

# **Julio Urkixo, a mirror of the variety that exists in the world of the Basque Language**

**Lizundia Askondo, Jose Luis**

Eusko Ikaskuntza. M<sup>a</sup> Díaz de Haro, 11. 48013 Bilbo

BIBLID [ISBN: 978-84-8419-150-6 (2007); 103-110]

---

*This article shows the diversity of Julio de Urquijo's Basque cultural activity: 1. Before the creation of the RIEV; 2. Before the setting up of Eusko Ikaskuntza and Euskaltzaindia; 3. In the period between the wars. 4. Up to his death. Diversity from two points of view: 1. with respect to themes such as linguistics, paremiology, onomastics, folklore, the origin of the Basque language, archaeology, heraldry, etymology, music, literature, bibliography, commerce, etc. 2. with respect to ideological diversity, since he had excellent relations with many politicians and intellectuals with different opinions although he was a traditionalist.*

*Key Words: Basque diversity.*

I am going to speak about Julio de Urquijo and I shall be using the better-known Spanish form of his name, even though he used the form “Julio Urkixokoa” whenever he wrote in Basque. The year following the founding of the *Euskaltzaindia* [Royal Academy of the Basque Language], the second secretary of the Academy –the first, Koldo Eleizalde from Bergara, having passed away a year and a half following his appointment– Mr Ramon Intzagarai used to put “*de Urquijo*” in fact in the minutes of the assembly meetings. Incidentally, when is this city going to name a street after this very first full member of the academy and the only one who was an inhabitant of Donostia-San Sebastian? After Mr. Intzagarai, the person who was the secretary, the second academic position in the *Euskaltzaindia*, from 1920 until 1941 –although for practical purposes until 1936–. Forgive me for referring in passing to this brilliant man who hailed from Donostia-San Sebastian, but the reason is that right now I am in the capital of Gipuzkoa.

If anything, Julio de Urquijo was an expert in the Basque language, a “*vascólogo*.” He was from Deusto, not Bilbao, because it was not until the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera that this neighbourhood of Deusto in the district of Uribe was annexed by the capital of Bizkaia. Urquijo was a skilful, untiring expert in the area of Basque language activity. He engaged in Basque language activities in the noblest and broadest sense of the word. That is what I wish to emphasise here, today, and highlight at the same time his multifariousness.

Here in Donostia-San Sebastian in fact, because this was his second home. In the first issue of the journal *Euskera* [published by the *Euskaltzaindia*] of 1919, his address figures as follows: “Julio de Urquijo. Zuzenbidea [Address]: Centenario 1, San Sebastián, edo [or]: Urkijo-Baita, St.-Jean-de-Luz, Basses-Pyrénées.” If I am not mistaken, he lived at that address in Amara up until his death in 1950, so he was Deusto-born but an inhabitant of Donostia-San Sebastian. Moreover, on February 8<sup>th</sup>, 1942, the Provincial Government of Gipuzkoa nominated him “Adopted Son of the Province.”

Today I am not aiming to provide a detailed CV of Julio de Urquijo. I could have done so, because it is easy to pick up his rich bibliography, make a list and read it out to you. That way I would have fulfilled the time fixed for this lecture and be done with it! But I know that many of you are as familiar with it as I am. If I have to list his bibliography because the organiser asks me to do so as a supplement to this lecture, I shall leave it for the publication. What I prefer to speak about is the atmosphere surrounding him, his historical background and his generation, in general.

He was an institution man. In the Basque Country at that time, we did not have a politician like Prat de la Riba in power in our four Provincial Governments. Basque language loyalist power relationships did not help, either. Nevertheless, in 1906 in the capacity of Chairman of the Provincial Government of Bizkaia, Julio’s brother Adolfo Gabriel wrote to the chairmen of the other three a year before the *RIEV* was founded urging the setting up of a Basque Academy, “Laurak Bat” [The Four United] as an institution for the first time. The most significant extracts of the proposal are as follows:

