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BOOK REVIEWS / COMPTES RENDUS

Paulí Dávila, Luis María Naya, and Hilario Murua
Bajo el Signo de la Educación;
100 Años de La Salle en Gipuzkoa

2 vols. Spain, Bilbao: Hermanos de las Escuelas Cristianas, 2009.
Vol. 1, 394 pp and vol. 2, 804 pp.

(www.sc.ehu.es/sfwsedhe/LaSalle/TOMOI.pdf;
www.sc.ehu.es/sfwsedhe/LaSalle/TOMOII.pdf;
www.sc.ehu.es/sfwsedhe/LaSalle/anexo.pdf)

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This is an extraordinary book that leads readers through the one-hundred-year journey of the La Salle Institute and its work in Gipuzkoa, a province of the Basque Country. The authors place their historical analysis within the context of the complex educational and cultural interactions that took place in the *Euskal Herria* (the cultural European region situated on both sides of the Pyrenees that includes both Spanish and French lands). The La Salle Brothers who went to Gipuzkoa at the beginning of the twentieth century shared with the people there common ways of making sense of the world and the same language (Euskera), although they were versed in French and Spanish. The La Salle Brothers were unique in that they devoted themselves to education in an exclusive way. Furthermore, the founder, Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle (1651–1719), strongly promoted popular schools, the right to education, teaching in the vernacular, and the creation of institutions to prepare teachers. These were important components of their mission but also of the transition toward modern education.

Volume one is structured chronologically, starting in 1904, when the presence of the Brothers and their schools in the province of Gipuzkoa increased as a consequence of the expulsion of teaching orders from France, and ending in 1937, when Franco and his troops occupied the Province. Volume two covers the period from 1937 to 2006. It examines Franco's regime, the transition to democracy, the vicissitudes of the newly-established democracy in a globalized world, along with educational reforms and the changing role of the Brothers in their schools.

Methodologically, the authors decided to use as a point of reference the internal history of the La Salle educational centres (mostly elementary) and to analyze from there the political contexts, the ideological struggles, the political and social role of the Church, the regional and internal mechanisms of adoption of national educational reforms, the always evolving school culture, and changes in the teaching forces and their formation. The emphasis of the book is on the schools and their pedagogy, without neglecting the centres for the formation of novices. There are some salient elements that call the attention of the readers. From the start of their work in France, the Brothers and their founder grouped the students in grades and taught them together (simultaneous system), and came up with a discipline of the body that played an important role in the students' formation. From very early on in Gipuzkoa the Brothers adapted their educational work to the socio-economic needs linked to industrialization and the building of modernity. Indeed, they became part of the process of modernization in Gipuzkoa. They also taught Euskera, an important issue in the history of the Basque Country and in the struggle of the Basque to recover their language and maintain their identity.

The book traces well the changes in the sponsorship and funding of the educational centres, the impact of moving from a teaching force of French Brothers to Spanish Brothers (in 1928 the French Brothers returned to France), to the integration of lay male teachers, and then to the incorporation of female teachers. The book examines the tremendous expansion of the schools reaching 9,000 students in the 1980s (at that point the student population included girls). It is clear that teacher preparation was a concern and was related to the Brothers' mission and vision as religious. Of particular importance is the impact of Vatican II and its emphasis on social justice and work with the poor that would reinforce the Brothers' mission, while inspiring them to recreate their own understanding of social issues and expand their apostolate to new fields.

This book makes a substantial contribution to the history of teaching congregations (in particular male ones), a neglected field in the history of education in Spain, and to the history of the Basque Country. The authors had open access to massive archival records, interviewed members of various constituencies, and even visited schools. It is serious work that I hope will encourage further research in the field.