

BASQUE FISHERMEN IN ICELAND

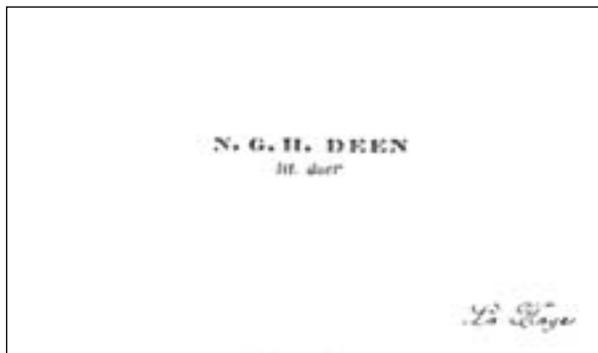
Bilingual vocabularies in the 17th and 18th centuries

Henrike Knörr

*Head of Research, Royal Academy of the Basque Language
Professor of Basque Philology, University of the Basque Country*

1. In 1937 Nicolaas Gerardus Hendricus Deen, a linguist from De Hague, presented his doctoral thesis, entitled *Glossaria duo Vasco-Islandica*, to the University of Leiden. The thesis, under the direction of F. Muller, was written in Latin and was edited in the same language later that same year. It was a relatively small work of just 135 pages in length. The recognition that the book enjoyed was negatively affected by two wars: the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), which was being fought bitterly at the time, and the Second World War, which was soon to erupt. However, Deen's thesis would almost certainly have been more widely acknowledged had the author published it in a modern language.

The subject of Deen's work was two vocabularies taken from manuscripts written in Iceland at the end of the 17th century and beginning of the XVII-Ith, accompanied by a commentary and a translation. The manuscripts had been made known to Deen by Christianus Cornelius Uhlenbeck (1866-1951), a well-known expert in Basque studies and lecturer at the University of Leiden. They had been discovered by Jón Helgason, professor of Icelandic stud-



ies and head of the Bibliotheca Arnamagnaeana at the University of Copenhagen. Using Azkue's *Diccionario vasco-español-francés* (1905), Helgason had added German translations and some comments. With good reason, Helgason believed that Uhlenbeck was the right person to continue with the work, and Uhlenbeck then contacted Deen, whom he considered to be a valuable new member of the team. Deen travelled to the Basque Country in 1927 (see our Appendix II below) and studied the manuscripts alongside another well-known expert in Basque studies, Julio de Urquijo (1871-1950), founder and editor of the *Revista Internacional de Estudios Vascos*. At the end of the prologue, having expressed his thanks to Urquijo, Deen wrote these moving words: 'Let us hope that the Basque Country comes back to life, stronger and more beautiful than before, and let us hope that Spain can soon live in peace!' (*'Utinam renascatur pulchrius ac fortius Vasconia et bona cum pace iamiam*

Glossaria duo Vasco- Islandica

EDITA AB
N. G. H. DEEN



AMSTERDAM - H. J. PARIS

Deen's thesis has been carried out by Gidor Bilbao and published in the first of those books (see bibliography). Bilbao wisely included a copy of the vocabularies in his work.

3. In terms of the origins of the Basque collaborators, we can confirm what was written by Deen (who was doubtlessly well-advised by Uhlenbeck and Urquijo) and Hualde: they were generally from Lapurdi, in the French Basque Country. Deen correctly mentions the port of Donibane Lohizune (Saint-Jean-de-Luz), the most important port in the region at that time ('saeculo 17° portus fuit celeberrimus') which is situated very close to the port of Ziburu (we can say that they are the same one). Traditionally, both ports have been the starting-point of many journeys to America (mainly to Newfoundland), Iceland and other areas far away from the Basque Country. In fact, Martin Oihartzabal, who wrote *Les voyages aventureux du capitaine Martin de Hoyarsabal, habitant de Çubiburu. Contenant les reigles et enseignements necessaires a la bonne et seure navigation*, which was published in 1579 in La Rochelle (although the cover says Bordeaux), was from Ziburu. Almost a century later, in 1677, Pierres Etxeberri, also known as *Dorre*, from Donibane, translated this book into Basque but with additional information, some of it his own first-hand knowledge. The book was published in Bayonne with the title *Itsasoko nabigazionea* (meaning 'Maritime navigation'). The same Etxeberri also produced an important map of Newfoundland. See the article of Michael Barkham (Michael Barkham 2003).

Another Etxeberri, first name Joanes, from Ziburu, was a well-known Basque writer. He was the author of three religious books. One of these, *Manual debozionezkoa* ('Devotional manual'), published in Bordeaux in 1627, was a collection of prayers in verse written for use by sailors during their long voyages. The book included prayers for different situations such as storms, fair weather, setting off from the port, arriving home etc. A sample can be seen in Selma Barkham 1987, 286.