El que suscribe somete a la ilustrada consideración de las Diputaciones vasco-navarras las siguientes bases: 1ª Se crea una Academia de la Lengua vascongada, compuesta de doce individuos de número y de otros académicos que tendrán carácter de honorarios... 2ª Será condición precisa que entre los miembros de número haya cultivadores de todos los dialectos literarios de la lengua euskara. (...) 4ª Las Diputaciones de Navarra, Guipúzcoa, Álava y Vizcaya contribuirán al sostenimiento de la Academia... 5ª El nombramiento de los doce individuos de número de que ha de constar, por ahora, la Academia habrá de encomendarse a las mismas Diputaciones hasta la constitución de aquel cuerpo. Una vez que se constituya la misma Academia irá cubriendo libremente las vacantes que ocurran por fallecimiento de alguno de sus miembros, etc, etc.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, that plan to set up a joint organisation was not to be, because the Provincial Government of Araba refused, while Gipuzkoa and Navarre agreed. If there had been any family correspondence, one would be bound to come across the influence and advice of Julio, the chairman's brother. I am saying this because during that famous Oñati Congress twelve years later when the decision was taken to set up the Euskaltzaindia, and when it was instituted the following year at the Palace of the Provincial Government, it was in accordance with the numbers and certain other conditions anticipated by Urquijo, the Chairman of the Provincial Government (Julio's brother). Azkue would not have been far away, because he was a very close friend of the Urquijos. Could this failed attempt to set up the academy have prompted Julio to support the starting of the *RIEV* [*International Journal of Basque Studies*] on his own? This might be something worth investigating.

The *RIEV* itself was in fact an institution to a certain extent, and not just any institution. I am not the one to conduct research into this directly, because there are others who are better trained and prepared than me to undertake such a task. Yet during that famous Oñati Congress of 1918, Julio was the creator and leader of two important organisations: Eusko Ikaskuntza [Basque Studies Society] and the Euskaltzaindia. He held a prominent position in both of them, in the first as Deputy Chairman until 1930, and in the second as Head of Research and Chief Librarian. In that dreadful wilderness following the Spanish Civil War, Julio de Urquijo was present when a number of right-wing figures set up the Real Sociedad Bascongada de los Amigos del País [Royal Basque Society of Friends of the Country]. And in 1943 Julio de Urquijo was appointed the Association's Chairman. But with his advancing years he could not be responsible for it for a long time. He collaborated with the Real Academia de la Historia [Royal Academy of History] as a member; he

---

1. The undersigned hereby submits to the learned consideration of the Basque-Navarrese Provincial Governments the following: (1) The setting up of an Academy of the Basque language, which will comprise twelve full members and other academics who will be honorary members... (2) A requirement will be that among the full members there should be cultivators of all the literary dialects of the Basque language. (...) (4) The Provincial Governments of Navarre, Guipuzcoa, Alava and Vizcaya will contribute towards the funding of the Academy... (5) The Provincial Governments themselves will undertake to appoint the twelve full members the Academy requires for the time being until the body is finally constituted. Once it has been constituted, the Academy itself will fill the vacancies that arise as a result of the death of any of its members, etc, etc.

was also a full member, together with Azkue, of the Real Academia Española [Royal Academy of the Spanish Language], because the Royal Decree of 28<sup>th</sup> November, 1926, legally admitted eight representatives of the three languages apart from Spanish. He was also a member of the Linguistics Association of Paris and a member of the Academy of Bordeaux in the French Republic. As far as Gipuzkoa was concerned, he was a member of the San Telmo Museum and a committee member of the Monuments of the Province. Furthermore, we can say that not long after his death his institutional soul remained, since on 13<sup>th</sup> December, 1952, the Provincial Government of Gipuzkoa proposed the setting up of the “Seminario de Filología Vasca Julio de Urquijo” [Seminar of Basque Philology Julio de Urquijo] and in the following year on 29<sup>th</sup> January created this institutional department that exists to this day, as well as the Anuario [Yearbook], known by the acronym *ASJU*, which bore so much fruit.

I would like to say something about the atmosphere, the historical background and his generation. I plan to divide this part as follows: 1. up to 1907, in other words, starting with his first pieces of work and before the *RIEV* was set up; 2. the period from 1907 to 1919, in other words, from the end of the First World War up until Eusko Ikaskuntza and the Euskaltzaindia got going; 3. 1919-1936, the period up to the start of the Spanish Civil War; 4. 1939-1950, which spans the post-war period and up until his death. I shall now attempt to deal with these four periods briefly.

