

# Carnival celebration and folk theatre in Zuberoa: a view from folklore and performance studies

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*Artikulu honetan Maskarada teatro emanaldiak aztertzen dira. Inauterietan Zuberoan egiten diren ospakizun folkloriko tradizionalak dira Maskaradak. Jarduera konplexuak dira: herri bateko gazteek beste zenbait herritako kideak bisitatzeko dituzte eta gero dantzari eta ipuinak kontatzeari ekiten diote, guztiz egituraturik ageri diren erritu jarraibide batzuen arabera.*

*Giltza-Hitzak: Inauteriak. Folklorea. Dantza. Teatro emanaldia. Zuberoa.*

*Este artículo estudia funciones teatrales de "Maskarada". Se trata de celebraciones folclóricas tradicionales que tienen lugar en Zuberoa durante los Carnavales. Las Maskaradak son una actividad compleja en la que jóvenes de un pueblo visitan a sus congéneres en otros pueblos y luego bailan y cuentan cuentos siguiendo unas pautas ritualistas fuertemente estructuradas.*

*Palabras Clave: Carnavales. Folclore. Danza. Función teatral. Zuberoa.*

*Cet article étudie des fonctions théâtrales de «Maskarada». Il s'agit de célébrations folkloriques traditionnelles qui ont lieu en Zuberoa durant le Carnaval. Les Maskaradak sont une activité complexe au cours de laquelle des jeunes d'un village visitent leurs congénères d'autres villages et ensuite dansent et racontent des histoires en suivant des règles ritualistes fortement structurées.*

*Mots Clé : Carnaval. Folklore. Danse. Fonction théâtrale. Zuberoa.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This article discusses several issues related to traditional folk performance in Zuberoa, with *Maskarada* performances being understood as a genuine Souletine folk genre.<sup>1</sup> However, these performances also have many points in common with other theatrical celebrations which are carried out in winter time by several peoples from Mediterranean or Atlantic Europe (Alford 1978), as well as from North Africa (Hammoudi 1993). There is a further view of the *Maskaradak* which portrays them as the enactment and public exhibition of the most intricate traditional folk arts from *Pays de Soule* and even though there are a large range of folk arts involved in *Maskarada* performance, it is the arts of the dancers which have been given greater significance, both in local discourse and in academic research. As dancing does occupy an extremely sound place in rural Basque society, scholars have tended to examine many Basque festivities by focussing primarily on the dances. As a result, a significant number of studies concerning traditional rural festivals have addressed no other question than their dancing. Indeed, several Basque festivals in the Basque Country are known simply by the name of the dance danced in the festivity. A similar process has happened in Zuberoa, as the dancers and dances of *Maskarada* performances have come to represent the entire folk festival. This article will, however, demonstrate that the organisation of a *Maskarada* is a complex social activity, where dancing is but one of the parts which makes up the performance. Therefore, it will be argued that the use of analytical categories such as 'dance-event' (Royce 1977) opens up wider possibilities to the study of folk performance. Moreover, it will be explained that studying *Maskarada* performance in terms of 'mask-event' or 'storytelling-event' or 'song-event' is as accurate as studying them in terms of 'dance-event'.

The argument will depart from a brief account of the development of folklore studies to conclude that the analysis of European folk performance requires a close examination of the sociological contexts from which both local performers and anthropologists bring about their interpretations. Thus, the performance of the *Maskaradak* in Zuberoa questions once more issues such as, the place of the youth within the social structure which characterises the Pyrenean social organisation. Also, it shows that particular notions of time and types of sentiments are at work. Leach (1961) has referred to this in a way which will be examined later on. Some authors have argued that festivals provide participants 'a time out of time' (Falassi ed. 1987) while others have said that ritual inversions inform a 'cultural ethos' (Bateson 1958) as well as 'structures of feeling' (Williams 1958, 1980). But within European carnival performance, it is Caro Baroja (1965) who best examines the notions of time and sentiment, as he scrutinises them in historical festive behaviour and ethnographic contexts.

## 2. TRADITIONAL DANCE IN RURAL BASQUE SOCIETY

Several folklorists have approached the *Maskaradak* of Zuberoa and discussed their aesthetics and formal elements. Noticeably, they have focused pri-

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1. See Fernández de Larrinoa (2000) for a description of *Maskarada* performances in Zuberoa.

marily on the dancers, the result being that the analysis of the activities carried out by the *beltzak* [black group of performers] has largely been neglected. The emphasis on dancing has produced an understanding of the *Maskaradak* which gives the performing arts of the *aitzindariak* [dancers of the red group] greater importance (Alford 1928, 1931a, 1931b, 1937; Urbeltz 1978, 1994; Guilcher 1984), while less attention has been paid to the study of the masks and verbal arts of the black team performers (Fourquet 1990; Truffaut 1986, 1988; Fdez. de Larrinoa 1993b, 1999, 2000; Mozos 1985). As the analysis of dancing has come to stand for the analysis of the entire *Maskarada* performance, one aspect of *Maskarada* performances (dancing) has therefore been taken to represent the whole event, thus implying the occurrence of metonymy and reductionism. Similar metonymic images of *Maskarada* are also depicted in posters, cards and other crafts designed for tourists who visit Zuberoa. In these souvenirs, particular images of *Maskarada* have been selected in order to represent the *Pays de Soule*. These images might portray the five members of the *aitzindaria* dancing group; or a solo dancer, commonly a *zamalzain* dancer [hobby-horse]; or the *aitzindaria* dancers performing the *godalet dantza* [the dance of the glass of wine]. Thus, both folklorists and craft sellers have projected a certain image of the *Maskaradak* and of *Pays de Soule*, where the folk arts performed by the black team members have little or no representation.

The emphasis given to dance is not arbitrary. Rather, it is grounded on sociological circumstances, since, until recent years, dancing has played a central role within rural Basque festivities (Fdez. de Larrinoa 1998), particularly in festivities whose significance required the presence of local authorities and noblemen (Irigoyen 1991). This is the case of the *aurreku* dancing. *Aurreku* has been of particular importance in *fiestas patronales* or *herriko festak*<sup>2</sup> in villages and towns from the Spanish Basque region. In the French Basque area, main festivals are known as *eliz-bestak* [church festivals], which are characterised by the dancing of *jauziak* [jumps] in the *herriko plaza* [village square] after mass. *Jauziak* consist of a series of dances performed by male adults who dance in a circle. The dancing of *jauziak* has not been a characteristic of *eliz-bestak* only. In some villages they have also been danced after Sunday mass until the 1950s and 1960s and they are still performed in Zuberoa when folk theatre is organised.

That *jauziak* are danced both when *eliz-bestak* are organised and after Sunday church services unveils a link between expressing religious and civil authority and dancing. Yet, in rural Basque society the relationship of religious and civil authorities with local festivals has been controversial. During my fieldwork in the late 1980s and early 1990s I recorded several life histories which confirmed that, throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the relationships between local headmasters and local priests had been difficult in some villages in Zuberoa. Local informants explained that politics in their villages were conducted in terms of *zuriak* [whites] versus *gorriak* [reds]. *Zuriak* represented the ideals of the *Ancien Régime*, which were supported by the church and noble-

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2. Within the annual cycle of festivals, these are given high importance because they honour the patron or saint of the village.

men, whereas *gorriak* represented the ideals of the Republic. The opposition between reds and whites was well represented in the person who was appointed as secretary of the *herriko etxea* [village council]. As a rule, a red council would designate the schoolmaster of the village as its secretary, whereas a white council would appoint the village priest to the post. It must be noted that up until a few decades ago in the villages of Zuberoa, *herriko etxeak* or *mairies* [councils] have had their office and meeting room in the church. Some still do even today. Furthermore, in the dialects of the French area the Basque term for *maire* or council headmaster is *auzapeza*, which means, in free translation 'civil priest' [from *auzo*: inhabitant of the village and *apeza*: priest]. These circumstances makes us aware of the conflicting relations between church and civil administration in local life, before and after the French Revolution. Hérelle has referred briefly to the relations between politics and the organisation of the *Maskaradak* in Zuberoa in the following way:

Le pis est que les passions politiques s'en mêlent, et, comme toujours, elles produisent de déplorables effets. Si la mascarade a été organisée dans un village où la municipalité est républicaine, les villages réactionnaires refusent de la recevoir; si elle a été organisée dans un village où la municipalité est réactionnaire, les villages républicains refusent de la recevoir (cela s'est vu notamment en 1914). Triste réciprocité de sottise! (Hérelle 1925: 26).

