



# Uncomfortable Memories and Non-Heritages: The Archaeology of Counter-Revolution and the Carlist Wars in the Basque Country

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## Abstract

The development of historical archaeology in the Iberian Peninsula has opened new and stimulating avenues of research into its most recent times. One of these has been the archaeology of the Carlist Wars, a series of nineteenth-century conflicts related to the overarching process of the emergence of liberal governments in Europe and, contemporarily, of counter-revolutionary movements. This paper will describe recent excavations at Carlist sites in the southern part of the Basque Country in order to tackle two interrelated questions: the limits and possibilities of a Carlist archaeology and the close connection of the specific materialities of these events and the politics of memory surrounding them. It is argued that the Carlist War materiality has not been considered in the process of the construction of the Basque heritage because these conflicts are not introduced into the legitimating narratives of the failed-state formation project of the Basque identity.

**Keywords** Modern Iberia · Basque Country · Politics of memory · Negative heritage

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## Introduction

The fiery courage, the blind stubbornness of the ones responded the others with equal or higher demonstrations of constancy and bravery. Those were the days, those were the men! It is painful to see so much energy used in this brother's war. And if the race is not extinguished while fighting with itself, that is because it cannot be extinguished (Benito Pérez Galdós, *Episodios Nacionales: Zumalacárregui*. Translated by the authors)

The *Episodios Nacionales*, by the Spanish novelist Benito Pérez Galdós (1843–1920), represents one of the greatest achievements of Spanish literary realism. Its purpose was to narrate an agitated period in Spanish history, the nineteenth century and the beginnings of the twentieth century, presented as a narration of the slow but constant imposition of Liberal ideas and politics. For the history of Spain, and of Western Europe as a whole, this century was characterized by the contradictory and dialectic tension between the extension of Liberal reforms, a crucial part of what we usually call “modernity” and the counter-revolutionary movements engaged with the defense of cultural tradition and the political system of the Ancient Regime which unfolded different counter-revolutionary movements (Lok et al. 2021; Mayer 1971; Tilly 1976). The Spanish Carlism and the Carlist Wars are perhaps one of the most interesting examples because of its continuity over time (persisting even today), its specific territoriality, and its capacity of resilience (Martínez Dorado and Pan-Montojo 2000). These wars refer to a series of conflicts between 1833 and 1876 with their roots in the death of King Ferdinand VII, when the faction supporting the proclamation of his Catholic and conservative brother, Carlos, hence “Carlists” (*carlistas*), confronted the faction supporting Ferdinand's daughter, Isabella (future Isabella II) (Aróstegui, et al. 2003; Burdiel 2004).

As writers like Galdós show, these wars had a great impact at the time, being considered as among the most crucial events of nineteenth-century Spain, defining social and political life during that period. Thus, the interest in its study does not lie only in the question of analyzing nineteenth-century counter-revolutionary movements and the progressive implementation of liberalism and capitalism throughout Europe (Martínez Dorado and Pan-Montojo 2000) but also as a way of better understanding these reactionary movements and the reaction of the constituted powers from a historical point of view in order to approach current reactionary movements (Eatwell and Goodwin 2018). Specifically, we argue that the Carlist Wars materialize the fundamental political, social, and technological processes that founded both the implementation of current modern warfare and also the roots of current memories and heritage management of the conflictive nineteenth century.

Despite the ample historiography of the Carlist movement and the Carlist Wars attempts to go beyond the documentary sources have been very limited (Aróstegui et al. 2003:217–226). As in other topics within Spanish modern history, archaeology has played a minor role in the advance of the study of this process (González-Ruibal 2019; Orser 1996). This is due to two main reasons. The first relates to a general academic situation in which archaeology has not been considered a useful methodol-

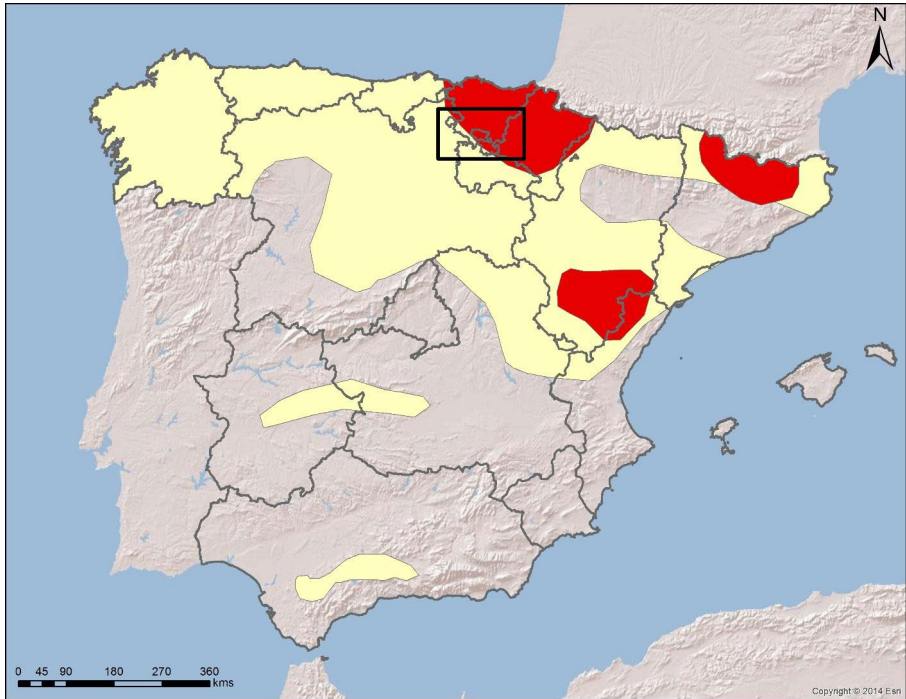
ogy to address post-medieval and contemporary events, while written sources are framed as the main and legitimate source for historical enquiry (Moreland 2001). It has only been in recent decades that, in the context of the development of commercial archaeology, post-medieval contexts, and particularly Carlist occupations have been recorded, at least in certain territories such as the Basque Country, in northern Spain. This has prompted the development of the first specific scientific projects approaching the archaeology of the Carlist Wars, as an alternative and compelling path to enter upon topics that are not covered by the written sources (González García 2020; Martín Etxebarria 2020; Navalón and Guimaraens 2016; Roldán-Bergaratxea and Escribano Ruiz 2015; Roldán-Bergaratxea et al. 2019).