As Hualde states in the prologue to Gidor Bilbao's edition of *Glossaria duo Vasco-Islandica*, the name *Glossaria Gallica* may have been the result of the fact that the sailors were from Donibane and were subjects of the French crown. This does not explain, however, why the second list is entitled *Vocabula Biscaica*. Hualde also mentions that the second vocabulary contains some Spanish translations, such as *boca* ('mouth') and *hermano* ('brother').

Trausti Einarsson (1987) believes that the Basques arrived in Vestfirðir as early as 1604. There are records of a bloody fight between natives and foreigners which took place years later and which resulted in the deaths of 31 people from the Basque Country and France. The well-known poem by Jón Guðmundsson (*The Wise*), published in Icelandic and translated into Spanish by Selma Barkham 1987 tells this sad story, highlighting the outstanding role of the legendary Martín de Villafranca (see Sigursveinsson's work in the same

book). However, as Helgason points out in the prologue to Deen's work, the vocabulary lists reflect a time of peace, not one of war.

As the presence of the Basques in Iceland is not officially recorded until 1604, this means that the Basques inhabited Newfoundland and Labrador before moving to Iceland.

Alba - 35	Alba - 36	Alba el. itzia 37	Alba - 38	Alba - 39	Alba - 40	Alba - 41	Alba - 42	Alba - 43	Alba - 44	Alba - 45	Alba - 46	Alba - 47	Alba - 48	Alba - 49	Alba - 50	Alba - 51	Alba - 52	Alba - 53	Alba - 54	Alba - 55	Alba - 56	Alba - 57	Alba - 58	Alba - 59	Alba - 60	Alba - 61	Alba - 62	Alba - 63	Alba - 64	Alba - 65	Alba - 66	Alba - 67	Alba - 68	Alba - 69	Alba - 70	Alba - 71	Alba - 72	Alba - 73	Alba - 74	Alba - 75	Alba - 76	Alba - 77	Alba - 78	Alba - 79	Alba - 80	Alba - 81	Alba - 82	Alba - 83	Alba - 84	Alba - 85	Alba - 86	Alba - 87	Alba - 88	Alba - 89	Alba - 90	Alba - 91	Alba - 92	Alba - 93	Alba - 94	Alba - 95	Alba - 96	Alba - 97	Alba - 98	Alba - 99	Alba - 100
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4. These vocabularies are clearly of great importance to the history of the Basque language. Their size must be taken into account: 519 words in the first list, 228 in the second, and another 11 words in a short supplement. Many of the Basque words in the lists remain a mystery. For example, *Tuesday* is translated as *asterdia*. Gidor Bilbao expresses some wariness regarding this word, which is not recorded anywhere else, but I believe that it could be a genuine word which fits well into the linguistic pattern formed by the first three days of the week: *asterdia*, with its second part *erdia*, meaning ‘half’, fits in well between *astelehen*, ‘Monday’, with the second part *lehen*, ‘first’, and *asteazken*, ‘Wednesday’, with the second part *azken*, ‘last’ (see Knörr 2000). Other words are more archaic in character, such as *episcuba*, ‘bishop’, which in modern Basque is *apezpiku*, (a cross between *apez*, ‘priest’, and *ipizpiku*, ‘bishop’). It is also worth noting that the consecrated wafer is called *Januna*, < *Jaun ona*, ‘the Good Lord’: in other words, ‘God’.

There are also some interesting phrases in the second vocabulary which provide good examples of a primitive pidgin language. For example, *Presenta for mi berrua usnia eta berria bura* (‘give me hot milk and fresh butter’) with its Icelandic translation *Gefdu mier heita miðlk og nyt smiðr*. In modern Basque the phrase would be *Emaidazu esne beroa eta burra berria*. In this phrase the verb *presenta* appears without an auxiliary. The expression *for mi*, which is of course derived from the English *for me*, is also of note. In addition, it is surprising to see the changes in the normal word order (adjective + noun), which does not follow the same pattern as modern Basque, and is more characteristic of the Germanic languages.

The vocabularies also give, as is the practice in Basque, the definite article with Basque words. If somebody asks how to say, for example, *man*, in Basque, the answer would be *gizona*, that is, *gizon-a*, literally «man-the», with a post-posed article. As well as the pidgin phrases already mentioned, there are also short phrases, such as *estacit*, today spelled *ez dakit*, ‘I do not know’, or *geki-seite*, today *jeiki zaitte*, an imperative meaning ‘get up’. In the second list there are also some impolite expressions, as *fenicha for ju / liggia dig / coire / coire* (where *fenicha* is for *fornica*) or *gianzu caca / jettu skut / ede excrementum / ede excrementum* (the German and Spanish words replaced by the Latin one).