Hérelle has better detailed the relations between Souletine folklore and politics in a study of *Pastorala* performances (Hérelle 1923: 9-20). In this work Hérelle analyses the impact of the ideas of the Republic in the organisation of *Pastorala* folk theatre. He documents that at the end of the eighteenth century, several organisers of the *Pastoralak* were accused of subversive behaviour and imprisoned, as *Pastorala* folk theatre was considered to support the monarchy and the church. Hérelle's own writing is illuminating:

Mais le sujet de cette pièce n'était qu'une 'moralité', et l'instituteur avait eu soin d'y insérer une chaleureuse profession de républicanisme. Voici ce qu'on trouve dans le manuscrit dont il fit usage (en basque, bien entendu):

Messieurs, divertissons-nous,  
Chantons le Te Deum,  
Tous l'un avec l'autre.

Mais en 1796 le Te Deum n'était plus de mode, et l'instituteur corrigea d'abord le verset de la manière suivante:

Célébrons la Nation.  
Tous l'un avec l'autre.

Puis cette formule lui parut encore insuffisante, si bien qu'il biffa de nouveau et écrivit en surcharge:

Chantons la Carmagnole,  
Tous l'un avec l'autre.

Et il ajouta au texte sept versets, dont les quatre premiers commentent, non sans verve, la rédaction définitivement adoptée:

Vive, vive la France!  
Vive, vive la Nation!  
Vive, vive la République!  
Et toute l'assemblée!  
(Hérelle 1923: 45).

Despite Hérelle's accounts no study has been undertaken on the relations between local politics and folklore on the French Basque side of the Pyrenees, except for two recent essays by Itzaina (1997- and Etxehandi 1989), respectively. Itzaina has analysed Corpus Christi celebrations during the Third French Republic in Nafarroa Behea, a French Basque area neighbouring Zuberoa. In particular, he has examined the conflicting relations between the Church and the State as reflected in the election of symbols to be displayed within the religious parade. Thus, dancing and rural festivities in the French Basque region reflected similar issues to those analysed by Agulhon (1982) and McPhee (1977, 1978) in other areas of the Pyrenees and France. Agulhon and McPhee have shown that there was a strong intertwining between local politics and folklore during the Second Republic, since folklore served as a vehicle for peasants to express left-wing radicalism. In other words, leftist peasants made use of locally rooted cultural symbols and religious rituals to express political meanings. Moreover:

By 1850, dancing and support for the Left had become virtually synonymous through much of southern France (McPhee 19:245).

In rural Basque society the attitude from civil and religious local powers towards festivities, music and dance-events has been ambivalent. Sometimes festivals and dances have been restricted and participants pursued by both church and civil powers (Ramos 1999), while on other occasions they have been encouraged and strongly supported (Itzaina 1997). Among the latter are the *aurresku* (in the Spanish Basque provinces of Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa), the *larraindantza* (in central and southern Nafarroa) and the *jauziak* (in the French Basque provinces). However, dances and festivals which imply, either nocturnality or physical or visual contact between dancers of different sex, have been criticised severely by local authorities as well as being forbidden. *Maskarada* performances are not an exception. Local authorities in Zuberoa have always expressed ambivalent feelings towards the organisation of the *Maskaradak*. On the one hand, in Zuberoa the *auzapezak* [council headmasters] usually have a background as folk dancers. Likewise, dancers dance in the *herriko plaza* [village square] to honour them as local representatives. Consequently, local authorities enjoy *Maskarada* dancing and identify themselves with the performers. However, they might not feel comfortable with the performance assigned to the black team, whose members behave disorderly, parody and make fun of them, as well as causing trouble by means of their *phreredikiak* [sermons]. Local priests are not at ease either, for the *beltzak* [the members of the black team] recite coarse speeches and never refrain from sexual references and obscenities. Therefore, ambivalence results from *Maskarada* performances. In sociological terms, dan-

cing tends to be highlighted while the arts of the black team are ill-esteemed. The same has happened in academic research. Yet dancing is but one component of *Maskarada* performances.

### 3. FIRST APPROACHES TO TRADITIONAL DANCE IN FOLKLORE STUDIES

The beginning of folklore studies is related to romanticism which spread over Europe throughout the nineteenth century. A characteristic of romanticism was the quest for simplicity which, as it was understood, was to be found in the arts and *modus vivendi* of simple folk, such as peasants, fishermen and women, craftspeople and marginal groups in society. By and large, folklore was synonymous with the study of the cultures of non-urban, pre-industrial or marginal European peoples. Here lay a key distinction between folklorists and anthropologists, as first anthropologists distinguished themselves through their interest in non-Western societies and cultures, particularly in societies characterised by the absence of a state or by lacking a centralised system of writing. Folklorists were concerned with 'non-official' European cultures and lifestyles (or those of European emigrants in other continents). 'Non-official' culture meant the culture of social classes lacking in power or position in the national economy. Likewise, it meant the culture of ethnic minorities and language groups not recognised for administrative purposes (Dorson 1973, Burke 1978).

According to the object of analysis and to its geographical location, anthropology and folklore contrasted, which has affected the theoretical and practical premises on which folklorists and anthropologists have undertaken the study of dance and folk arts. The study of dance and other performing arts has been of crucial importance in the work of many folklorists and anthropologists and constitutes a focal point in this thesis. The different approaches to dance are reflected in the diversity of expressions which are used by anthropologists and folklorists. Most anthropologists have studied non-Western dances in terms of *ritual* behaviour. Folklorists have referred to rural or ethnic European dancing as *traditional*. The origin of this distinction comes at the end of the nineteenth century when folklorists and anthropologists adopted different approaches to dancing and other performing arts. Whether the dance was performed by a Western or non-Western society implied that the performing art was performed in rural (or marginal urban) European contexts or in 'primitive tribal' societies (Dorson 1968, Stocking 1996).

The first studies of dance undertaken by sociocultural anthropologists and folklorists departed from different assumptions. Anthropologists set out to decipher contemporary meanings, whereas folklorists wanted to uncover original significances. The data gathered by anthropologists through participant observation led them to conclude that dancing in tribal society had an active meaning and significance within the social and symbolic order of the community. Equally they stressed that dance often plays a significant role in the configuration of the political or religious order in non-Western societies.

Dance has been given a special status beyond the Western world. It has been considered to hold a deeply rooted meaning for its performers, as well as being

closely linked to the celebration of political or religious rituals. This explains why the early research carried out on dancing distinguished between dance performed in rural Western societies and that performed in 'primitive' tribal societies. Accordingly, a distinction between traditional and ritual performing arts included former distinctions between Western and non-Western societies and between rural and tribal. Many folklorists have argued that European folk arts did not possess social, religious or political significance but that they were surviving examples of cultures from the past. Folklorists affirmed that European dancing belonged to cultural, social and ritual worldviews which had already disappeared or were in the process of doing so. Moreover, folklorists considered that European peasant arts were reminiscent of a time past, prior to the advent of industrial and urban societies. Consequently, they suggested that the European performing arts were 'primitive' in origin and surviving examples of ancient religions and beliefs. Given the passage of time, its original significance had been erased from the collective memory of performers and audience alike, and as far as the early European folklorists were concerned, the original meaning was the only authentic meaning (Bronner 1984).

As framed within social evolutionary theory, the distinction between tribal and peasant led anthropologists and folklorists to follow separate paths in the study of dance. With the dawning of the twentieth century, anthropologists institutionalised their research in the University, and detached themselves from romantic, evolutionist and diffusionist ideas of the nineteenth century while incorporating such notions as 'native's point of view', 'regional history' and 'intensive fieldwork'. This change in approach was not taken up by twentieth century folklorists who continued to work in research centres characterised by their defence of romantic, regionalist or nationalist ideas, as well as supporting evolutionist or diffusionist frames of interpretation. Thus, folklore studies were carried out in local societies and research institutes in which data-collection and erudition were favoured above analysis and reflection (Dorson 1973, Bronner 1984, Davidson 1987). This contrast has meant that folklore studies have lacked prestige in the intellectual community until recently, when folklore studies have undertaken a major change which we will go on to discuss in the following pages.

#### **4. FOLKLORE AND SOCIOCULTURAL ANALYSIS**

It has been argued that cultural activities are awarded greater or lesser reputation or consideration according to whether they take place in the town or in the country or whether they are organised and attended by marginal or ruling sectors of society. Accordingly, folklore and culture appear to constitute a dichotomy in constant confrontation (Murphy 1987). Following Murphy's theories, folklore is associated with peasant activity characterised as pleasant, tender, immature, innocent, simple and repetitive. By contrast, the town is associated with culture which implies elaboration, good taste, elegance, experimentation and creation. Several authors have stated that this dichotomy is false (Bourdieu 1983; Chartier 1987, 1988; Barber 1997), so a proposal has been made to withdraw the term folklore and replace it with another term with more positive connotations. Among the alternative expressions proposed the following stand out: tradi-

tional or ethnographic art, oral literature, popular culture, choreology and ethnomusicology (Murphy 1987). The inclusion of the words literature, art, musicology and culture are noteworthy, since they are expressions immediately associated with positive aspects such as creative capacity, control of the techniques of composition and aesthetic accomplishment. Additionally, the use of innovative methods in the interpretation of data gathered during fieldwork has contributed to a greater recognition of European folklore studies today. Particularly influential were the studies of Malinowski and Boas on myth which focused on the sociological context (Malinowski 1926) and historical development (Boas 1940). The following paragraphs outline the different types of folklore analysis which evolved from the end of the nineteenth century up to the present day.