The first period: around the time of the abolition of the ancient Basque laws. However, by taking advantage of the “Special Economic Agreement”<sup>2</sup>, the Bilbao bourgeoisie was getting rich on mining and the blast furnaces and harbour of Bizkaia. Cánovas del Castillo, the then President of the Spanish Government, in fact played a “brilliant”, dirty trick whereby political self-government was removed, the Basque provincial councils ended up in the hands of the powerful, “parliamentary control” of the popular representatives was abolished, and with Navarre having being without a parliament since 1841 and the General Assemblies in the Western Basque Country [Alava, Bizkaia, Gipuzkoa] having been forced to disappear. That is the background against which Julio de Urquijo has to be set with his distinctive traditionalist ideology, because most of the Bilbao bourgeoisie were dynastic monarchists and practically the only Basque nationalist was Ramón de la Sota y Llano. While the latter was a pro-Basque historical rights, liberal of “euskalerría” [the Basque Country], Sabino Arana called him a “Phoenician”, but later on, a Basque nationalist convert, luckily, but a pragmatic Basque nationalist nevertheless, which is understandable, because he was a bourgeois capitalist. Apart from Jurgi Kintana and a few others, only a handful of our Basque historians have researched this setting; otherwise one would have a better understanding of the relationship between the Carlists and the Basque Nationalist Party members of the “Comunión” faction; Resurrección M<sup>a</sup> Azkue was between the two and always

---

2. Special Economic Agreement or *Kontzertu Ekonomikoa*: a system set up in 1876 after the abolition of the Ancient Basque Laws to administer the taxes payable by the four historical Basque territories (Araba, Bizkaia, Gipuzkoa and Navarre) to the Spanish State.

enjoyed good relations with both sectors while seeking patronage for his journals, books, grammars, dictionaries, etc. He who subsequently became the first chairman of the Euskaltzaindia was skilful in contacts and always generous towards Basque language loyalists: whether they were Carlists, Basque nationalists or monarchists. There were already plenty of Socialists in the Bilbao area but they did not appear to be wealthy. Resurrección was Urquijo's chaplain at their "La Cava" palace in Deusto, very close to the university. The loss of the ancient laws sparked off a reaction, and consequently led to a period of renaissance of which Julio was the son. Having a clearer picture of the network of relationships among the Basque language loyalists at the time who adopted different but not so different ideologies would help to set Julio against his background better.

The early works of Julio de Urquijo have to be set within that early period too. Firstly, his admiration for invented universal languages. In fact, dating back to that time was the little book entitled *Konils Volapükik pelovepolöl(s) fa Volapükels difik e Pekonletöl(s)*, published in 1889, and which appeared to be the first piece of work he did as a student at the age of eighteen. He did not remain on that road for long, because in 1905 he had two articles published in the newspaper *La Gaceta del Norte*, which belonged to his family. The first on November 8<sup>th</sup>, "El Esperanto es una utopía"<sup>3</sup> and on 26<sup>th</sup> of the same month "Ni volapük, ni esperanto. Desengaño de un volpükista bilbaíno."<sup>4</sup> I think this disillusion served to turn Julio into a Basque language expert, because he became totally immersed in the subject. At that time he began to get into contact with a number of foreign linguists or Basque language experts, like Julien Vinson in 1905 and Hugo Schuchardt in 1906. Some of his works dating back to those years show that he had begun to write on the Basque language or Basque matters in journals. Examples are as follows: "El Conde de Peñaforida y las Fiestas Euskaras de Vergara", in the publication entitled *Euskal-Erria*, in 1905; "Un catecismo vascongado de 1759 (de Francisco Antonio de Aguirre)", in the *Revue de Linguistique*, in the same year and in the following one; one in English entitled "An early Latin-English-Basque dictionary", in *Notes and Queries*, in the same year, in 1905; "Un manuscrito vasco-latino (de J. de Etcheberry) que se creía perdido", published in *El Correo de Guipúzcoa*, in 1905; "Notas bibliográficas acerca de la primera edición del libro del Capitán Ivan de Perocheguy", in Donibane Lohizune [St. Jean de Luz], in 1905, while he was living there; "Los precursores de Azkue. Manuscritos de Pouvreau y Pierre d'Urte" and "*De re litteraria*. Bibliografía vascongada (sobre Vinson 'Les études basques de 1901 à 1906')"; once again on bibliography the piece of writing "Notas de bibliografía vasca. El catecismo de Arzadun", in the *Revue de linguistique*, in 1906. I am saying all this to show that even before 1907, in other words, before the RIEV had been founded, what a broad range of subjects he had begun to develop, thus highlighting his multifariousness.

---

3. "Esperanto is Utopia".

4. "Neither Volapük nor Esperanto. Disillusion of a Volapük supporter from Bilbao".