A second reason is related to more profound sociological and political concerns. In current Spain, the topic of the Carlist Wars is a paradoxical one which can be situated between oblivion and discomfort. On the one hand, the territorial development of the Carlist movement during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has led to its marginalization as an object of study except in specific areas, where its historic development and even its current situation in the political spectrum is socially relevant as a layer within local and territorial identities. It is thus logical that in the Basque Country, where commemorations and tributes to the Carlist forces play a current active role, this topic is still relevant, while in other parts of the Iberian Peninsula it is merely anecdotal. On the other hand, in those territories where Carlist history is related to local identities, what can be defined as an uncomfortable memory has emerged, as it represents specific conservative values which, in fact, have been magnified due to the connection of the Carlist movement with the Francoist army during the Spanish Civil War (González-Ruibal 2020). Moreover, the impact of the latter conflict, whose consequences are still very much alive today, has obliterated the prior Carlist Wars. This paradoxical consideration of the Carlist past has thus resulted in a particular politics of memory cancellation, with a variety of situations regarding its materiality and its use in heritage landscapes. Situations that range from examples of the exaltation of the Carlist past, usually connected to current reactionary political views (Barraycoa 2019), to its abandonment, obliteration or even its deliberate destruction.

Building on these ideas, the main aim of this paper is to advance the archaeological analyses of the Carlist Wars by building on previous research with new information. This will be approached through the theoretical and methodological background of the conflict archaeology's interdisciplinary approach (Saunders 2012a; Smith and Geier 2019). This approach introduces archaeological evidence of past conflicts within broader social, economic, and political contexts, and aims to create alternative narratives for the historical processes behind the conflict.

## **The Archaeological Contexts of the Carlist Wars in the Southern Part of the Basque Country**

As said, one of the main characteristics of the Carlist Wars was its specific territoriality. Even though there were episodes of conflict in every part of the Iberian Peninsula including Portugal, they were most significant in the Basque Country, Catalonia, and the Maestrazgo area (Fig. 1). Specifically, the Basque Country was a central nucleus

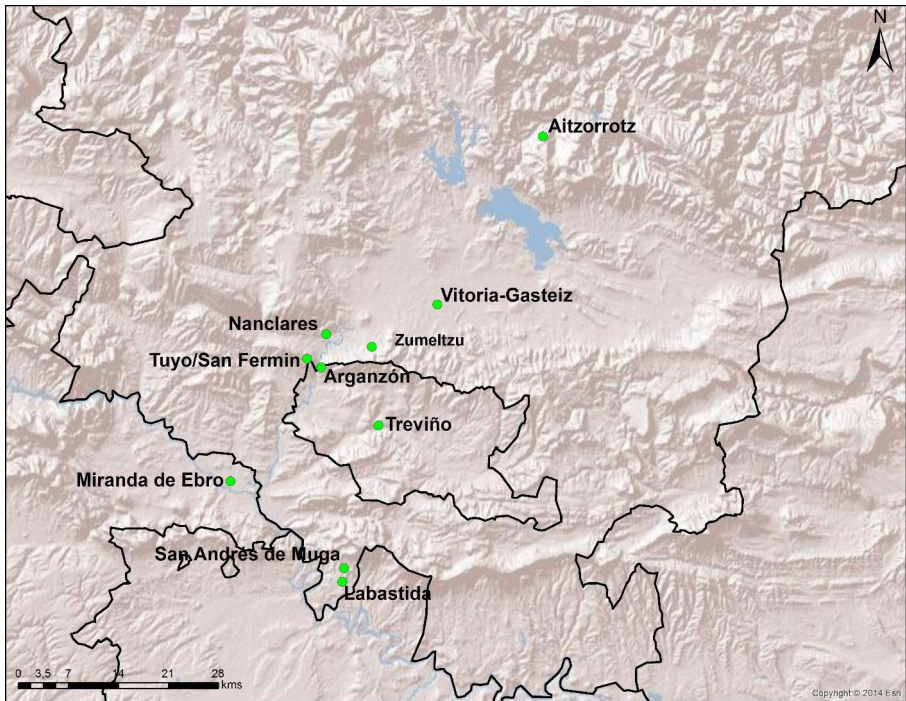


**Fig. 1** Main conflict areas of the Carlist wars. In red, areas controlled by the Carlist during the First Carlist war. In pale yellow areas of Carlist influence. The black box points the area of study. Source: authors

for the development of the Carlist forces, mainly for three reasons: first, for its significant support both from landowner classes and popular masses regarding both the defense of a decentralized system, known as the foral regime, against the centralization tendencies of the Liberal government and the use of particular regionalist ideologies such as the “vasco-cantabrista” movement (Agirreazkuenaga and Ortiz 1990); second, because of its proximity to the French border, which allowed the crossing of the Carlist army; and third, due to the physical presence of the generals and Carlist pretenders to the throne, who even established a Carlist state centered on the city of Estella (Ansorena Casaus and Ocariz Basarte 2014). In the following sections, we present the archaeological evidence of the Carlist Wars at different sites recently excavated in the southern part of the Basque Country (Fig. 2). This area was crucial for the development of the First and the Third Carlist Wars, as it constituted in both conflicts a liminal space of frontier between the contenders.

### **The Castle of Treviño: The Subtleties of the Carlist Materiality**

The territory of Treviño was the scene of crucial events throughout the two main Carlist conflicts. In the First Carlist War the county of Treviño was mainly occupied by the Liberal forces at the beginning of the conflict. However, its geographic position focused the efforts of the well-known Carlist general Tomás de Zumalacárregui, who attacked the town in 1834/35. During this attack, it is said that some of the cannons



**Fig. 2** Main sites mentioned in the text. Source: authors

and shells were fired directly at the castle, seriously affecting the walls (García Sáinz De Baranda 1941:165–166). Treviño was finally taken by the Carlists, who supposedly established a temporary garrison in the castle. The Carlist occupation did not last long, as certified by a military map of the Liberal forces dated in 1836 in which Treviño is shown as occupied by the Royalist army (Ortiz De Urbina Montoya 2005). Until the end of the war it was allegedly not attacked again or the scene of further military encounters.

