

- **Introduction**

This thesis focuses on the role of festival landscapes as a tool for ethnic groups to maintain their ethnic boundary in the United States and as a form of symbolic ethnicity for individuals assimilated in American society. A review of the existing literature documents the relationships between cultural landscapes, ethnic landscapes, and festival landscapes to provide a geographic context. The literature review also defines and discusses the social processes of migration and assimilation affecting the creation of the landscapes for ethnic festivals. This discussion is then applied to explaining the data collected from the Basque festival, Jaialdi '95.

- **Background**

The existing literature commonly characterizes festivals as one-to-three day events which offer a colorful variety of activities such as parades, music, dancing, arts and crafts, games, and special cuisine. More specifically, ethnic festivals are described as dynamically choreographed events in which ethnic groups not only express their culture and ethnicity, but also stimulate ethnic pride in group members. These objectives are accomplished primarily through the transformation of rationalized spaces such as businesses, sidewalks, and streets into a metaphor of ethnicity by incorporating the dramatic intensity of cultural performances and symbols within the landscapes produced for the festivals. The study of cultural landscapes investigates how social processes such as migration and assimilation in American society affect the cultural landscapes of areas. Over the past several decades, the landscapes of ethnic festivals have

become responses to and spatial expressions of the social processes influencing ethnic groups in American society.

Despite more than a century of immigration to the United States, the Basques have not established generally a wide range of ethnic institutions to produce an ethnic landscape within the American cultural landscape. Extensive involvement with sheep herding, and in particular with transhumant sheep husbandry, has influenced greatly the spatial distribution of Basques in the United States. As a result, Basques are located primarily throughout the sheep herding districts of many western states. The combination of the isolation of sheep herding and early social pressures, such as those felt by many other ethnic groups, also has made the Basques reluctant to concentrate in urban areas. Since the Basques typically have not created ethnic landscapes in American society, the landscapes of Basque festivals are unique in that they represent one of the few spatial expressions of Basque ethnicity and some of the few cultural landscapes produced by the Basques in the United States.

The festivals of the Basque cultural festival series, Jaialdi, represent unique events in that they occur once every five years, are international in scope, and highlight diversity in the Basque culture. Jaialdi '95 was the third festival in the series and was held in Boise, Idaho, from July 27 through July 30, 1995. As a celebration of Basque culture, Jaialdi '95 included a variety of festive and formal events to present a colorful assortment of cultural performances and symbols. While the cultural performances demonstrated various aspects of Basque culture, the symbols captured the essence of Basque culture within a discernible form. These cultural performances

and symbols were embedded in the multiple festival landscapes and, thus, produced a spatial expression of Basque ethnicity.

As one of the few spatial expressions of Basque ethnicity in the United States, the festival landscape of Jaialdi '95 was both a tool for maintaining the ethnic boundary of the American Basque community and the Basques of Boise and a form of symbolic ethnicity for many assimilated Basques. Because the festival landscape of Jaialdi '95 incorporated elements of French-Basque, Spanish-Basque, and general Basque cultures, members from all three types of Basque colonies came together for the common purpose of celebrating Basque culture. Also, Jaialdi '95 helped to assert the claim of the Basques of Boise over the Basque block by utilizing the block as a site for the festival landscape. In addition, the cultural performances and symbols embedded in the festival landscape allowed assimilated Basques an opportunity to experience Basque culture without having to abide by the value system of Basques or to spend extra time being Basque, which are primary characteristics of symbolic ethnicity.

- **Methodology**

The major research objectives for this thesis are to investigate how the structures, cultural performances, and symbols of the festival landscape for Jaialdi '95 reflect Basque ethnicity, to describe how the social processes of migration and assimilation in American society influence the production of this festival landscape, and to explain how this festival landscape serves as a tool for the American Basque community and the Basques of Boise to maintain their ethnic boundary and as a form of symbolic ethnicity for many assimilated Basques. This methodology discusses

the selection of the festival landscape of Jaialdi '95 as the study area and describes the data sources and the methods used to collect the data.

Study Area

The festival landscape of Jaialdi '95 provided a rare opportunity to study a spatial expression of Basque ethnicity in the United States. Basques historically have been one of the most exceptional ethnic groups in American society. The extensive involvement of the Basques with sheep herding not only has resulted in the Basques becoming associated with a single occupation, but also has prevented Basques, in general, from spatially expressing an ethnic identity through ethnic landscapes. However, the landscapes of Basque festivals have provided a means via cultural performances and symbols to display Basque ethnicity in a spatial sense. Jaialdi '95, as the third festival in the Jaialdi series, is a special kind of Basque festival celebrating the diversity of Basque culture by organizing and presenting a diverse collection of cultural performances and symbols.

Data Sources

Data to achieve the research objectives for this thesis were derived from a variety of theoretical, statistical, and empirical sources. A review of literature relevant to ethnic festivals, cultural landscapes, ethnicity, and Basques established the theoretical framework to situate this thesis in the study of ethnic landscapes. The census provided information on the population and locations of the Basques in the United States. Field research produced details about the festival landscape of Jaialdi '95 including an inventory of the structures, a catalogue of the cultural

performances and symbols, and a parking lot survey. Interviews with key personnel involved with organizing and presenting Jaialdi '95 contributed specific details about the gathered data.