During the second period he was mostly immersed in the *RIEV* and was living in Lapurdi [Labourd] up until the end of the First World War. He got the journal going, founded Eusko Ikaskuntza and the Euskaltzaindia –he was one of the founders of each–. When the war was over, he moved from Donibane Lohizune [St. Jean de Luz] to Donostia-San Sebastian, to the Centenario square, in fact. Here we will not be dealing with his colossal work and editorship in connection with the *RIEV*, because that has been covered by other speakers. It would be interesting if someone were to do a doctoral thesis on Julio de Urquijo, just as Jurgi Kintana-Goiriena did on Azkue, because then we would have a clearer idea, among other things, what work and steps he carried out during the second period from 1907 to 1919 in preparation for that famous Congress of Oñati, for founding Eusko Ikaskuntza, for getting the Euskaltzaindia going, etc. I am sure that he was Azkue's pragmatic, intellectual partner. So, in addition to the *RIEV*, and separate from my reflection today, these three accomplishments might require one or more lectures or a more developed three-person, roundtable discussion on the Congress, Eusko Ikaskuntza, the Academy, the atmosphere, the steps, the relations, letters etc. Interesting points would be bound to emerge.

The period between 1919 and 1937 would be the third period, as we said previously, the one between the two wars, in fact. As I said, the speakers before me have spoken about the *RIEV* and about Julio de Urquijo. The work done by Urquijo in Eusko Ikaskuntza and the Euskaltzaindia turned out to be crucial. I have not examined the minutes and documents of Eusko Ikaskuntza, but I have examined those of the Euskaltzaindia. They show that Urquijo's presence during those years was not as brilliant and fruitful as those of Azkue, but I do say that although they were discreet and modest, they were effective. To support this I quote what Koldo Mitxelena said in the Bizkaiko Biblioteka on 12<sup>th</sup> May, 1972, because I was a member of the audience and assisted in the organisation:

En el fondo, acaso haya sido Urquijo uno de los más radicalmente críticos, a pesar de su posición política más bien conservadora y de tantas otras cosas. No debemos olvidar, en efecto, que mucho de lo que nos parece tímido en su obra no es más que una distorsión marcada por la distancia: nos separan de él demasiados años y demasiadas mutaciones. (...) Porque la modestia, en el mejor sentido de la palabra, fue una de las cualidades más manifiestas de don Julio. De ello dan fe incontables testimonios, desde el excepcional del doctor Areilza... Era, en una palabra, una modestia crítica: la de quien empieza por juzgarse fríamente a sí mismo, antes de juzgar a los demás.<sup>5</sup>

---

5. Basically, Urquijo may have been one of the most radically critical, despite his rather conservative position and many other things. We must not forget in fact that much of what appears timid in his work is no more than a distortion created by distance: too many years and too many mutations separate us from him. (...) Modesty, in the best sense of the word, was in fact one of Urquijo's most outstanding qualities. There are numerous testimonies that vouch for this, starting with the exceptional one of Dr. Areilza... He was, in a word, a critical modesty: the attribute of the person who starts by coldly judging himself before judging others.

Along with Azkue from Lekeitio, Eleizalde from Bergara and Campion from Iruñea-Pamplona, he was one of the four founders of the Academy in that first Congress of Eusko Ikaskuntza in Oñati with the support of the four Provincial Governments. A little later on 21<sup>st</sup> September, 1919, during the assembly of the Provincial Government of Gipuzkoa, representatives of the Basque journals at the time –the guarantee could not have been better!– appointed the eight full academy members, from the seven [Basque] provinces, in fact. When I have more time and have had the chance to go through all the minutes and assembly files of that period, I will be able to vouch more specifically for what I am saying now. But so as not to speak too much at length, let me remind you that from the moment when the first positions were chosen, he was the head of the department for Research of the Euskaltzaindia and this internal task did not prevent him having open discussions with his Academy colleagues, for example with Eleizalde on onomastic subjects, in particular in the area of Christian names. We need do no more than take a look at his bibliography. Let me finish this section once again with these words pronounced by Mitxelena during the talk on the occasion of that tribute in Bilbao:

Sería, con todo, dejarse engañar por las apariencias el apresurarse a concluir que aportó poco o nada a la lingüística vasca y, como de paso, a los estudios lingüísticos entre nosotros. Aportó mucho, precisamente porque, con una certera apreciación de la situación, se conformó con un papel de mediador, esencial en aquellos momentos.<sup>6</sup>