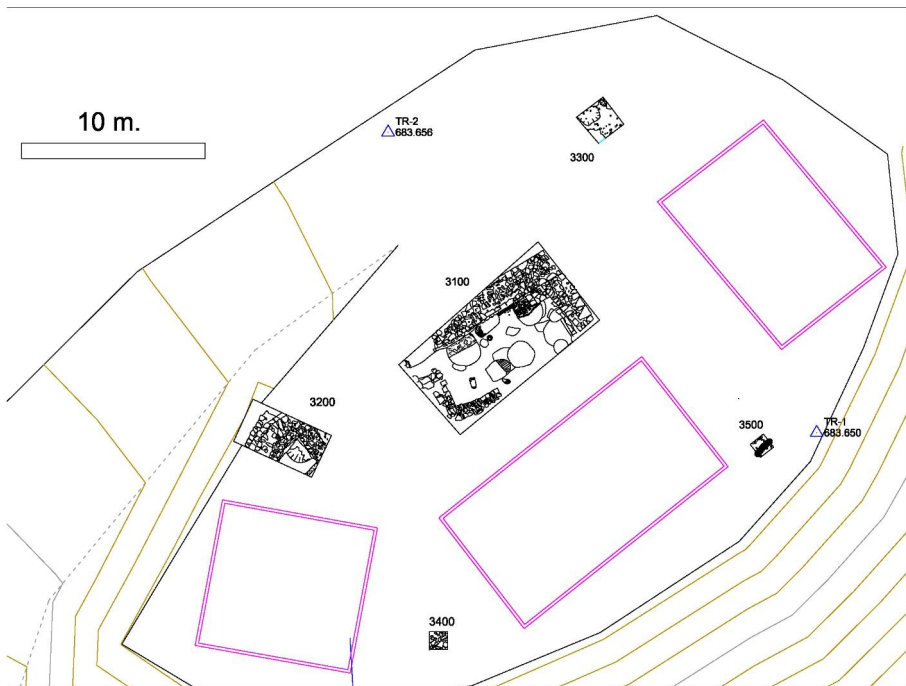
After this episode, the territory was again a central place of conflict during the Third Carlist War (1872–76) in the context of the so-called Battle of Treviño (Ortiz De Urbina Montoya 2005:271–274). In 1875 the northern front was stabilized, after several attacks from both armies in the northern part of the Basque Country, which included a failed Carlist attack on Bilbao in 1874. As a way to recover the initiative of the war, the Carlist forces under the command of General Mendiry tried to conquer the city of Vitoria by passing through Treviño. By this time the county of Treviño was mainly under Carlist dominion, delineating a frontier territory. The Liberal attack began on July 7, 1875, after which some important places were conquered, such as Añastro, Arrieta or Treviño, where they captured “two thousand portions of bread and seven hundred pieces of fodder which the Carlists prepared for their forces” (García Sáinz De Baranda 1941:168). Once the Liberals secured their position, the main confrontation of the battle took place at the town of Zumeltzu, where the Carlist forces were defeated, causing a retreat to Vitoria. As a consequence of the battle, the



Liberal positions in the territory were consolidated, with large parts of the territory occupied by the Liberal forces, including the castle of Treviño, which was abandoned by the military forces until the end of the war (Ortiz De Urbina Montoya 2005:274). After the battle, which, as seen, took place mainly in the surroundings even though it was called ‘of Treviño,’ the Liberal army concentrated on fortifying the crucial communication line between the cities of Miranda de Ebro and Vitoria, which included the construction of different towers which we describe below.

An archaeological project was carried out at Treviño in 2007, aimed at analyzing the occupational sequence at the castle (Fig. 3). This project consisted of the excavation of different profiles distributed around the castle, including the upper platform, where the castle was built. The excavations resulted in a long chronological sequence from the early Middle Ages to the late twentieth century, when three antennas were built on the platform, affecting the prior structures (Quirós Castillo 2011).

The archaeological testimony of the Carlist occupation of the castle of Treviño is, however, quite scarce, implying a very low impact in the remaining stratigraphy at the castle. Thus the only activity documented is in a layer identified as an occupation level characterized as a compacted clay floor divided by a wall built in a previous phase and two trenches, one of them  $1 \times 0.2$  m in size and 10 cm deep. Another small trench cut directly in the bedrock, in which a well conserved log was found, completes the testimonies of the nineteenth century at the castle of Treviño. The only material culture associated with this layer was a dense concentration of a total of 150



**Fig. 3** Plan of excavated sectors in Treviño. Source: authors



Fig. 4 Lead shots from Treviño. Source: authors

pieces of lead shot (Fig. 4; with a weight of 31.6 g each) related to the weaponry used during the First Carlist War (in the Third Carlist War the main type of weapon used by both armies was the Remington; Rodríguez Gómez 2004:46–65). This lead shot is characterized by a particular gray-bluish color which may indicate that they were probably made directly on site, owing to the malleability of the metal. The use of lead for shot has been related to Carlist forces in other contexts (González García 2020) and thus these remains probably correspond to the temporary Carlist military garrison at the castle, which implied not only a reuse of the fortification but also its modification for modern military purposes.

The case of Treviño is quite interesting because it shows both the possibilities and the issues when analyzing a temporary military occupation of an historical site. While the military activities surrounding the castle of Treviño were significant, as expressed in the documentary evidence, its material expression is quite subtle. This is mainly due to the specific temporalities of the military occupation and its dynamics of abandonment once the conflicts were over. Treviño is a good case for reflecting the dissimilarities between written and archaeological sources (Moreland 2001), showing the necessity for high-resolution excavations which may overcome these subtleties of the material record of the conflict. Subtleties that, in cases like Treviño, and the following case study, explain the specific politics of oblivion regarding the Carlist Wars, as discussed below.

## **The Castle of Labastida: The Materiality of the Daily Conflict beyond the Documentary Sources**

A second case study corresponds to the castle of Labastida. This site is in the southern part of the current province of Alava, near the border between the current Autonomous Communities of Castile and La Rioja. This territory is characterized by a deep valley through which the River Ebro flows, surrounded by several mountain ranges that mark the current political border. The importance of this space on a communication route to the sea in the north possesses a long historical background, including a previous military occupation during the War of Independence against the French invasion testified by an iron military button dated in 1801 (Fallou 2005:295), and it was also key for the development of the Carlist Wars. What should be stressed here is that they were probably reusing the buildings from the Third Carlist War as a new layer in the stratigraphy of the castle of Labastida as a landscape of war, as documented in other sites of the province, such as the castle of Aitzorrotz.

The villa of Labastida was the scene of military encounters during both the First and the Third Carlist Wars. We have only direct written evidence for the former, although the information is scarce and difficult to interpret. Thus, what we know from the first conflict is that Labastida was occupied by the Carlist forces until 1835, when it was conquered by the Liberal General Martín Zurbano. During the Carlist occupation, the convent of San Andrés de Muga, founded in the fifteenth century and located 1 km south of the castle, was fortified and later abandoned after the attacks of General Zurbano. This convent was excavated in 2011 but no heritage plan was implemented and it is currently abandoned and forgotten by the local and regional



administrations. In addition to this convent, some written evidence testifies that the shrine of the Saint Christ, the central Church of Labastida, was sacked by the Liberal forces after the conquest of Labastida.

Even though we do not have specific information about the occupation of the castle by the Carlist forces during the first years of the conflict, the written references attest the presence of a “guard of the castle” for the years 1837, 1838, and even after the end of the conflict in 1840, which implied the presence of a Liberal military garrison occupying the castle during these years. They specifically mention the forced supply from the Council of Labastida, which generated a conflict with the Liberal government (Ortiz De Urbina Montoya 2005:145–152). This is the only mention of the castle garrison, underlining the abovementioned contrast between written and archaeological sources. Thus there is little information on the specific occupation of Labastida during the Third Carlist War, even though the development of the conflict implied many military operations in the territory.

However, some indirect references indicate that a tower was built in Labastida during this conflict. Two photographs, located in the local archive, taken at the end of this century and attributed to the castle of Labastida, show the presence of a tower (Fig. 5). Both of them correspond to towers typologically related to those built during the Third Carlist War by the Liberal forces for the protection of communications,



**Fig. 5** Photograph, potentially of the tower at the castle of Labastida. Source: Labastida's local archive



**Fig. 6** Excavations at Labastida. Source: authors

both telegraphic and the railway-line, between the localities of Miranda de Ebro and Vitoria during the years 1874–75 (Ortiz De Urbina Montoya 2005:275–289). However, one of them has a subrectangular floor plan while the other is circular. As we will see, the archaeological record not only confirms that there is effectively a military structure from the nineteenth century but also that the tower in Labastida should correspond to the subrectangular one. Thus, this tower was built over the remains of the previous buildings, dismantling the structures used during the First Carlist War.