Early studies in European folklore were shaped in two ways. One focused on meaning, while the other stressed collection and classification. Followers of the first approach were inspired by works on animism and magical thought by authors such as Tylor (1903) and Frazer (1913). They aimed to show that European folklore was a remnant of magical thought characteristic of societies situated at a stage of evolution prior to civilisation and industrialisation. Followers of the second approach paid greater attention to the tasks of identification, description and classification of data. They were influenced by the works of literature and language of the time and dedicated themselves to the selection and arrangement of genres of folkloric expression and to the elaboration of typologies. Their task consisted of gathering material from the field and then elaborating an inventory which would be classified according to the genre or prototype to which it corresponded. Inventories were organised according to several criteria. For instance, importance was given to the different social or ritual ways in which words were employed and also to the way in which utensils, tools and other elements of material culture were elaborated and used. Likewise, beliefs and practices related to worldviews were given special attention as well as entertainment, festivals and celebrations. Thus, when folklorists classified and archived the human activities in which words played an important part, they established different genres: narrative, poetry (lyrical or epic), paremyology, riddles, songs and dialectology. When studying material culture they distinguished between architecture, dress, work tools, cooking utensils, musical instruments, crafts and artistic or decorative elements. When dealing with collective activities they differentiated religious festivals from civil festivals, and also classified theatre, music, dance, games and pastimes. They focussed on other categories as well, such as beliefs, medicine, etc. (Dorson ed. 1972; Ben-Amos 1976).

In the wake of these first two approaches, other ways of researching folklore developed so that by the 1960s folklorists could choose between six theoretical-methodological approaches for their study. Murphy (1987) has summarised them as follows: the historical-geographical method; the nature allegory; mythical-ritual theory; psychoanalytical theory; structuralist analysis and vulgar Marxism. These six theoretical and methodological schools were distinguished by their pursuit of different objectives, although sometimes they shared certain premises, as we shall observe. The historical-geographical school follows the same procedure as those who favour classification by genre



and theme. Murphy argues that the historical-geographical school has concentrated on issues related to the origins and diffusion of elements of folklore. Its methodology consists first in gathering all the existing variations of a piece of oral literature, or of a dance, which are found across a determined cultural area to then identify the original song, narrative or dance out of which come all the others. This methodology gives preference to the task of identifying or reconstructing the first, original and genuine piece, the point of departure for all the rest.

The use of nature as allegory to explain folklore is very much related to comparative-evolutionist approaches. Its followers argue that the significance of a piece of oral literature or a dance should be sought in its origins, in a previous phase of human life when people made their living in close proximity to nature. Accordingly, peasant folklore is a surviving example of a past culture and the folklorist's task consists in rediscovering the lost meaning of the chosen piece of folklore. So folklorists must reconstruct a society in a state of nature which has since disappeared. The mythical-ritual theory states that the significance of oral texts and dance derives from the existence of a mutual connection. It may happen that with the passage of time some cultures have conserved mythical narration but let its ritual representation go. Others, on the contrary, have forgotten the oral narrative but maintained its physical, theatrical or ritual manifestation. The folklorist must then seek out the mythical piece of oral literature which corresponds to a certain ritual dance and vice versa. In both cases, the task of the folklorist consists in rediscovering the lost piece. The psychological approach focuses on the unconscious meanings attributed to collective phenomena of artistic-ritual character, whether verbal or non-verbal. Within this approach symbols, codes and metaphors are examined in terms of the information they provide in order to study psychological stereotypes, types of personality and archetypes. According to Lévi-Strauss' structural theory, masks, myths, material culture and other folk elements are external manifestations of an internal mental code characteristic of the human species. Lévi-Strauss uses the expression, 'structural logic of thought' to refer to this. This structural logic inhabits the unconscious of the human mind and it is fundamental in the processes of artistic creativity. Lévi-Strauss affirms that this mental structure is formed by pairs of opposites and he adds that the principal opposition on which all the others rest is that which arises from the opposition between nature and culture. Consequently, folklorists who adopt this approach direct their efforts to demonstrate how dances and other folk arts dramatise an opposition between the elements of the natural and the cultural world. Vulgar Marxism considers that myths, narratives, poetical compositions and ritual or religious festivities belong to what is known as the 'superstructure', otherwise known as the 'ideological sphere'. Marxism maintains that the notion of culture is not neutral. Since there exists something called ideology, culture exists to cover up the fact that human relations are essentially relations of economic exploitation. This has led Marxists to argue that culture, or the superstructure, is an ideology created and maintained by the dominant classes in order to legitimate asymmetrical and unjust social relations. They have further affirmed that since folklore feeds a false consciousness of reality, it often operates as a counter-revolutionary activity.

Several scholars have argued that the theoretical models discussed above are ethnocentric, and thus deficient, since they are grounded on Western conceptions of knowledge (Murphy 1987). Folklore studies attracted more attention when folklorists gave greater importance to the analysis of context and local meaning. In other words: to the analysis of sociological context and to the analysis of local historical context, as developed from Malinowski and Boas onwards, within the British and North American anthropological traditions, respectively. The switch was relevant, for folklore studies shifted from text to context, and took into account both the interpretations given by the social agents and the social, economic and political processes involved in the production of folk arts (Murphy 1987, Bauman & Briggs 1990).

In the 1960s and 1970s folklorists embraced the study of folklore in terms of an act of communication. The study of folklore as an act of communication gained ground as a result of the research of Kenneth S. Goldstein and Dan Ben-Amos (1975), D.H. Hymes (1974) and others. These authors were concerned with the communicative capacity of language forms which are employed in folklore events. For that reason they turned to sociolinguistics, and studied folklore in terms of semantics, namely folklore as the study of the strategies and rhetorical forms of communication characteristic of folk representations, whether literary or ritual, material or craft or bodily expressions. Equal importance was given to the study of local frames of reference, for it was understood that the codes of reference enable participants to interpret what happens in folklore events. When folklore approached linguistics, many European folklorists abandoned the study of formal or morphological texts and began to question instead the types of interaction between the participants and the level of communicative competence which were shared. A consequence of studying folklore as communicative competence was the reflection upon the social rules which determine the culturally appropriate use of different forms of collective expression, verbal or non-verbal.

The study of folklore as a communicative act is not only the result of the sociolinguistic research of Kenneth S. Goldstein, Dan Ben-Amos and D.H. Hymes. Also, symbolic interactionism and other American schools of thought have been influential. For instance, the sociologist Erving Goffman (1974) and the anthropologist Gregory Bateson (1972) used the expressions 'cognition frame' and 'meta-communication' respectively to indicate that sociocultural events are interpreted according to the cultural-communicative frame in which they occur. This idea has been taken up by anthropologists like Don Handelman (1977, 1990) or Da Matta (1977) who have argued that festivals must be understood in terms of whether participants employ a communicative frame which defines the event as 'play' or as 'ritual', or as a combination of both.

Following on this line of interpretation, folk events involve a process of interaction in which more than one communicative intention can be distinguished. In other words, in folk celebrations different forms of relations between actors and audience or between authors and receivers can be appreciated. It is the folklorist's task to examine the communicative intention of some and the willingness of others to receive, in addition to specifying which frame of reference or communicative code is employed. Therefore, the study of folklore unveils the

existence of rules which determine the culturally appropriate use of speech and ritual or artistic movement. These rules then make it possible to interpret the communicative and receptive competence of the actors or authors and audience or receivers respectively. Finally, this approach implies an enquiry into the semantics of the context of representation, which in turn means attributing less importance to the analysis of the text represented.

New ways for the study of folklore arrived in the 1980s as folklorists became influenced by writings of anthropologists such as Turner (1974, 1977, 1982 1982 ed.) and Geertz (1973, 1980). Folklore was now studied in terms of cultural arenas as well as displaying cultural models or as being a genre of cultural performance. That is to say, folklore events were seen to be activities by means of which a culturally significant social action is publicly performed or carried out. On this basis, folk events were studied in terms of social drama and cultural representation, which requires a focus on symbols and ritual action, on their interpretation as well as on the ritual experience of the participants. It is worth noting that these studies of folklore have rejected the notion of linguistic-communicative structures which were employed in the 1970s in order to promote analysis based on the examination of dramatised images and metaphors (Sapir & Crocker 1977; Fernandez 1974, 1977, 1984). In other words, a shift from analysing cultural models and structures to asking about cultural agency took place.

