds of immigrants, both Basque and non-Basque, in the modern world and earlier. In the case of the early modern Basque immigrants discussed above, testamentary bequests can be seen as emotional attempts to bridge difference, right perceived wrongs, address resentments, and make up for lost time. Many of these anxieties may have existed only in the minds of the immigrants, and without testaments or corollary documentation from the people at home that received their bequests, it is hard to tell if these sorrows were reciprocated.

Nonetheless, the confusion, lethargy, or resistance by some heirs to fulfill the wishes of their long-lost relatives is an important statement in itself. In the cases of immigrants like Domingo de Arangúti, who enthusiastically left the complex rotating mass schedule in the hands of whatever relative might still be alive, or Pedro de Echeberría's assumption that he had nieces though he had never met them, their memories of home were constructed. Imagined (and perhaps, hoped-for) relatives populated these testaments. Bequests scampered about local geographies, stopping off at all the shrines the immigrant could remember, regardless of their current state or popularity. Joanes de Biziola, insisted that despite years of absence he had maintained a devotion to Nuestra Señora of Zufiaurre, despite this iteration of Mary being strikingly local and probably unknown to most people outside of Gipuzkoa. Perhaps Joanes had found a community of other immigrants from Zumarraga, who also remembered this shrine, and together they reminisced and augmented their personal attachment to this local Marian icon. As they collectively retrieved this particular memory, it gained more importance each time, while they also bonded over a distant, but collective experience.

Conclusion

Importantly, it is not that immigrants misremembered their homelands *per se*, but rather that the trauma, isolation, disappointment, and sorrows of exile through immigration heightened a sense of attachment that may have not been reciprocated or felt in the same way by friends and family members back home. Moreover, Basque immigrants provide an especially manageable lens through which to examine the entombment of memory via immigration. Their distinct language created a community apart inside of early modern Iberia, the sense of which was

⁵⁸ Joseba Atxotegi, "Basques that Come and Go, Basque from Oregon, Basques from Gabon: The Ulysses Syndrome in the Basque Migrations of Yesterday and Today," in *The Ulysses Syndrome: The Psychology of Basque Migrations*, ed. Joseba Atxotegi (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2021), 20–21.

heightened by distinctive domestic, testamentary, and inheritance practices. A long history of looking outwards, through maritime activities and other foundational roles in the development of the infrastructure of early modern empire, meant that in the first century of American immigration they had long established practices of layering travel with nostalgia and longing for home. In the Americas, the Basque language and connection to the Basque Country and Navarre served as critical mechanisms for creating new communities in a new place.

Yet just as importantly, the formation of immigrant Basque communities in the Americas also created pathways for a forking and misremembering of the very places immigrants sought to remember and keep alive. As immigrants composed testaments, they set down new memories that had been altered through retrieval and through recollection with other immigrants. Memories are elastic, and subject to constant change, and the memories they recorded in their wills via the establishment of *capellanías* and bequests reflected these changes. Neither the current lived interactions of their relatives with religious personnel and spiritual landscapes, nor the memories of the immigrants were exact duplicates of the world of the past. Yet the conflict that these testaments occasioned reveals the divide that separated their two paths of memory.

Importantly, the ways in which Basque and Navarrese immigrants remembered and misremembered their villages and families is not unique to their experiences. Indeed, there is likely a similar forking of memory for many early modern communities, and similar shades of trauma and longing. Yet the closeness of Basque immigrant communities, and the ways in which they actively sought out each other in the new world for economic and well as social support makes them a particularly useful lens for considering the broader effects of immigration on early modern testamentary culture. Like Ulysses, who found that time—more than geographic space—prevented him from returning to the memory of the place that he had left, Basque immigrants to the New World also found home within their minds and their collaborations with other transplants. They clung to the idea of home as they had left it and attempted to entomb it within their testaments. When these bequests tested the patience or limits of comprehension of their distant heirs, these competing ideas and realities of home finally converged.