During the decades of the 1970s and the 80s, all the structures at the castle of Labastida were dismantled as a result of a failed construction of a tourist resort by the local council. This implied the total destruction of the archaeological remains and the obliteration of all the history and memory of the castle and the subsequent occupations. This process, as a dialectic relation of contemporary societies with the past and specifically with the Carlist Wars, discussed below.

The archaeological excavation in the castle of Labastida took place during 2012 and 2013 (Fig. 6), revealing a diversity of occupations from the Middle Ages onward, in which the phases related to the nineteenth-century wars were the most significant. As mentioned above, one of the documented structures can be related to the military tower. It consists of a 5 m linear wall of which only two rows of ashlar blocks have been preserved, owing to a leveling layer. It was built by reusing a trench of a building from the castle's previous phases. Evidence is scarce, but it can be inferred that the structure had an access from ground level, testified by an empty space for a door, and its outline followed a cut from previous phases, which the structure reuses.

The material culture related to the abovementioned building certifies that the castle of Labastida was effectively occupied during the conflict. Specifically, we mention here the military elements, coins, and faunal remains. Military objects are represented by the presence of two buttons (Fig. 7). The first one includes the inscription “GARDE NATIONAL,” which corresponds to the uniforms of the French National Guard, dissolved during the Paris Commune and, thus, dated in the years 1870–71



Fig. 7 Military buttons documented at Labastida. Source: authors

(Fallou 2005:248). After the dismantling of the National Guard, the uniforms were sold to different armies, including the Carlist forces, who bought this type of military supply by means of contraband across the French border in order to regularize their uniforms (Rodríguez Gómez 2004:51–52).

In contrast, the second button belongs to the Royal Infantry and thus from the Liberal forces. It includes the Spanish national badge and the inscription “INFANTERÍA” (infantry) and is dated in the year 1873 (Guirao Larrañaga, et al. 2012:06.09.05b). The construction of the tower in Labastida would certify the presence from the year 1875 onward of a Liberal garrison, which will explain the presence of the latter button. In turn, the presence of the French button may be explained through two possibilities: either there was a Carlist occupation before the Liberal one or it was used as a temporary prison for Carlist forces.

Other archaeological objects were recovered in the layers and deposits inside the building, including a group of 14 coins dated in the period between 1840 and 1870. Specifically, five coins (35% of the total) can be dated between the years 1840 and 1842—perhaps related to the occupation of the Liberal garrison during the First Carlist War—one coin is dated in 1856, and seven in 1870 (50% of the total) clearly related to the Third Carlist War. Among them, the coins from the year 1870 are quite interesting as they correspond to a very specific Provisional Government formed after the so-called Glorious Revolution of 1868, which lasted until the year 1871. Even though they may be pointing toward a *post quem* occupation after 1870, their quantity and the absence of coins after that period suggest a specific phase which lasted until that year and thus a possible connection to Carlist forces. Following this line of reasoning, once the Liberal forces conquered Labastida and established their garrison by building the military tower, there was no more needs for coins. In other words, materiality would help here to understand the specificities of a conflict for which we do not have written references.

The third archaeological record of interest for the analyses of the Carlist War is an ensemble of faunal remains located in relation to the military structure. Even though the number of remains is not very significant in quantitative terms (only 22 recovered remains), their taxonomic study provides an interesting overview (Table 1):

We should mention that, within current historiography of the Carlist Wars, this is the first faunal analysis of a context related to this conflict, which increases its spe-

**Table 1** Faunal analyses from Labastida (by Idoia Grau Sologestoa).

TAXONOMY	NUMBER OF RESTS
Bos	2
Ovis/Capra	8
Ovis aries	1
Sus	3
Canis familiaris	4
Galliforms	3
Columba	1
Fish (cod)	Ind.
TOTAL	22



cific interest. Even though it is not possible to determine the particular moment of deposition, stratigraphy strongly suggests that this ensemble corresponds to the last moment of occupation of the building and thus to the Liberal occupation of Labastida. Most of the faunal remains mostly show edible species, which includes the presence of pigeon, widely consumed in rural contexts, and, moreover, of cod, which implies connections with the coastal commercial routes. Evidence suggests that animals were already prepared and thus they may be related to the forced supply given by the Council. On the other hand, some dog bones in anatomical connection were recognized, suggesting the presence of dogs as pets, or even guards, for the military garrison. It is a commonplace in the analyses of past conflicts that written sources highlight mainly the crucial events and military elements. This is very much the case of the Carlist Wars in which, as we have seen in the case of Treviño, even those events are sometimes rarely testified. The case of Labastida shows the importance of the archaeological record and the application of theoretical and methodological backgrounds such as the Modern Conflict Archaeology framework not only to document events not reflected in the written sources, but also to approach questions usually ignored by them, such as the daily life of the army (Bagwell 2012; Saunders 2020).

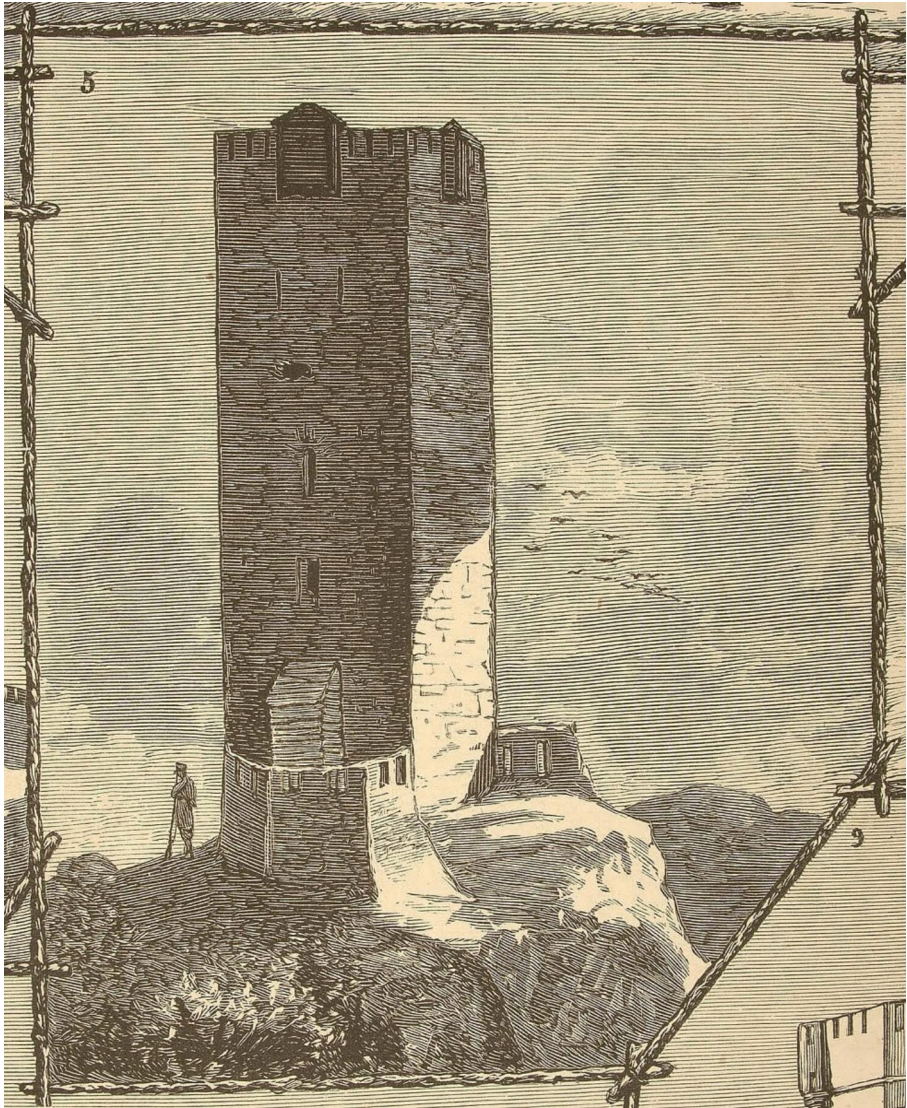
### **The Route of Arganzón and the Fortress of Nanclares (La Puebla de Arganzón, Burgos): The Impact on the Landscape and the Development of Modern Conflict Technologies**