Thus, it can be observed that folklore studies have evolved significantly in the last hundred years. At the outset, folklorists worked on formal and morphological aspects, emphasising different genres and their classification. Today, folklorists consider folklore to be characterised by three facts. Firstly, folklore is a cultural practice, with a specific, cyclical form. It possesses a particular format which repeats itself periodically. Therefore, folklorists study the morphology, the sequence and syntax of elements which are observed in folk events. Secondly, folk performances are public exhibitions which are enjoyed by both local communities and external visitors to whom attention must be paid in the task of grasping cultural meaning and social significance. Thirdly, folklore is an aesthetic representation, which means that folklore is conceived as a sociocultural event where more than one interpretative genre (song, dance, proverb, speech, mask, music, etc.) combine. These genres follow complex aesthetic and creative patterns of composition, not necessarily connected to the use of words. Therefore, most folklorists of the 1980s and 1990s have understood that they study cultural behaviour. In particular, they now study the performative aspects of culture regardless of its social or ecological setting (Bauman ed. 1977).

## **5. THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF DANCE EVENTS**

Research conducted by folklorists has focused on four broad topics: oral culture (myths, tales, legends, proverbs, verse, etc.); ritual and celebration (dance, masks and other religious and symbolic elements); material culture (pottery, textiles, beads, architecture, etc.); and ethnomusicology (song, music, instruments, players). The question here is: what place must be ascribed to dance in the studies of folklore? and particularly: what place is to be ascribed to dancing in

the Zuberoan *Maskaradak*? There are two possible answers. One states that dancing must be studied as a genre in its own right because it possesses its own inner logic which can be observed in the way different cultures have chosen to combine specific sets of bodily movements. An alternative answer is to consider dance together with other folk genres and arts such as music, masks, song, speech, etc. Moreover, it has been argued that folk dance takes place within local contexts as well as in relation to wider organisational, participatory, social and political circumstances. In the first case, dance is studied separately from other actions coinciding with it. As a result, the study of a dance becomes the study of choreography proper. In the second case, dancing is perceived as a folk art which happens to be in an event larger than the actuality of the dance itself and this has given rise to the notion of 'dance-event' (Royce 1977).

In the study of the *Maskaradak* from Zuberoa seen as a dance-event, the scholar must be aware of a series of circumstances which can be explained by following Spencer's (1985) notes on dancing. Firstly, Spencer has stated that, in particular contexts, dancing works out a collective or individual catharsis. This can be seen in healing and shamanistic ceremonies as well as in carnival festivals. Most functional analysis has followed this path, which Caro Baroja (1965) has discussed, in relation to the study of the *Maskaradak* and other European carnivals, by arguing that carnival celebration held a special meaning as pressure valve and as a structural reversal in medieval Christian society. Secondly, Spencer has stated that dance also occurs in processes where social control is exercised or dramatised. This is the case when dancers perform at a time when symbols of political, economic, social or religious authority are publicly displayed and honoured. This can be seen in *Maskarada* performances where the *aitzindari* dancers wear clothes and decorate them with colours which are related to the expression of authority. Thirdly, Spencer has showed that several dances are particular to processes of individual or social transformation. A typical example consists of the dances required to perform in rites of passage. Up until recently the *maskaradakaiak* [performers of the *Maskaradak*] have been young male bachelors of a village, which has given grounds to interpretation of the *Maskaradak* as a collective dramatisation of the changing status of a particular social group, i.e. from youth to manhood. In fact, the *maskaradakaiak* like to say that each generation of people in a village ought to perform its own *Maskarada*, which backs up the interpretation of the *Maskaradak* as a rite of passage. Fourthly, Spencer has pointed out that dancing can be seen as an index or marker of particular social identities. The dancing in the *Maskaradak* expresses this in several ways. One meaning is global. That is to say, the *Maskaradak* and Zuberoa or *Pays de Soule* are cultural images, as well as historical realities, which have come to identify each other and mutually support each other. However, there are further identifications. For instance, villagers of the *basabürüa* [highlands] carry out their dancing skills differently from villagers of the *pettarra* [lowlands]. When jumping, dancers of the highlands are supposed to hold their arms in a way that makes them distinguishable from lowland dancers (Truffaut 1986, 1988). Another example is seen in some *etxeak* [households] from villages of *Pays de Béarn* (Occitanian speaking area bordering *Pays de Soule*) whose inhabitants take part in the *Maskaradak* organised by neighbouring Souletine villages. This is an example where inhabitants of culturally Occitan areas show a commitment to

express Souletineness and identify themselves publicly as Souletine by dancing in the *Maskaradak*. Fifthly, Spencer has explained that dancing may occur in situations where performers are dramatising social values such as group belonging or group tensions. As I have shown elsewhere, the *Maskaradak* of Soule dramatise gender concepts and tensions (Fdez. de Larrinoa 1993c, 1997a). Finally, Spencer argues that there is a body of research which has focussed on dance in terms of a combination of movements which are meaningful in themselves. This trend has led scholars first to discern the dances' choreographic units and then to analyse their meaning, for it is understood that dances encompass meaning by the way specific choreographic units are combined in particular dances. By adopting this method of analysis, scholars have emphasised description. In order to represent choreographic movements on paper, they have elaborated and discussed several notation systems. Similarly, they have proposed various systems of dance classification. Most Basque folklorists have chosen a choreographic analysis of *Maskarada* performances by highlighting that *aizindari* dancing is made out of the combination of several dance units such as the *puntuak*, *frexetak* and *entrexatak* (Guilcher 1984).

Spencer has argued that the study of dance is not a simple task since a number of circumstances occur simultaneously. This is also true in the analysis of dancing in *Maskarada* performance. First of all, dancing in the *Maskaradak* is but one folk art within a larger event where other folk arts are at work. In addition to dancing, performers sing, tell stories, disguise themselves, play music, eat and drink. Consequently, dances happen on a par with other aesthetic creations. Even if we consider undertaking a study of the *Maskaradak*, where the analysis of dancing is given special emphasis, complexity again arises. The reasons have already been outlined. The performance of the *Maskaradak* implies, or has implied, a dramatisation of structural catharsis and symbolic renewal. It also stages cultural symbols and images which intensify social order as well as those which subvert it. The age and social status of the performers suggest the idea that performing allows participants to experience a rite of passage into adulthood. Dancers are also expected to dance by following separate patterns of style which identify them with particular areas and villages inside Zuberoa. Likewise, dancers are seen to express masculinity. Yet some characters of the *Maskaradak* are female and since the 1980s many dancers are themselves female. Furthermore, Zuberoan dances are composed of a number of steps and jumps which dancers decide how to combine.

## **6. THE STUDY OF MASKARADA PERFORMANCES AS A EURO-MEDITERRANEAN WINTER FESTIVAL**

In the study of European winter festivals scholars have pointed out four aspects or areas of investigation: the historic-religious aspect; the dramatic or para-theatrical aspect; then what the French historian Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie has named the 'existential' element, for it refers to the basic economic activities upon which rural people make their existence and lastly the class struggle (Le Roy Ladurie 1980:309). This essay does not propose to analyse these aspects in any depth, since the main aim is to demonstrate the different ways in which

festive celebration and sociocultural identity are related. However, a brief summary of them will be carried out.

The studies which have concentrated on the historic-religious aspect of carnival vary in their emphasis. One approach studies the origin of carnival in pagan or pre-Christian festivals, rites and celebrations (Dumézil 1966; Bayet 1971; Caro Baroja 1965), whilst others relate it to the Christian period of Lent or the Islamic feast of sacrifice (Bristol 1985; Hammoudi 1993). There are some researchers who see a connection with medieval cathedral festivals and feasts of fools (Heers 1983). The second area of research focuses upon the dramaturgical and theatrical aspects of winter festivals in which two currents can be identified. The first emphasises the notion of open-air representation regarding highly codified ideas and images (Burke 1978). The second explains that the relation between text, actors and audience, which is established in these festivals, should be understood in terms of popular and oral culture (Bakhtin 1984). Although in the past some scholars have considered this notion of popular or oral culture to be separate from other types of cultural manifestations, particularly from those of the wealthier social classes, today it is mostly accepted that there is no restricted relationship between class structure and popular culture. Thus, later research emphasises the ambiguities of feasts and celebrations which are a cross-section of different boundaries within society. That is to say, cultural artifacts circulate across social, cultural and geographic boundaries, which means that both the so-called 'common' and 'elite' social groups imitate and appropriate mutually cultural elements (Bourdieu 1983; Chartier 1987, 1988; Barber 1997). The third aspect underlines the link between winter festivals, peasants' beliefs and the cycles of the agricultural and cattle-raising economy (Gaignebet 1974). The relevance of the fourth or socio-political aspect has manifested itself in different historical and geographical circumstances. Its importance is illustrated in the research of Le Roy Ladurie (1980), and in that of Davis (1987) and Thompson (1974) on popular culture in modern France and England, respectively. The work of Cohen on the carnivals organised by the Caribbean community of London, England, during the 1980s should also be included amongst the works which stress the socio-political character of the festival (Cohen 1993). These four aspects of carnival festival are present in the *Maskaradak*, even though their intensity has varied over time.