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Appendices

I

[Letter of Christianus Cornelius Uhlenbeck to Julio de Urquijo.
Julio de Urquijo's Archive, Donostia. Catalog number 9.104.]

Nimègue le 29 Mars 1927

Cher Monsieur de Urquijo,

Veuillez me permettre d'introduire chez Vous un jeune savant, M. N.G.H. Deen, doctorand-ès-lettres qui va étudier le dialecte de Getaria. Comme Vous le verrez, c'est un jeune homme plein d'enthousiasme pour les études lin-

guistiques et ethnographiques. Il ne sait pas encore beaucoup de la langue basque, mais il a la méthode pour parvenir à une profonde connaissance de toute langue à l'étude de laquelle il se consacre. [1]

Avec mes hommages trespectueux à Madame de Urquijo

Votre bien cordialement dévoué

C.C. Uhlenbeck

[1] Deen had published in 1929 'Over taalverwantschap, meeniungen en vragen'. *Mededeelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen. Afdeling Letterkunde*. Amsterdam 1926. Separata, Julio de Urquijo's Archive, Donostia. Catalog number 2.336.]

II.

[Letter of Christianus Cornelius Uhlenbeck to Julio de Urquijo.
Julio de Urquijo's Archive, Donostia. Catalog number 9.104.]

Nymegen le 2 Août 1927
Bergendalsale weg 251

Cher Monsieur de Urquijo,

C'était une surprise bien agréable de recevoir Votre aimable lettre hier dans l'après-midi, et je regrette seulement que Vous semble être un peu fatigué, que 'se le hace todo cuesta arriba', comme Vous vous exprimez. Cette fatigue ou cette dépression ne sera que temporaire, sans doute, et je me flatte encore de Vous revoir à la Haye, si la date de Votre discours de réception à l'Académie Espagnole Vous permettra de Vous absenter de l'Espagne en Avril l'année prochain. Qu'on Vous a élu membre de l'Académie de Madrid, n'est qu'un acte de justice qu'on vous devait et je la félicite de Vous compter parmi ses membres. Vous pourrez y défendre les droits de Votre noble langue, si belle et originale à la fois.

Je reçois des lettres de M. Deen qui témoignent de son enthousiasme pour le peuple basque –les simples laboureurs et pêcheurs de Guetaría– et pour toutes les questions d'ethnographie et de linguistique qui s'y rattachent. Il m'a écrit aussi que Vous voulez bien Vous intéresser à ses études. J'espère qu'il deviendra un collaborateur régulier de la RIEB.

Vous êtes bien aimable d'avoir traduit mon compte-rendu de 'Sprf. & Sprkreise' [1] en espagnol, et je ne crois pas qu'il y ait quelque objection à publier Votre traduction dans la RIEB. Alors Vous voudrez bien m'envoyer les épreuves, comme Vous m'avez déjà proposé. J'y ferai les modifications nécessaires, s'il y en aura.

Je n'ai pas encore reçu le tirage-à-part de mon article sur les noms des parties du corps [2]. Je vous en enverrai un exemplaire aussitôt que possible.

Avec nos hommages les plus respectueux à Madame de Urquijo je reste, comme toujours

Votre bien amicalement dévoué

C. C. Uhlenbeck

[1] P.W. Schmidt: *Sprachfamilien und Sprachenkreisen der Erde. Revista Internacional de Estudios Vascos* 18, 1927, 546-547. Spanish translation from English by Julio de Urquijo.

[2] 'De mit *b-* anlautenden Körperteilnamen des Baskischen'. *Festschrift Meinhof*, 1927, V, 351-357.

III.

[Letter of Nicolaas Gerardus Hendricus Deen to Julio de Urquijo. Julio de Urquijo's Archive, Donostia. Catalog number 8.263. We publish the letter as per the original.]

Holanda. Venraij. 17-5-'28.

Muy estimado Señor de Urquijo,

Recibi de Bilbao el diccionario anhelado [1]. Para eso muchas gracias. Como siempre Usted es amabilisimo.

Yo estoy usando mi nuevo diccionario para las glosas vasco-islandesas que ha descubierto en Kopenhagen el Señor Olafsson y que seran enviado a sus señas para la revista.

Este año tengo poco tiempo y encuentro muchos obstaculos. Non obstante acabaré este y otro articulo. El año que viene sara mejor para mis estudios vascophilos.

Mis recuerdos, Señor de Urquijo, desde los paises bajos donde tanto apreciabamos de ver a Usted.

Se sirva Usted de ofrecer mos recuerdos respetuosos a su Señora doña de Urquijo de quien tenia el honor y el gusto inolvidable de hacer el conoicimeinto.

Mientras tanto que de Ud. Afmo. S.S.

N,G.H. Deen.

[1] Undoubtly Azkue's *Diccionario vasco-español-francés*.