The last case study is the castle of Arganzón, also known as the castle of Los Moros. It is located on the border between the Basque Country and Castile, which means this territory is on the obligatory route through the gorge of Las Conchas, which the castle directly controls. As we will see, this gorge was a key element of control during the First and the Third Carlist Wars. The most visible element of the castle is a 17-m tower, which occupies the northern part of an 830 m<sup>2</sup> level platform. However, the archaeological excavation documented a complex medieval infrastructure, which included another tower, a thick wall, and a water tank. As it is the only place within the county of Treviño in which a medieval tower is still preserved; it has been protected as a *Bien de Interés Cultural* since 1949.

As said, the gorge of Las Conchas was a crucial element in the strategy for the control of this territory in both the First and the Third Carlist Wars. In both wars, the struggle for its control was related to the attacks on Vitoria-Gasteiz and to protect the supply and communication lines. During the First Carlist War, the castle and Las Conchas were part of a strategic line created by the Liberal general Fernández de Córdova, following the Carlist forces' attempted conquest of Vitoria-Gasteiz in October 1835. The city had been transformed into the military center of the Liberal forces since the previous attack in March 1834 (Ortiz De Urbina Montoya 2005:66–67). During the development of this conflict, an optical telegraph line—a system of communication conceived in the end of the eighteenth century—was established by the Liberal forces with the aim of reinforcing the front in this territory by connecting the cities of Pamplona, Logroño, and Vitoria-Gasteiz. This eventually formed the *Línea de Castilla*, a telegraph line inaugurated in 1846 which connected Madrid with Irún



(Ajamil Baños 2014:22–23). It is interesting that this telegraph line, built in 1837/38, took advantage of the structures already in place, which was already common in Europe (Ajamil Baños 2014:15), such as the castle of Arganzón (Ortiz De Urbina Montoya 2005:175). A chronicle written in the Third Carlist War notes the persistence of the line: "Somewhat separated from the road there was also on the top of the hill a third tower, that built in the last period for the aerial telegraphic communication



**Fig. 8** Drawing depicting the castle of Arganzón

with Madrid, even though it is currently abandoned since that system was replaced by the electric one" (De La Vega Inclán, et al. 1874:76).

The relevance and significance of the territory was even greater during the Third Carlist War. As already seen when analyzing the case of Labastida, during the 1860s and 70s the territory was controlled mainly through the construction of a series of military towers in which garrisons were stationed. This process had a major impact in the territory of Las Conchas, with the construction of two towers controlling both sides of the route (the castle of Tuyo and the Castillo of San Fermín) (Ortiz De Urbina Montoya 2005:274–277). Although it was not destroyed, the castle of Arganzón was also affected, as we know from some indirect sources as well as from the archaeological record. During the years 1874 and 1875 several engravings were published in the journal *La Ilustración Española y Americana* showing the gorge of Las Conchas and the surrounding Liberal towers (Fig. 8). In one of them the tower in the castle of Arganzón is depicted as being used by the Liberal forces, including its remodelling and the addition of new wooden structures. This intervention in the tower of the castle is also described in the previously cited chronicle: he decided the restoration of the first one, that is, the closest to the road, using, for this purpose, the materials from that of the same origin, far away, while ordering to restore also the telegraphic one; the first, as mentioned, for the defense of Las Conchas, and the second, for its own aim and as one that should constitute the aerial telegraphic system that he had designed and wanted to adopt. In each of these towers he established a garrison composed by 30 men with food for one or two months (De La Vega Inclán, et al. 1874:77).

The archaeological excavation in the castle of Arganzón took place between September 2011 and February 2012. It included the excavation of several profiles both in the platform and outside the limits of the wall, resulting in a complex sequence starting in the Iron Age and documenting a relevant medieval central place within the emergence of the territory of Treviño (see above). However, the evidence of the Carlist Wars was concentrated in the remaining medieval tower in the northern part of the platform. As seen in the written sources, this tower was object of several interventions both in the First Carlist War, when it was used for the installation of a telegraph line, and the Third Carlist War, when a garrison was established inside the tower, including the construction of several wooden walls around the tower.

The archaeological excavation inside the tower and its stratigraphic analyses found evidence which may be related to the Third Carlist War. In the interior, after different contemporary layers interpreted as landfills, two different sections were located at 1.1 m depth from the top of the fill, which implied a deliberate and complete emptying of previous deposits. One of these features corresponds to a posthole, while the other was a pit against the wall with a diameter of 1 m. The latter feature revealed an ensemble of nineteenth-century cream ware ceramics, mainly plates and bowls, which may be related to the garrison during the context of the battle of Treviño in the Third Carlist War.

The main impact of the Liberal occupation of the tower is documented in the structure itself. In order to enlarge the entrance of the tower for military purposes and to adapt it to military technologies, the old door was enlarged by removing part of the wall. This operation created a 3 m x 2.5 m door, which reused part of the prior ashlar blocks and employed a different rose-grey mortar for the joints. The bay did not cover the whole section of the wall; at 1 m depth in relation to the outer part of the mortar, a leftover is documented, showing that a frame or structure was placed next to the bay. Furthermore, some putlog holes located in the façade indicated the presence of an attached structure which totally or partially covered the entrance, and which may be related to those wooden structures documented in the nineteenth-century engravings. These alterations are also detected in the opposite wall, with some bays which are possibly related to the use of rifles.