Here I shall elaborate upon the idea that the Zuberoan *Maskaradak* form part of a European and Mediterranean festive complex, which is reflected in the calendar, structure, sequence of events and festive aesthetics. By festive aesthetics I mean the arts involved in ritual performance such as song, dance, masquerade, music and other artistic elements usually known as performative arts (Blacking & Kcalirohomoku eds. 1979, Kapferer 1983). *Maskarada* performances form part of a broad group of festivals and rituals which are celebrated by rural populations in winter time. Thus, the *Maskaradak* are local manifestations of a form of ritual behaviour which is to be found across an extensive geographical area which includes countries from both sides of the Mediterranean sea as well as from Atlantic Europe. They take place during a specific period of the year and, to a large extent, are founded on social and economic characteristics of agricultural life. In addition to their Euro-Mediterranean and rural character, other characteristics must

be mentioned. Firstly, winter festivals are seasonal and cyclical. According to their date of celebration they can be grouped into two festive periods: one in October through November to Christmas; the other in February or March, the dates of carnival. Secondly, there is a syncretism of beliefs and festive calendars which is inferred from the fact that different religious systems and conceptions of time coincide in these festivals. Thirdly, the rural winter festivals and rituals are performances which demonstrate a high level of aesthetic homogeneity.

The syncretic aspect of the winter festivals of the different European regions and their Mediterranean neighbours has been analysed by various scholars who have emphasised the existence of a chain of juxtapositions in contemporary winter festivals. This stretches from the early Indo-European religions and Mediterranean mythologies to Medieval Christianity, and links Roman and Jewish calendars and festivals. Yet this idea has followed several paths. For instance, Dumézil (1966), Bayet (1971) and Caro Baroja (1965) have argued that Roman and Greek festivals such as Roman New Year, Kalends of January, Saturnalia and Lupercalia are the first documented references concerning the celebration of winter festivals and masked festive performance. Gaignevet (1974) has studied winter celebration in relation to beliefs and practices considered to be pagan, to then conclude that winter peasant festivals are linked to a lunar calendar which is based on folk conceptions of astronomy. Bartra (1994) has shown that today's rural folk festivals are theatrical expressions of the myth of the wild man which, he has argued, is central in the making of a cultural self-understanding of Europe as civilised. Other authors, such as Heers (1983), have studied winter festivals in relation to festivals organised in churches and cathedrals during early medieval Christianity.

The homogeneity which characterises Euro-Mediterranean winter festivals is also reflected in the aesthetics of the representation. The degree of homogeneity is such that a significant number of scholars consider the different winter festivals to be individual versions of a single original celebration, i.e. they are ramifications of a common trunk. This idea of winter festivals as stemming from a common trunk is confirmed in that they are a *sui generis* dramatisation of human relationships and also in that they dramatise relationships between human beings and their physical environment. Thus, it can be observed that they are directly related to the biological rhythms of nature and the cycles marked out by the agricultural and pastoral activities of the rural world (Caro Baroja 1965, Gaignevet 1974, Hammoudi 1993). Likewise, animals feature significantly in these festivals in the disguises and masks. The most frequently dramatised animals are those which inhabit the mountains and woods, for example, horses, bears, cats, deer, different types of game and cocks. In the festival these animals must be hunted, domesticated or sacrificed. Ultimately they must be dominated and controlled. It has been reported that European masks are displayed in a way that they represent mutually opposing images and attitudes (Poppi 1994).

Winter festivals convey scenic, symbolic and social meaning. Moreover, their high degree of theatricality projects socially relevant questions. Hence, many winter festivals dramatise rites of passage and socialisation within the community, which is expressed in feasting and in collecting food and drinks by the young male bachelors in a village. In the Basque Country, this activity is

known as *santaeskea* or *obetaka* (according to Basque dialect and local pattern; it also is referred to as *aguinaldo*<sup>3</sup>, when using Spanish). As a *Maskarada* performance is composed of young single men of a village, several scholars have expressed that the *Maskaradak* are related to what Van Gennep (1960) defined as *rite de passage*. In so doing, they have argued that by means of performing in a *Maskarada* the young men of a village publicly distinguish themselves from other social groups of the community, precisely when according to age and social expectations they are about to become adult members of the community. To reinforce this view it can be argued that these young men have been called -or are close to being called- for national service, either military or civil. As they are dramatising that a change in social status takes place, together with a biological transformation, these young men act out the passing from adolescence to social maturity. Duvert (1882-1983) has pushed this argument forward in his analysis of the Zuberoan *Maskaradak*. He has stated that the *Maskaradak* represent a transition in the performer's understanding of cultural space and social relations, since by participating in a *Maskarada*, a performer initiates himself in a ritual knowledge which makes him come out from the private space of the household and enter social relationships in public spaces. Duvert has further stated that performing the *Maskaradak* maps a sociocultural space where participants learn about cultural and social boundaries in Souletine society.

But the Zuberoan *Maskaradak* can be seen as ritual behaviour which allows a particular social segment to express group identity vis-à-vis other social groups in the community. Thus, many patterns of behaviour which are acted out alongside the celebration of festivals in winter time can be approached in similar terms as Davis (1975) Le Golf and Schmitt (eds. 1981) and Thompson (1974) have done when analysing social behaviour involved in *charivari* and *rough music*. I have focused on this issue in Fdez. de Larrinoa (1994a), where I pointed out that Zuberoan *Maskarada* performance dramatises the existence of two contrasting social groups within social organisation. This contrast is playfully expressed in the breaking down of the *barrikadak* (ritual barricades in *Maskarada* performance). I have illustrated this point by comparing the crossing of boundaries involved in the *Maskaradak* with the crossing of boundaries involved in the enactment of the *Maskak* [masks] and *obetaka* [collecting box or trick-or-treating]. These are two yearly activities by means of which the young men of a village collect food and drinks in order to feast. Like the *Maskaradak*, the *Maskak* happen in Carnival, although at night. They consist of male bachelors who mask their faces and disguise themselves as *buhameak* [gypsies]. A member of the troupe disguises himself as a gypsy woman who is in charge of gathering the food and drinks given to them in a basket. Silently at night, these young men approach the houses of their villages and then ask for permission to enter. Residents usually concede. Visitors are received in the kitchen and hosts try to guess who is behind the mask. When a performer's identity is discovered, the visitor then takes off his

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3. The *aguinaldo* is a gift usually given around Christmas or New Year but since it belongs to the tradition of winter festivals as a whole, it also extends to carnival. It is similar to the Anglo-Saxon Christmas 'box' or may be a gift or donation of the kind given to carollers or children 'trick-or-treating' at Halloween.



mask. But if the hosts miss the answer they then go on to pretend taking off the visitors' masks from their faces, while the visitors pretend to take the hosts' *lukainkak* and *irugiherra* [sausages and bacon], which hang from the ceiling in the kitchen. The visit finishes when the visitors are identified or the hosts give up the task of identification. At this moment *lukainkak* and *irugiherra*, as well as wine, are given to the troupe who acknowledges it by singing a verse. This is repeated in every house they visit. Once food and drinks have been collected these young men will meet together for supper in a local tavern, where their fellow villagers' presents will be consumed. The performing of the *Maskak* has been a common pattern in Soule during the first half of the twentieth century, as J-M Guilcher reports (Guilcher: 1984:538-542). My fieldwork confirms that the *Maskak* are still carried out in several villages. For instance, in Muskildi<sup>4</sup> no *Maskak* have been played since the 1970s, but they were still performed in Urdiñarbe and Donaixti, which are two villages neighbouring Muskildi.<sup>5</sup>

*Obetaka* is another collective activity undertaken by a village's young men. Like in many other French Basque villages, in Zuberoa it is the young people who organise the annual main festival in a village, usually in the summer. *Obetaka* is carried out as a fund-raising activity designed to meet the expenses of the festival. However, there is an additional source of income, as a ticket must be purchased in order to attend the festival. Three aspects are significant in the organisation of summer festivals in Zuberoa. Firstly, fellow villagers are not made to buy a ticket, as they are expected to contribute in *obetaka*. Secondly, in the autumn the young people arrange a dinner party to which all the villagers are invited, a *atzarkiaien jatea*, which is a feast where a billy goat is cooked and consumed. It was explained to me that the young men organise this feast to thank their fellow villagers for their contribution to the summer festival. Thirdly, the tension between the young men and the masters of the households of the village, that is to say between the two contrasting understandings of social organisation, must be seen to be playfully dramatised. This is best seen in the way that *obetaka* is carried out.