The fourth period is the one spanning the post-war period and his death. They were bitter years for any Basque speaker and even more bitter for Basque language loyalists. As Julio advanced in years, profoundly affected by the Spanish Civil War, how traumatised he must have been when “the reds” killed his brother Jose María in Donostia-San Sebastian in an attack against the rebels [Franco’s supporters]. Although he was on the side of the victors, as someone has pointed out just now, he was one of those Carlists that lost the peace. For all these reasons, he was not to enjoy the vitality of the pre-war years, but in 1943 nevertheless played a part in reviving the most historical of our associations that had long disappeared and this was the Real Sociedad Bascongada de los Amigos del País. It was one of the few initiatives of interest of right-wing Basque language loyalists who supported the new regime [of Franco]. And that was not all, Julio was its first chairman, and two years later, in 1945, he was also the first chairman of the Boletín [Gazette] of that association that was to be so important following the war.

He did not write much during this period. That is why I shall list what I have come across. In the *BRSBAP* we have: “Vergara en el último tercio del siglo XVIII según un minero sueco. El primer platino enviado a Suecia”, in 1945; “Caro Baroja, J. Sobre el vocabulario de las inscripciones ibéricas”,

---

6. If we were to rush to conclude that he contributed little or nothing to Basque linguistics and, at the same time, to linguistic studies among us, we would, however, be allowing ourselves to be deceived by appearances. He contributed a lot, precisely because, with a certain appreciation of the situation, he was content to assume the role of mediator, essential at that moment.”

in 1946; “Bausani, A. [an Italian Basque language expert made an honorary member of the Euskaltzaindia]: *El enigma del vascuence...* apostilla de Julio de Urquijo”, in 1947. Not very much at all. The reasons: lack of capacity?, fatigue?, resignation?

To conclude, I should like to highlight his great multifariousness, but from two perspectives. Firstly, from the perspective of the subjects he analysed, researched and published, or the encouragement or support he gave to analysis, research and publishing. His rich bibliography bears witness to this. By putting together books, booklets, articles, reviews, etc., I have been able to count over three hundred pieces of work. He is multifarious from the point of view of the subjects, well supplied out of curiosity: general and comparative linguistics, paremiology, onomastics, ancient songs and stories, origin of the Basque language, folklore, archaeology, heraldry, etymology, music, literature, invented universal languages, trade and commerce of Bilbao, plus some strange, isolated subjects: “Bolchevismo y vascológia” at the Congress in The Hague. “El terrible ruso Jakovlev” published in the newspaper *El Pueblo Vasco* in 1928, and others.

The second aspect of his multifariousness is the ideological diversity of the atmosphere in which he moved. He seems to have managed well within that diversity. He was right-wing, pro-monarchist, a Carlist –most of the monarchical Basque language loyalists in the Southern Basque Country [administered by Spain] were in that world, because there were few dynastic Basque language loyalists, and the “Euskalerrriakos”, in other words, most of the remaining, pro-Charter [of ancient Basque laws] liberals had switched to the Basque nationalist sphere. Later on, he had friends among the pro-Republicans. Justo Garate of the ANV<sup>7</sup> told me one day how he himself had competed in the same constituency of Bergara for a seat in the Parliament of the [2<sup>nd</sup> Spanish] Republic when he was fielded in a “Conjunción republicana-socialista” list; among his opponents were Telesforo Monzon from the EAJ<sup>8</sup>, and Julio de Urquijo from the right wing. However, they were friends, as Justo told me. The same thing can be said with respect to Urquijo and the Basque nationalist Eleizalde, a member of the “Comunión Nacionalista Vasca” and, if I am not mistaken of the EBB.<sup>9</sup> Urquijo and Eleizalde had heated arguments about onomastics, but on the Governing Board of the Euskaltzaindia, Julio de Urquijo was head of the research section and chief librarian; Eleizalde, secretary. Unfortunately, we cannot find any Basque language loyalist colleagues in today’s pro-monarchist right; just as I told another present-day Urkijo once in a meeting, Julio who shared this person’s surname could be a mirror of the multifariousness within Basque language activity. Many rightwing and leftwing intellectuals ought to gaze into that mirror. Basque nationalists, too, because that mirror of diversity is desirable for them, too.

---

7. “Acción Nacionalista Vasca” left-wing Basque nationalist party.

8. Or PNV (Partido Nacionalista Vasco): Basque Nationalist Party.

9. Supreme decision-taking body of the PNV.