The remains in the castle of Arganzón are related with those of the fortress of Nanclores, located north of the gorge of Las Conchas. This fortress was built during the events of the Third Carlist Wars (Ortiz De Urbina Montoya 2005) and, once the war was over, it was progressively abandoned. The analyses of historic aerial photography show that this fortress was destroyed in a moment between the end of the 1960s and mid-1970s, in the late Francoist regime. This, again, shows the inner contradictions and obliteration of Carlist heritage by local administrations in this territory, as we have also seen in the example of Labastida.

Contrasting with the other examples, the case of Arganzón shows a greater impact of the Carlist Wars both on the landscape and specifically in the site occupied by the military forces. The development of the strategy of the Liberal forces during the Third Carlist War implied the reconfiguration of the landscape, including previous medieval sites such as the castle of Arganzón. It is also an expression of the impact of nineteenth-century conflicts in the development of military technologies regarding the implementation of new systems of communication. This is a crucial idea we discuss in the following section.

## **Discussion: Materiality, Landscape Use and Memories of the Carlist Wars**

### **The Material Culture of the Carlist Wars in the Peripheries of the Conflict**

The archaeology of the Carlist Wars, despite a growing interest in academia, is a discipline still to be constructed (Roldán-Bergaratxea, et al. 2019) and, moreover, a discipline to be defined in ontological terms in contradistinction with other conflicts in the Western European and Iberian contexts, mainly the 1936-39 Spanish Civil War. Thus, the abovementioned case studies offer the possibility of contributing to its development by analyzing the main elements of the material culture associated with the Carlist Wars. Furthermore, their location in a relatively peripheral position, since they were not at the center of the conflict except for specific maneuvers and operations, allows for an alternative view of the conflict through its materiality.

One of the main difficulties that arose when analyzing the archaeological record was associating it with one of the contenders, or even with one of the Carlist conflicts.

This is a question that, curiously, has not been systematically addressed by scholarship and is a significant handicap in carrying out high-resolution archaeological analyses of the conflict. Moreover, we argue that this vagueness when dealing with the material record is one of the explanatory factors for its place in the politics of memory in contemporary Spain.

As noted above, once the significant operations in a territory took place, the documentary sources rarely focus on the localities, and, thus, it is sometimes difficult to know exactly which forces are present in a specific moment; as in the example of the castle of Treviño. Moreover, in some cases the transfer of a position from one contender to the other may imply an additional difficulty in analyzing the archaeological record, as happens, for example, in the abovementioned case of Labastida. It is for this reason that a careful analysis of the material culture and the stratigraphy at the local scale should be performed in order to interpret the evidence correctly (Table 2).

This latter assertion is even more significant because of the low resolution and difficulty in correctly contextualizing the material record corresponding to the Carlist Wars in the southern part of the Basque Country. This can be explained by three reasons: the abovementioned peripheral character of the territory, the temporality and opportunistic character of the occupations, and mainly the processes of memory and obliteration, on which we focus below. Both the peripheral character and the temporality of occupations, which lasted three years at most, left a scarce or even invisible material culture, mainly related to occasional abandonments of military elements, such as buttons or weaponry, and domestic waste: mainly ceramics and bones. In contrast, those spaces which played a more central role during the conflict left more significant evidence (Roldán-Bergaratxea et al. 2019) as can be seen in the case of Labastida. This specific temporality regarding the development of conflicts is one of the characteristics of supermodern times, and is directly related to the type of ephemeral cultural heritage of today's world (González-Ruibal 2008, 2019).

As Bisley (2004:50) states, “all social revolutions of the modern period have elicited some form of international counter-revolution,” provoking a reordering of international politics which tries to “turn the clock back.” In the moment that the ancient

**Table 2** Proposal of chronology and type of occupation in the main contexts analysed

SITE	ARCHAEOLOGICAL OCCUPATION		ARMY		TYPE OF EVIDENCE	
	1st CARLIST WAR	3rd CARLIST WAR	LIBERAL	CARLISTS	WRITTEN	ARCHAEOLOGICAL
CASTLE OF TREVIÑO	X		X		X	X
CASTLE OF LABASTIDA		X	X	¿?		X
CASTLE OF ARGANZÓN		X	X		X	X



*status quo* of social order and class privilege is threatened, there is a mobilization of the resources by the different agents implied at every scale, from international to local. This diversity of scales is clearly visible in the material record of the Carlist Wars and symbolically shown by the presence of a military button predictably used by the Carlist Forces and which came from the consequences of another counter-revolution, the one that resulted in the dismantling of the Paris Commune in 1871.

As we have seen, the differences in the Carlist and Liberal forces at a material level in the context of a periphery of war is subtle, even inexistent, and only in some specific cases can they be differentiated. The castle of Labastida is one of the best examples, in which the presence of different military buttons is the main element for distinguishing the presence of each of the combatants. This calls for a careful analysis in order to tackle the subtleties of the material record in this specific conflict archaeological context. Moreover, only an interdisciplinary combination of different strands of historical sources (photographic, archaeological, and written) and methodologies (archaeobotanical, stratigraphic, and spatial analyses) has the potentiality to achieve this aim, as it has been repeatedly proposed in Modern Conflict Archaeology (Saunders 2012b). In this regard, the critical dialogue between written and material sources seem to be a crucial part of this puzzle (Moreland 2001).

Associated with the specific materiality of the Carlist Wars and the differentiation of the combatants, another significant question, related to temporality, is the material difference between the First and the Third Carlist War. As explained in the introduction, one of the most interesting issues regarding this conflict is that they represent a progressive transition toward modern societies. Both conflicts represent those last pre-modern conflicts which characterized the nineteenth century until the development of modern warfare in the twentieth century. As such, the evolution from the First to the Third Carlist Wars is quite interesting as a way to understand this process from the material point of view. This is represented, for example, in the presence of the lead shot in Treviño, which characterized the First Carlist conflict in contrast with the technological developments of the Third Carlist conflict, which already incorporated rifles as the main combat weapon.

### **The Materiality of the Conflict: Between Daily Life and Technological Developments**

As stated above, the social aspects of the Carlist Wars have constituted a marginal topic within academia, more attuned to the military side of the conflict (Aróstegui, et al. 2003). This is relatively common within war studies in general, even from an archaeological point of view (Saunders 2012a). Notwithstanding this, in the last decade interest in the social aspects of the wars has increasingly focused both on the documentary sources and, overall, from an archaeological perspective (Carman 2013; González-Ruibal 2019; Orser 1996). From our point of view, a social approach to the Carlist Wars through its materiality is an important potential strategy of inquiry in order to delve into the complexities of this conflict and the emergence of the contemporary world (Saunders 2012b). This is, however, a task to be carried out in the future in which we will make some specific inquiries. Taking into account the case



studies, here we will address only two aspects: the quotidian life of soldiers and their relation to local communities, and the question of the technological impact of the war.