In the summer of 1991 I participated in the *obetaka* performed by the youth of Muskildi. Boys and girls<sup>6</sup> of the village met in the *herriko plaza* [village square] early in the afternoon. They divided themselves into several groups, as many as there were *herriko kartielak* [village neighbourhoods]. Each group was assigned a particular *kartiela*. I joined in with the group which visited the households in the neighbourhood named Karrika. Unlike the *Maskak*, the *obetaka* happens during the day and participants do not disguise or hide their identity. As they approach a house they stop at the doorstep. A young *txirularia* [Souletine flute player] plays a melody while a friend dances. A member of the household opens the door and watches his or her dancing. When the dance is over the entire group<sup>7</sup> is

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4. Muskildi is the village where I stayed while in the field.

5. Abrahams and Bauman (1971) and Sider (1986) give ethnographic accounts of similar ritualistic behaviour in St. Vincent and Newfoundland respectively.

6. Since the late 1970s boys and girls participate together in the organisation of *eliz-bestak* (main village festival) in most villages from Zuberoa. Up until then *obetaka* was undertaken by just boys.

7. On that occasion groups were of around ten-fifteen people.

invited to enter the house. Coffee, spirits, cakes and sweets await them inside. *Etxeko jauna* [the master of the house] is the host. It is he who pours the drinks and fills the glasses when they are empty. At a certain moment one of the visitors who has been thus commissioned is offered an envelope containing some money. It will be repeated in all the households which are visited.

Several things are striking in the realisation of the *obetaka*. One is *etxeko jauna* overacting his role as host, making himself look almost a waiter. He will get up from his seat in the kitchen and move around the table, continuously filling up glasses with wine, *ricard*, *pernod* and other French spirits. This behaviour contrasts radically with that of everyday life when *etxeko jauna* is never expected to leave his seat at the table or to serve food and drinks. Therefore, his performance in the *obetaka* is unusual. Another important circumstance in the *obetaka* is that visitors visit most houses of a *kartiela* [village neighbourhood] which may number up to ten<sup>8</sup>. This means good funding is obtained, but also that the young men get drunk. By mid afternoon the scenes in the kitchen are hilarious. The *etxeko jaunak* [the masters of households] insist on refilling the glasses over and over again whereas the young people will cover them with their hands as they realise that the spirits are affecting them and there are several households still waiting to donate an envelope. As the young people drink, the hosts and guests joke about themselves. The young people would not deny a first drink but would try to avoid a second by remarking loudly *aski, aski! Ez, ez!* [Don't! Stop it! I've already had enough, I'm fine]. But *etxeko jauna* approaches them again with a bottle in his hand. The latter would answer: *lotsa hiza? Hi azkarra hiz, ehiz mozkortũko* [why are you worried? You won't get drunk you are a strong boy].

*The Maskak* and *obetaka* construct two principles of social organisation which face each other in a playful manner. On the one hand, there is the principle of the household which puts forwards an understanding of social organisation, where households are given a strong ideological value as independent unities within a village, both economic and ecological. This principle has already been discussed by Douglass (1969, 1975), Ott (1981) as well as myself (1991, 1993a, 1993b, 1977b) and it is represented by *etxeko jauna*. The other principle involves a view of social grouping which subverts that of *etxea* (the household-orientated society) since the young people form a social group which is composed of members who belong to separate households but act together. In other words, whereas the Pyrenean household system stresses a notion of social organisation which is based on membership to a household, the associations of young people cut across the former principle. The *Maskak* and *obetaka* are occasions when these two groups meet each other in a common space and measure their strength in a ritualistic and joking manner.

As these two separate social groups have fun and a good time in their ritual encounters, their relations are of exchange as well. This is better observed in the *obetaka* than in the *Maskak*, since the latter conclude with a private feast for

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8. Two main reasons apply to deny the young men entry into the house. One is residents are elderly and other is that the domestic group has recently lost a member of the family.

just the young men. The outcome of the *obetaka*, however, involves a festival and a feasting for the whole village. Zuberoans conceptualise the *Maskaradak* in a similar manner to the *Maskak* and *obetaka*. As it will be explained in the following chapter, performing the *Maskaradak* implies the crossing of boundaries between the youth of a village and the households in it, as well as in other villages of the valley. As in the *Maskak* and *obetaka*, they must accomplish it ritualistically: the *maskarakaiak* are expected to perform the arts of the *Maskarada* to their best of their abilities. Both villagers and performers have a good time. Villagers enjoy the spectacle and in exchange performers feast and enjoy their hospitality. But as Zuberoans themselves express it, the latter *mereizitü behar die*, i.e. performers ought to show that they deserve it. And here again comes an occasion to dramatise tension between the household and age groups. This is most commonly seen when young people take a *Maskarada* performance to a village other than theirs. When this is the case the leaders and trainers of the *Maskarada* manifest serious worries. The reason is that during the morning the *maskarakaiak* [performers] are offered wine every time they cross a *barrikada* [barricade]. Moreover, they will have a special midday lunch at the households of the village, when they are served wine and spirits abundantly. The *maskarakaiak* are advised by their trainers to drink moderately. Trainers also tell performers stories about how in particular households hosts tried to get them or someone else drunk during the midday meal when years ago they performed in a *Maskarada*. Furthermore, trainers are careful when they go house to house checking to make sure all the performers will be ready at the right time for the afternoon performance. Thus, meals are perceived both as a gift and as a threat. Likewise, the arts of *Maskarada* are seen as a gift, but also as a threat since the *pheredikiak* will criticise and make fun of village life.

As in the *Maskak* and *obetaka*, feasting is a special feature in *Maskarada* performance. Through eating and drinking *Maskarada* performance expresses exchange and tension between social groups. Just as in other winter festivals, the act of eating and drinking is highly codified throughout the celebration, in which three key moments can be discerned: the breaking down of the *barrikadak*, the midday meal and the evening. As has already been explained, the performance takes place on Sunday and starts early in the morning. During the course of the morning, the local households who so wish give members of the *Maskarada* troupe certain foodstuffs as they perform. These are: *kauserak* which are thick round biscuits; *matahameak* or crêpes; *jezuitak* which are like unfilled *éclairs* and then sponge cakes. Wine and other drinks are also given to the performers. In Soule, it is understood that these products are consumed on special occasions and that women prepare them. At midday there is a break to rest and rally strength round the table. As has been mentioned, lunch is special and three or four courses might be served as well as home-made cakes and spirits. After lunch, dancers and masked actors go the village square where they perform. The performance ends at nightfall and the players have dinner in one of the bars of the village.

Winter festivals in general, and the Zuberoan *Maskaradak* in particular, are charged with social and symbolic meaning and the ritual performances have a specific style of collective representation. The points of reference which generate

meaning in winter festivals can be found both inside and outside of the realm of festive activity. They can be found in the sphere of social relations of local organisation, but they can also be found within the organisation of sequences and the combination of internal elements of the ritual action. Thus, most winter festivals parade groups of people who are depicted according to local conceptions of social hierarchy and cultural identity. Groups usually characterised in winter festivals are: a group of gypsies; a group of expert dancers; animal-like masked performers; carollers who sing for the carnival gift of food; troupes of Turks, Arabs, Jews or Hungarians; devils; tinkers and others with different trades or skills.

In sum, Zuberoan *Maskarada* performances share several characteristics with Euro-Mediterranean winter festivals. Firstly, masks and costumes are largely zoomorphic. Secondly, *Maskarada* festivals dramatise scenes of hunting, domestication or death of the animals or characters represented. Thirdly, costumes have bells, usually cow and sheep bells of different sizes, which are worn on the back or waist or calf so that they ring in time with the dance movements. Fourthly, several performers wear hats adorned with mirrors, flowers and ribbons of different colours. Fifthly, performers are offered special meals in exchange for their performance. Finally, the colour of the costumes and disguises, together with the dances, songs, speeches, music and poetry occupy a predominant position. They reinforce the communicative character of *Maskarada* performances and reflect the importance of the ritual aesthetic and the symbolic dimension of public and collective celebrations.

## **7. FESTIVALS AND THE REPRESENTATION OF TIME AND SENTIMENT**

Winter festivals also allow us to examine different ways of representing time. To this end, the British anthropologist Edmund Leach published an essay discussing festive celebration and the structuring of time which acquired a certain prestige. Leach pondered on the process by which we configure the category 'time'. He also questioned to what extent this category is linked with day to day experiences. For Leach, the key lay in the human capacity to distinguish and interpret notions of repetition and notions of non-repetition (Leach 1961) .

Following Leach's line of argument, in non-Western societies the notion of time is not conceived in terms of a succession of periods marked out by their duration. There exists no sense of advancing in some kind of direction, whether it be lineal, as is characteristic of modern urban societies, or circular, as is considered idiosyncratic of agrarian societies. In non-Western societies the notion of time is experienced as discontinuity and as an oscillation between poles of opposites: night and day, winter and summer, drought and rain, age and youth, life and death etc. Leach concluded that in primitive societies the social mechanism which makes it possible to agglutinate different opposites and create a sensation of time was neither practical knowledge nor common sense but rather the religious system.