Methods

The qualitative approach of this thesis utilized a number of methods, including field research, participant observation, and elite interviewing, to collect data. Field research, as Johnson (1975) explains, produces a theoretical understanding of the substantive realities of a phenomenon. The purpose of this research is to ground empirical observations of the phenomenon in the larger context of meanings for the social group that produced it. This thesis also involved a participant observation method during the field research. Participant observation, according to Jorgensen (1989), seeks to uncover, make accessible, and reveal meanings of the phenomenon. In order to accomplish these goals, the researcher becomes directly involved not only to observe the phenomenon firsthand, but also to perform other data collection techniques such as surveys. This method employs an open-ended, flexible approach that required constant re-definition of the research objectives based on the facts gathered during the phenomenon. Following the field research, this thesis applied an elite interviewing method to clarify data collected during the field research and to gather more focused details. Elite interviewing is a research strategy which selects certain individuals who have direct knowledge of the phenomenon for semi-structured, in-depth interviews on specific topics (Denzin, 1978).

A literature review on ethnic festivals, cultural landscapes, and ethnicity established the theoretical framework to explain the relationships between festival landscapes, cultural

performances, symbols, ethnic boundary maintenance, and symbolic ethnicity. During this literature review, a number of questions came to my mind about these relationships. How are the cultural landscapes of places transfigured into metaphors of ethnicity? How do the cultural performances and symbols project images of the ethnic groups? How are festival landscapes a tool for ethnic boundary maintenance and a form of symbolic ethnicity? To answer these questions, I went to an ethnic festival before and after Jaialdi '95 to compare the similarities and differences between the festival landscapes. The theoretical framework from the literature review provided the structure to analyze the data collected through the field research, participant observation, and elite interviewing methods.

Before leaving for Jaialdi '95, I attended the annual Celtic festival held at Oatlands Plantation outside Washington, D.C. to gain experience viewing the landscape of an ethnic festival from a geographical perspective. The questions raised during the literature review provided the basis to expand my awareness of festival landscapes. From my observations, I grounded the words from the literature review in the real context of the sights, sounds, and smells of the festival. In addition, a number of questions were raised about the festival landscape. Who participates in the presentation of cultural performances? What different types of symbols are included? When and why did the festival begin? The experiences from attending this festival aided in refining my objectives for the field research and participant observation at Jaialdi '95.

The primary objectives for the field research and participant observations at Jaialdi '95 were to identify the places and cultural landscapes used for the festival landscape, to record how

the festival landscape was produced, to document the structures of the festival landscape, to categorize the cultural performances and symbols, and to conduct a parking lot survey. While I was viewing the festival landscape from a geographical perspective, I also directly participated in the festival. I attended every event in the official program to record the details about the layout of the festival landscape, the number of structures that comprise the festival landscape, and the types of cultural performances and symbols of the event. Whenever possible, I took photographs of the festival landscape to create a visual record. During an event, I tried to watch all or at least part of the cultural performances, to visit each structure, and to taste the different Basque cuisine. Also, I initiated casual conversations with the other participants at the events to learn more about the cultural performances and symbols. Finally, I contacted key personnel responsible for organizing and presenting Jaialdi '95 for future interviews.

After Jaialdi '95, I went to an Oktoberfest in Ocean City, Maryland, to collect data on another festival using the same objectives and approach as Jaialdi '95. Although I did not intend to include any data gathered during this festival in this thesis, the information provided a way to check that I had data about the major points of Jaialdi '95. While there were a number of differences between the two festival landscapes, I was able to explain satisfactorily each variance.

As a follow-up to the field research and participant observation, I interviewed key personnel responsible for organizing and presenting Jaialdi '95 to answer questions which I still had and to clarify details about the collected data. The selection of these elites was based on the role of that person in Jaialdi '95. The persons I interviewed included the co-chairpersons of the

Jaialdi '95 organizing committee, Dave Eiguren and Gerri Achurra, the manager of the Western Idaho Fairgrounds, Don Bich, guest lecturer Jeronima Echeverria, Ph.D., and the director of the Basque Museum and Cultural Center, Patty Miller.

- **Plan of the Thesis**

Chapter 2 reviews the literature relevant to the study of ethnic festival landscapes and places the research for this thesis within the study of ethnic landscapes. Also, the process of how ethnic festivals in the United States transfigure cultural landscapes into metaphors of ethnicity is explained.

Chapter 3 discusses the history of the Basques as an ethnic group and the American Basque community. This discussion provides a brief background of the Basques' origins, examines historical factors influencing the migration of Basques *en masse* to the United States, describes the general characteristics of the American Basque community, and focuses on the ethnic landscape of the Basque colony in Boise, Idaho.

Chapter 4 investigates the history of Basque festivals in the United States and, in particular, the international Jaialdi '95 festival. This investigation examines the general characteristics of Basque festivals and focuses on the diverse collection of cultural performances and symbols found in the multitude of festival landscapes of Jaialdi '95.

Chapter 5 analyzes the festival landscapes of Jaialdi '95 as both a tool for ethnic boundary maintenance and a form of symbolic ethnicity. This analysis explains how Jaialdi '95 has contributed to the ethnic boundary maintenance of the American Basque community as an ethnic

institution, describes how Jaialdi '95 has assisted the Basque colony of Boise in reinforcing territorial claim over one of the few Basque landscapes in the United States, and illustrates how Jaialdi '95 has contributed to the symbolic ethnicity of assimilated Basques.

Chapter 6 summarizes the major points of the thesis, i.e., how ethnic landscapes are affected by social processes in American society, the influences on the development of Basque ethnic landscapes in the United States, and the conclusions from the analysis of Jaialdi '95 landscapes.