Analyzing the quotidian life of soldiers during the Carlist Wars from a material point of view is a complex prospect because of the temporary and situational character of the occupations (Fig. 9). However, archaeological excavations have obtained significant data to approach this question. The discovery of a small ensemble of ceramic remains in La Puebla de Arganzón related to the Liberal garrison there during the Third Carlist war makes visible their daily life and their social condition. By the 1870s, undecorated creamware was a popular and common ceramic in the Basque Country (Ibabe Ortiz 1995) so it may have been used by regular troops during the temporary stay at La Puebla de Arganzón. As we know from the documentary sources, supplies for regular troops were very limited and they did not include the materials needed for eating (Rodríguez Gómez 2004). Thus, it is quite probable that these garrisons provided their own means for their sustenance and thus expressed their identity through these commodities (Escribano Ruiz 2016). However, what is interesting here is that the use of ceramics may have been a privilege of the garrisons unlike the regular troops in movement who were not supplied ceramic dishes because of their fragility during maneuvers. Instead, wooden bowls or even bare hands were the common means for the daily diet (Albi De La Cuesta 2017:155–157). Thus, a suggestive idea is that ceramics may have been a means for social distinction between



Fig. 9 Liberal troops at Miranda de Ebro. Digitalized by the Archivos y Bibliotecas de Vitoria-Gastiz. CC

the lower strata of the armies during this conflict, as already acknowledged for other contexts regarding low strata groups (Gray 2009).

The question of supplies for the garrisons and the troops is a major topic as regards the Carlist Wars. This feature of everyday life be made visible through the archaeological record, together with the daily diet of the garrisons. As we have seen in Labastida, the faunal remains show not only that the garrisons enjoyed a good meat diet, including beef, mutton, chicken, and even pork and cod, but also that they were mainly supplied from the local community. As we know from the documentary sources regarding the territory near La Puebla de Arganzón, it was precisely this type of supply that provoked a constant dispute between local communities and the authorities, on the one hand, and the Liberal troops on the other (Ortiz De Urbina Montoya 2005). This may be related to the social differences and tensions between the Liberal identity and the Carlists supporters. Following the analyses of the social composition of Carlism, one of the characteristics that differentiated the Basque



**Fig. 10** Tuyo castle, used as a telegraphic line during the Carlist Wars. Source: authors

Country from other territories was the specific weight of local rural landlords, who controlled the local institutions and by extension the networks of power within the rural world (Agirreazkuenaga and Ortiz 1990). Thus, tensions arose between the liberal troops and the occupied rural villages, especially when the local population had to supply these troops.

War and conflicts are historical contexts in which the necessity of defeating the enemy at all costs fosters technological advances and their adaptation to war purposes (González-Ruibal 2019:120–127). In other words, wars and conflicts are paradoxically common contexts of technological development. In the case of the conflicts in the second half of the nineteenth century, this is especially visible and only surpassed by the (traumatic) technological development of World Wars I and II. The Carlist Wars are not an exception and the archaeological record shows the implementation of cutting-edge technological advances in the context of nineteenth-century Spain. Perhaps the best example is the use for the first time of optical telegraph lines by the Liberal Forces during the First Carlist War, as for example the abovementioned Tuyo castle (Fig. 10), a technology that was, at the time, still in its infancy (Ajamil Baños 2014). What is materially interesting is that this new technology had to adapt to prior landscapes in order to be implemented, reusing old structures such as the medieval tower of Arganzón, as discussed above. The technological development materialized in the archaeological record is one of the best examples of the progressive introduction of modern technologies through conflict (Breithoff 2020), which also has an impact on the daily life of local communities, as seen in other conflict archaeological contexts (Tejerizo García and Rodríguez Gutiérrez 2021). As Roldán-Bergaraxea et al. (2019:719) discuss: “the changes documented between the First and Third Carlist War were influenced by industrialization and globalization. They helped transform the materiality of the war completely in a very brief period of time.”

### **Emergence and Reuse of a Landscape of Conflict**

Contrasting with material culture, the impact of the Carlist Wars on the landscape was very significant, with effects that have lasted until today. This impact is also determined by the relatively peripheral character of the southern part of the Basque Country in the two Carlist conflicts. As this territory was not within the central areas of military operations, unlike Bilbao or Estella, except from specific events such as the attacks and the conquest of Vitoria or the battle of Treviño, the construction of new structures was not very common. This was a question of the economy of war, as it was considered a waste of time and resources to build them (Albi De La Cuesta 2017; Ortiz De Urbina Montoya 2005). Instead, the reuse of previous fortified settlements became the rule within the development of the conflict, as has been confirmed by other excavations in this territory (Martín Etxebarria 2020).

The reuse of old structures in order to build a landscape of war did not originate in the period of the Carlist Wars. In the case of the Iberian Peninsula, for example, this was common during other significant conflicts in the Middle Ages such as the conquest of the Andalusian territory by the Christian kingdoms. However, the scale and the irreversible impact that a conflict has over previous structures is a modern phenomenon and characteristic of the nineteenth century-wars all over Europe



(González-Ruibal 2019). It is clearly shown by the case studies, in which the impact of the Carlist Wars on the occupied settlements was significant. The case of La Puebla de Arganzón and the modifications to both the tower and the villa (Ortiz De Urbina Montoya 2005) is a clear example of this.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the Carlist Wars preferably used the medieval castles in the southern part of the Basque Country. Most of them were built precisely in a context of conflict and solidification of territorial elites, re-signifying their use as military landmarks in the landscape. The economy of war, the logics of the emergence of a landscape of conflict and resistance (Bender and Winer 2001), and the peripheral character of the territory during the Carlist Wars explain the choice of these fortified settlements as the military axis for the development of the operations. It is interesting also to underline that both combatants used the same strategies of re-occupation of previous fortified settlements, as we have already seen. In this regard, another interesting phenomenon is the fortification of churches, both by the Carlist and the Liberal forces. During the context of the First Carlist Wars, many churches around Vitoria were fortified and militarized, as seen at churches in Nanclares de Oca (Ortiz De Urbina Montoya 2005:69) and also in the case of Labastida. Together with castles, churches constituted the most efficient buildings in terms of architectural strength. Moreover, the churches and monasteries in the southern part of the Basque Country, like the one at San Andrés de Muga (Fig. 11) mentioned above, are precisely characterized by their width and their strength. In the case of the Basque Country, the support of the Carlist movement by the Catholic Church was closely related to the defense of its privileges against the Liberal reforms, such as the *Desamortización*,



Fig. 11 Archaeological site of San Andrés de Muga convent. Source:[www.euskadi.eus](http://www.euskadi.eus)

which implied the expropriation of lands and buildings by the state and was specially focused on the Church's properties.

It should be stressed that, although the impact of the Carlist Wars on the landscape was significant, none of the analyzed examples has been used or claimed as part of local historical narratives and heritage. On the contrary, it is the medieval past that commonly obliterates this specific moment of history, precisely because of its uncontroversial nature (even though the social context in which these sites are located is quite relevant in terms of the emergence of social inequality in medieval societies) (Quirós Castillo 2013; Quirós Castillo and Santos 2015). In other words, history connected with the Carlist Wars is much more problematic than other historical narratives, and this is a consequence of the specific material culture, which reuses the remnants of a more romanticized medieval past. This, in consequence, has major implications in the preservation of the archaeological record and the politics of memory dealing with them. This leads us to the last point we wish to discuss here.