In this sense, time repeats itself, in that it turns back on itself over and over again, constantly oscillating between two poles of reference. The interval then is

fundamental to the creation of a sense of time in social life. Significantly, religious systems are main generators or intervals because, through celebrations and festivities, they create and establish intervals. Nevertheless, when it comes to establishing a certain coherence in the investigation of the notion of time, the system of festivities should be considered as a whole, rather than as isolated festivals.

Analysing a global system of celebration, Leach discovered three types of festivity in terms of types of behaviour: formal festivals, masquerades and festivals of inversion. Formal festivals refer to those rituals which laud the strict fulfilment of moral and social norms. These are the rituals which eulogise the dominant socio-cultural structure and exalt the official vision or definition of social reality. Masquerades are those festivals which instead of overemphasising the social status or personality of the participants, they mask or hide it. The last type of festivity is that in which roles are reversed and which takes place when the protagonists of a ritual activity engage in representing exactly the opposite of what they really are in daily life (Leach 1961).

In terms of the notion of time, Leach believed that the formal rituals imposed a hiatus in the perception of the social experience of time. This suspension of experience makes it possible, in turn, to experience what is represented during that interval of time in a way that is significantly different from ordinary time. Thus, formal rituals suppose a leap from profane or ordinary time to sacred or extraordinary time. In this same process, all the elements of daily life acted out during sacred ritual time will acquire the category of sacred or extraordinary. In the masquerades, time leaps in the opposite direction, from sacred time to profane time. The same happens with the personalities and social forms which are represented. As a consequence, serious aspects of social life can become the object of ridicule and irony. Finally, in rituals of inversion sacred time and profane time confront each other. When this happens they cancel each other out and the notion of time disappears altogether. In the celebration of inversion rituals time stands still, i.e it is absent.

In the celebration of the Zuberoan *Maskaradak* we find that the three types of ritual behaviour and notions of time indicated by Edmund Leach are combined together. Aspects of ordinary life and local social organisation are blown up to be larger than life and made sacred through the norms of feasting and the symbols of authority embodied by *jauna* [the lord], *anderea* [the lady], *laboraria* [male farm labourer], *laborarisa* [female farm labourer] and *entsenaria* [flag bearer]. The covering up of the official personality of daily life, the possibility of transgression and crude presentation of norms and attitudes which in daily life should be treated with great delicacy, are manifested by the *buhameak* [the gypsies], *kautereak* [the tinkers] and *medizina* [the doctor]. Lastly, we see inversion or symbolic transformation in characters like the *zamalzaina* [the man-horse, centaur or hobby-horse], the *gathuzaina* [the cat], the *txerroa* [shoers], the *kantiniersa* [the water-bearer or serving-girl] and several others. Inversion can also be observed in the analysis and comparison of the ritual behaviour associated with the red and black groups. Furthermore, all this happens at the time of the equinox, at carnival time, which is presented as an undefinable interval in which winter and summer, night and day, death and life, the old and the new compete with each other.

Similarly, Caro Baroja (1965) has considered the importance of time as representation. It must be pointed out that Caro Baroja's work on the world of rural carnival consists of two main areas. These areas are festival and time and the comparison of models and aesthetics in the winter festivals. In the opinion of Caro Baroja festivals should be studied in terms of festive cycles which enable us to discern the notion of time. Festive activity produces the notion of the calendar, which in turn gives rise to the concept of the year. Caro Baroja observes "a dramatic conception of existence, which includes Nature, Man and Society" which can be discerned in human ritual (Caro Baroja 1965:18). The ritual festival is then closely linked to passion. Festival, feeling, drama and passion are inseparable elements of the collective perception of time. Caro Baroja explains:

The Christian religion has meant that the calendar, or the passing of the year adjusts itself to a sentimental order, repeated century after century. Following the *family joy* of Christmas comes the *unleashing of passions* in Carnival and after this, the obligatory *sadness* of Holy Week (after the *repression* of Lent). In opposition to the spirit of the *sad* and *autumnal* All Hallows Days, is that of the *joyful* festivals of spring and summer. The year with its seasons and phases marked out by the Sun and the Moon, has served as a fundamental model to establish this order in which individuals submit themselves within their society and whose elements seem to be subordinated as well. Life and death, joy and sadness, desolation and splendour, hot and cold, all is encapsulated in this time charged with qualities and concrete facts, and which is also measured through experience (Caro Baroja 1965:19. Original italics).

According to Caro Baroja carnival is definitely a period about time, but a qualified time of the year which generates its own feelings, experience and passion. Equally it is a structured time, even though its content is somewhat redundant. Carnival is an expression of many levels: of apparently violent games and norms; of corporal and verbal unruliness; of irrationality, of inversion and social chaos; of parody, ridicule and ferocious criticism and of renewal.

Festive, social and temporal structure are three inseparable components which make up human experience. After a careful observation of the dates chosen for the celebration of the *Maskaradak* in Soule, it can be seen that these have varied through history. Let us examine how the *Maskaradak* performances represent different notions of time. Firstly, they represent a notion of time close to the notion of oscillation between opposite poles which coincides with the argument put forward by Leach. The *Maskaradak* of Soule mark the interval of time in which death and life, cold and hot become empirically palpable. These performances are celebrated when a key transition occurs, i.e., when the bright and warmer Spring takes over the cold and dark Winter. That is to say, when a new agricultural cycle is about to start. Therefore the *Maskaradak* set a timely reference which configures a cyclical interval.

Secondly, *Maskaradak* in Zuberoa dramatise, or have dramatised until recently, a calendar similar to the Medieval Christian notion of time. This can be discerned in the custom of celebrating the *Maskaradak* strictly on the days of carnival. This custom has survived until about the mid twentieth century, finishing

with the burning of a Saint Panzart just as Lent began<sup>9</sup>. For a long time the Church did not allow the *Maskaradak* to be celebrated on Sunday, for Christianity has thought of this day as being sacred and entirely dedicated to God. On this basis, village priests have not regularly allowed peasants to work in their fields or to organise jocose and mundane feasts such as the *Maskaradak* during Sunday sacred time. Lent too has been a period of time with a strong religious significance when play and laugh were not considered proper behaviour. However, the Zuberoan *Maskaradak* of the second half of twentieth century are celebrated exclusively on Sunday and invade the once sacred and taboo time of Lent (without any shame from within or recrimination from outside). This situation seems to suggest that the Zuberoan *Maskaradak* have lost the notion of Christian time, as perceived in the Middle Ages and during the *Ancien Régime*. Performances are now framed within what we would call industrial time with the notion of a weekend and Sunday as a time for leisure and rest.

Thirdly, some villages in Soule have extended the dates of celebration of the *Maskaradak* to the patron saint's summer festivals, arguing that as emigrants and their families return at this time of year, there are a large number of visitors who appreciate and value the chance to see the cultural manifestations of the area. This happened in the village of Altzükü during my fieldwork. This village performed its *Maskarada* throughout the winter of 1992 and once again performers gave a single performance in their *plaza* [village square] on a Saturday night in August.

Fourthly, the analysis of Zuberoan *Maskarada* reveals the existence of a notion of national time which is obvious in the expressions of my informants. They divide the *Maskaradak* between the categories of *avant-guerre* or *gerra-aitzinin* (French and Souletine Basque expressions which mean pre-war) and *après-guerre* or *gerra-ondokuak* [post-war]. These expressions are also used in reference to the performances of another theatrical genre characteristic of Zuberoa known as *Pastorala* [the Pastoral]. The war referred to is the Second World War. The use of the war as a point of reference in the creation of intervals of time is characteristic throughout Soule and France in general thus creating periods of nationally shared time. Indeed, it has been argued that among the factors that have contributed to the making of a French national identity, there is a notion of an external enemy which stemmed from France being invaded by foreign armies during World Wars I and II (Daguzan 1991).

Finally, during fieldwork carried out in 1992, a man from Soule told me he believed it necessary to create and institutionalise *Züberoko Egüna* or Zuberoa Day. He thought Shrove Tuesday would be the ideal day for such a celebration since it marks the materialisation of the spirit of Carnival: *Maskarada*, Carnival and Zuberoa here being synonymous. Up until now, however, his idea has not met with any success.

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9. The figure of Saint Panzart is an effigy which resembles other dummies used in different winter festivals. In some places the figure is shot, in others it is stoned or beaten, or, as here, it may be burnt.

To sum up, it can be affirmed that the Souletine *Maskaradak* are winter festivals with a marked ritual character, a highly elaborated aesthetic component and a clear tendency towards theatrical performance, as well as being a relevant reference in the constitution of the social experience of time.

## 8. INTERPRETATIONS OF THE SOULETINE FESTIVAL

The Zuberoan *Maskaradak* should be interpreted as the intersection of two social webs. The first is determined by aesthetic elements, participant characteristics, festive time and portrayed cultural images. This web indicates that the Zuberoan *Maskaradak* form part of the corpus of winter festivals characteristic of the rural societies of the European continent and other enclaves of the Mediterranean area bordering Europe. The defining characteristic of the second web is to be found in the organisation of the winter festivals of Zuberoa. This organisation fosters a network of social relations and specific cultural interactions, with the end result that a singular version of a festival is produced in the local Souletine version. Scholars have approached the Zuberoan *Maskaradak* by emphasising either one or other point of view. Some approaches are universalist and have pursued comparison seeking common significance with other festivals outside *Pays de Soule*. Other are particularist and have emphasised the local context of the festivities. The reason has been that *Maskarada* performances have many attributes like other rituals from a general point of view, but much of its local character is generated by regional circumstances and culture.

Violet Alford used a universalistic theory to explain the Souletine *Maskaradak*, to which she applied Frazer's ideas on magical thought (Alford 1928, 1931a, 1931b, 1937). Thus, the Zuberoan *Maskaradak* were submitted for scrutiny from the evolutionist and comparativist perspective, as well as being compared with English morris dances and with dances from other Pyrenean and European countries (Alford 1978). Accordingly, *Maskarada* performance was interpreted as an ancient ritual which was linked to a magical type of thought meant to evoke the powers of nature. Caro Baroja (1965), however, was inclined to see *Maskarada* performance rather as a type of expression, which has developed within a wide area, whose main cultural references are legacies from the arts and myths of Greece and Rome as well as from Medieval Christianity.

At the start of the twentieth century followers of functional and functional-structural anthropology abandoned all interest in discovering the origin and evolution of rituals and festivals and concentrated on their logical and psychological function. Now anthropologists were interested in understanding rituals of inversion as a social institution which alleviates or regulates the structural tensions within social groups (Gluckman 1963, 1965). A consequence of this was that many festivals with masks and disguises came to be seen as cathartic forms of behaviour. Gluckman argued that in African tribal societies some rites act like a thermostatic device because they come to re-establish equilibrium and social order, which are always threatened in society due to the existence of inner tensions between conflicting social groups. From the work of historians of European culture such as Le Roy Ladurie (1980) and Davis (1975) stems the idea that



Western carnival and carnival-like rites of violence contribute to the cohesiveness of mutually antagonistic social groups. My previous analysis of *Maskarada* and *obetaka* leads to a similar conclusion. However, other frames of reference have drawn upon *Maskarada* performance in a very distinctive way. This is the case of Fourquet (1990) who has studied a *Maskarada* organised by the young people of Urdiñarbe [a village in Soule] in 1981. He has focused on the symbols displayed by the *beltzak* (performers of the black team of the *Maskarada*) in their performance and concluded that *Maskarada* performance shows pairs of antagonistic entities such as country/city, autoctons/foreigners and Basque/French which are dramatised both within ritual structure and in symbolic action. On the basis of his ethnographic account he has affirmed that the arts of the black team of *Maskarada* performance are strongly concerned with the expression of cultural symbols of resistance. Thus, Fourquet's analysis gathers Gramscian notions of hegemony and resistance to frame them within symbolic analysis. By focusing on the *pheredikiak* [sermons recited by the blacks] and the symbols displayed throughout their performance, Fourquet has suggested that the *Maskaradak* contain a highly political content. Also, he has shown that they are able to express, symbolically, a commitment to struggle and cultural resistance.

As carnival performance is play ritual, i.e. playfully dramatised ritual performance, its outcome is ambivalent. This ambivalence is present in *Maskarada* performance as well, which is manifested in that, at times, it challenges the social order and in that, at times, it fixes it. Nevertheless, there are less sociological interpretations of *Maskarada* performance. For instance, Garamendi Azcorra has approached *Maskarada* performance from a semiotic perspective (Garamendi 1991). She has directed her enquiry towards the internal syntax, communicative codes and theatrical signs particular to Zuberoan *Maskarada*. Garamendi, however, weaves together two threads in her argument: an historical dimension and a semiotic dimension. When working with the first, she locates the winter festivals of the Soule region in the context of universalistic, or at least Europeanist currents of interpretation. Indeed, Garamendi suggests that the *Maskaradak* performances have their closest historical references in medieval Europe. However, when she centres her analysis on the semiotic dimension, the result is specifically internal and self-referential, for she is looking for inward codes of signification. Urbeltz (1978, 1994, 2000) is another author who has defended a non-sociological approach to *Maskarada* performance. By placing his arguments within a ritual-myth theory (Segal ed. 1998), Urbeltz seeks an interpretation of *Maskarada* performance in, on the one hand, the firmament and its constellations and, on the other, swamps and insects.

I have argued that the *Maskaradak* can be seen as a local elaboration of the myth of the wild man (Fdez. de Larrinoa 1997). Drawing upon informants' interpretations of the *Maskaradak* in terms of dramatisations of strength, particularly upon the view of the *beltzak* [performers of the black team of the *Maskarada*] as enacting wildness and uncontrolled strength, I have contrasted Bartra's (1994) analysis of the myth of the wild man and its persistence in European folklore with the ethnography of *Maskarada* performances. Bartra has affirmed that winter festivals are the rural folkloric representation of the myth of the wild man. This myth arose and evolved alongside the development of the

notion of civilisation. Bartra argues its presence in Old Testament Babylon and suggests that it survives in the present both in oral and written narrative and in iconographic representation, theatre and folklore (Bartra 1994). He has observed that the image of the wild man is a widespread one. Having its origins as a myth in the ancient world, it became fully established by the Middle Ages and has continued to this day in winter theatrical performances. Bartra also signals a shared framework of meanings attached to the wild man, as his depiction in the folk arts is related to a representation of strength.

A vision of Zuberoan *Maskarada* which incorporates this idea has been discussed in Fdez. de Larrinoa (1997a, 2005). There I explained that the Zuberoan *Maskaradak* display two types of corporal movement and ritual action which could be central to certain plastic creations and certain representations of the European myth of the wild man studied by Bartra. From this point of view, the representation of the wild man myth in Zuberoan *Maskarada* operates a double aesthetic code: one for the red group of dancers and another for the members of the black group. The dancers represent, at the same time, the threat of and the need for the savage force of nature. The gypsies and tinkers and members of the black group, represent the threat of and need for the strength of adjacent social groups.

Finally, there are students of the Zuberoan *Maskaradak* who have followed upon sociological and historical circumstances of *Pays de Soule* proper. Thus several authors have pointed out that the *Maskaradak* stage war images and therefore they are commemorations of an ancient battle whose date and reason have long been forgotten from the Souletine memory (Badé 1840). Similarly, Hérelle (1925:42-47) used war-like terms, such as *l' action guerrière, les combats singuliers* or *l' assaut* when describing the crossing of the *barrikadak* [barricades] during *Maskarada* performance, although he argued that, at last, performers of the *Maskaradak* dramatise Souletine native selves vis-à-vis outsider others. Michel (1857) and Chaho (1847, 1856) affirmed that *Maskarada* performance parades the hierarchies and social order of *Pays de Soule* as it was in feudal times. Yet they do not reach a consensus on the model of society prevailing in Zuberoa during the Middle Ages and the *Ancien Régime*. Amongst those who have centred on the local history and sociology of *Pays de Soule* to interpret *Maskarada* performance, Georges Hérelle stands out for the ethnographic wealth which he has supplied. Also J.D.J. Sallaberry's (1899) work remains outstanding as he documented the music involved in performing the *Maskaradak*.

## 9. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this article it has been argued that Zuberoan *Maskarada* is a kind of ritual activity which fits into what anthropology has denominated dance-event (Royce 1977; Spencer 1985) and performance (Tambiah 1985; Del Hymes 1975). The choice of the term 'dance-event' derives from the necessity of explaining the cultural categories which anthropology uses. Dance is a ritual activity which happens at the same time as song, music, games, religious celebrations and ludic festivals. Since a significant number of cultures do not use different words to express the corpus of activities mentioned above, it is understood that 'dance event' is a

workable transcultural expression. To say *Maskarada* in Zuberoa is expressing implicitly an event with many meanings embodied in local performance. The notion of performance or representation coincides with the study of the Zuberoan *Maskaradak* from different angles. From a formal point of view the *Maskaradak* are cyclical and itinerant theatrical performances. From an analytical point of view, the *Maskaradak* are performances which are not restricted merely to public behaviour but they also communicate ritual or traditional knowledge. Dell Hymes attributes a precise meaning to the term communication. He affirms that folkloric representations occur when a group of people assume responsibility before an audience and before a piece of knowledge. Zuberoan *Maskarada* performance implies the observation of responsibility and knowledge in a specific way. Firstly, there are the masks and disguises, which must accomplish a particular aesthetic effect. Secondly, there are the actors who must enact a series of performing arts. Lastly, there is a network of social relations which is established between the host village and its young guests when *Maskaradak* take place.

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