### **The Politics of Memory: The Carlist Wars as an Uncomfortable Memory and Negative Heritage**

As stated throughout the paper, the position of Carlist memory in the current Basque Country is, to say the least, contradictory. One of the key issues to understand this question, and the consequence for archaeological heritage, is the relation between history and politics, especially the role of Carlist memory in today's Basque nationalism. In order to better understand this, it is interesting to contrast this case study with Catalonia, the other territory impacted significantly by the Carlist Wars (Aróstegui et al. 2003) and, specifically, the case of the market of El Born (Hernández Cordero 2016). This market, one of the first modernist buildings in Barcelona, was a contested space during the 1970s and 80s because of the urban interests of the site for speculation. Different civil associations managed to protect this space, but without any intervention by the local administration due to budget shortfalls. Archaeological excavations in the late 1990s documented an impressive site related to the conquest of the city by the troops of Philip V during the *War of Spanish Succession*. The discovery of these archaeological remains was used by the nationalist movements as a weapon against the central government in a context of growing nationalism, transforming El Born, through large investments, into a symbol of the conflict between Catalonia and Spain (Hernández Cordero 2016). It is interesting that, in contrast, the Carlist past has been forgotten, as another uncomfortable past that does not fit into the contextual politics of memory.

In the Spanish cultural tradition formed during the formation of the nation-state, the Carlist Wars remain either as a forgotten past - inasmuch as it was obliterated in the cultural realm by the 1930s Civil War (González-Ruibal 2020) - or as an uncomfortable memory. Even though Carlism has evolved in multiple factions from right-wing conservatism to left-wing libertarian socialism (Aróstegui, et al. 2003), it remains in the popular imagination a conservative, ultra-Catholic and anti-progressive movement (Barraycoa 2019). Thus, its heritage constitutes a polemic arena, especially in those territories, like the Basque Country or Catalonia, where the Carlist movement had the greatest impact. Thus, in the former there is a dialectic tension between those



who defend and protect the Carlist past and heritage and those who aim -consciously or unconsciously- to obliterate or just forget it. The preservation and management of the Carlist materiality is a clear reflection of this situation, with significant mnemonic consequences, as Roldán-Bergaratzxear et al. (2019) have argued.

What is interesting in the case of Basque Country is the territoriality of this heritage management of the Carlist Wars and that it reflects the territoriality of the wars themselves. Thus in those central territories in which Carlism had a major impact at a local scale, such as Estella and its surroundings, Carlist heritage is not only preserved or encouraged, but also celebrated as part of the local identity. The most interesting case is the annual Montejurra act, which celebrates both the battles which took place during the nineteenth-century conflicts and the participation of the Carlist forces during the 1930s Civil War. An extreme example which is replicated in other performances celebrating the Carlist past (Roldán-Bergaratzxear et al. 2019:719–720).

This situation is quite different regarding the southern part of Basque Country, where the Carlist past is seen as conflictive, mediated through voluntary amnesia or even defined as “negative heritage” as “conflictual sites that becomes the repository of negative memory in the collective imaginary” (Meskell 2002:558). An uncomfortable past rejected during the emergence of Basque national identity that may be obliterated because of its negativity and instrumentalized for spurious reasons (Moshenska 2015). Both the cases of Treviño and Labastida are significant in this regard, although the latter can be taken as a good example (Fig. 12). An analysis of twentieth-century aerial photography demonstrates that, until at least 1968, there were structures in the castle of Labastida. However, in 1983 a photograph shows that the hill had been object of massive earth movements and thus, that in an indeterminate moment between the end of the 1960s and 1983 the remains of the castle were destroyed, probably within a project for the construction of a modern building for tourism. This is a good case for our argument on the relationship between the specific materiality of the Carlist Wars and the consequent politics of memory within a con-



**Fig. 12** Aerial photographs of the fortress of Nanclares de Oca. (1) 1956. (2) 1968. (3) 1970s. (4) 1980s. Source: authors, using maps downloaded through [geo.euskadi.eus](http://geo.euskadi.eus). CC.

text in which this past was so subtle and conflictive as to provoke its oblivion and its destruction (Saunders and Cornish 2021).

## Conclusion

Conflictive pasts are consubstantial to human history, and each society develops its own way to confront them from the point of view of the material remains they leave behind, producing such reactions as curiosity, rejection or, on the other side of the spectrum, pride and identity at different levels (Schnapp 1993; Trigger 2009). However, the development of modern conflicts from the nineteenth century onward, because of their major impact on societies and landscapes, has generated a specific way to confront the material past (Saunders and Cornish 2021). Thus conflict archaeology can make a major contribution in order to assess the significance of modern wars in the constitution of alternative and critical historical narratives. A good example is the heritage of the two World Wars, which has constituted important references for the resignification of those traumatic events (Pollard and Banks 2006; Saunders 2012a) although they are not without criticism and debate (González-Ruibal 2019).

The case of the nineteenth century-wars, and specifically cases such as the Carlist Wars, represents the other side of the coin. Most of these conflicts, or at least the most significant ones, were related both to specific territorial conflicts and, overall, to the confrontation between the liberal and social revolutions and the conservative counter-revolutions. A past that has been interpreted either as a legitimization of current nation-states or as conflictive and controversial. This is the case of the Carlist Wars in current Spain, a past that has no specific place in historical narratives and is mostly condemned to be a mere anecdote if not to oblivion. The consequence is that the archaeological heritage related to this past has commonly become uncomfortable. As we have argued through this paper, this is related to various factors, of which the impact of the traumatic events of the most recent Civil War is one. This is why the importance that writers like Pérez Galdós gave to the nineteenth-century Carlist conflicts -always from the point of view of a liberal- was ultimately eclipsed by the twentieth-century Civil War. Thus the politics of memory regarding conflictive heritage has tended to confront the latter. However, one crucial factor is precisely the type of materialities related to the Carlist Wars and the lack of a profound and critical archaeological narrative for them. As we have argued, the characteristics of Carlist material culture, its temporality, subtlety, or even invisibility, and the lack of a social reflection on the archaeological record have determined the type of narratives that can be constructed upon them and the place they occupy in the current politics of memory regarding heritage management.

In summary, the Carlist past constitutes a negative and contradictory heritage which, in some cases, was destroyed and obliterated while in others it was transformed into an arena for national populist display. A negative and uncomfortable past that has not been an object of major discussion in the public sphere even though a debate on this past, both as history and as heritage, may have a role to play in our present. From our point of view, archaeology, in both its public and academic dimen-

sion (González-Ruibal 2012; Merriman 2004; Moschenska 2008) may serve as the key to confront those negative pasts which shape our present.

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## Declarations

**Conflict of interest** There are no conflicts or competing interests that may apply to this manuscript.

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