

SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY BASQUE WITCHTRIALS:
THE INTERACTION OF SOCIO-RELIGIOUS NORMS WITHIN
THE CONTACT ZONE OF THE ACCUSED AND THE INQUISITOR

by

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ABSTRACT

During the early seventeenth century, the Catholic Church sought to eradicate any belief systems that did not align with Catholic theology. In the Basque regions of Spain and France, these efforts produced a series of witch hunts between 1608 – 1614, in which the Church labeled as diabolical and nefarious the socio-religious belief systems the Basque people tried to incorporate into their practice of Catholicism. This thesis uses the confessions of accused Basque witches gathered during investigations and trials to explore Basques' mention of pre-Christian symbols and beliefs, which I argue were often misunderstood by the Inquisitors as evidence of diabolical, maleficent witchcraft. The accused Basques' use of such symbols and beliefs in their testimonies may have been a means of asserting their own culture against the dominance of the Catholic Church. Previous scholarship on the Basque witch trials focuses on legal, political, and Catholic religious aspects of the persecutions but does not investigate the influences of pre-Christian mythology, symbols, and belief within the trials. This contributive work builds upon previous research and adds Basque points of view to the multilayered factors present within the Basque witch trials.

This study limits its focus to the specific Inquisition investigation and trial surrounding the *Auto de Fe* of Logrono between 1608 – 1614 and also draws from seventeenth-century writings from Spanish Inquisitor Alonso de Salazar Frias, French Inquisitor Pierre de Lancre, and Inquisitional records. The research reveals the deeper Basque connections to pre-Christian belief and mythology that went unrecognized by the

Inquisitors and most modern scholars. It explores the cultural history of the Basque people, and the pre-Christian, socio-religious beliefs the Basques held in spirits such as the goddess Mari, He-goat Akerbeltz, and other spirits such as the Lamiak. Some of the last witch trials in Spain, these Basque trials display a cultural syncretism of Catholic belief with pre-Christian belief that the accused used to assert their culture and themselves in powerless situations. Inquisitors failed to recognize this, while attempting to fit the symbolism and syncretism of the Basques into mainstream European witch beliefs, labeling it as diabolic and evil.

This thesis explores the socio-religious environment of the Basques and the confrontation and miscommunication of the accused witches and the Inquisitors through linguist Mary Louise Pratt's framework of the *contact zone*, the point where Basque social and cultural norms met the restrictions of the Catholic Church. The accused's use of common witchcraft terminology such as night flights, conjuring storms, and sabbats display a connection to the pre-Christian socio-religious environment of the Basques as well as the maleficent language the Inquisitors sought. By investigating this *contact zone*, a fuller understanding is gained regarding the multifaceted event of the Spanish Inquisition within the Basque region.

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INTRODUCTION – BASQUE WITCH TRIALS OF THE EARLY MODERN ERA

In the country fields of Navarre, a new mother tends to her chores as her body recovers from childbirth. Her actions, similar to those of many other rural European women, demonstrate her fortitude in childbirth and her acceptance of her continued responsibilities to her home and family. The reason she can work outside of the home is due to the protection she receives from the tile she wears upon her head. The tile, taken from her house, offers her and her newborn protection from evil.¹ Through the tile and the sacredness of her house, the new mother receives security while she heals and remains outside of the Catholic Church's spiritual covering. When Mass attendance is allowed, the young mother wears her house tile to the church for her formal presentation and connection to the sanctity of the church. The tile, a physical piece of her home, gives the mother sacred protection until she is received into the physical structure of the church and continues participation in the sacraments.² The mother, her sacred amulet tile, and the latter protection of the church reveal a melding of ancient beliefs with Catholicism. The story, taken from early twentieth century traditions, displays the syncretism of religious belief used within the social constructs of post-childbirth and demonstrates how the

¹ Julio Caro Baroja, *The Basques*, trans. Kristin Addis (Reno: Center for Basque Studies, 2009), 218.

² The Catholic ritual, also known as Churching, was a formal blessing given by the Catholic Church to a Catholic mother after her birth recovery. Schulte, Augustin Joseph. "Churching of Women." The Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 3. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908. 27 Feb. 2018 <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03761a.htm>>

mother protected herself and her child from evil by participating in both non-Christian ritual and Christian ritual.

The Basques, an ethnically and culturally unique group, have maintained their presence between the dominant political, cultural, and religious powers of Spain and France. Nevertheless, the Basque people have held on to many unique beliefs demonstrating acceptance and acculturation of the dominant powers but also an affinity for their cultural norms. In such an environment of mixed beliefs, several witch trials of the early seventeenth century occurred and consequently created an atmosphere of fear for the accusers and the accused. In addition to the similarities of other European trials of the Early Modern period, the Basque trials expose a culture with traditions that link to an inter-dependence on earlier non-Christian traditions. The trials held in Basque regions of both France and Spain investigated aspects of witchcraft that Inquisitors expected to find but also reveal a culture that had its own unique traditions. In this thesis, I will argue that the Basques once again found themselves in an oppressive situation, dominated by the Catholic Church, which functioned as an authority and eradicator of non-Christian cultural beliefs. Within the dynamic environment between the Inquisitor and the accused, the so-called witches asserted themselves by holding to their blended culture and utilizing pre-Christian belief that remained melded throughout the Basque society. I contend that the inequality of communication between Inquisitor and accused not only stemmed from social class separation but also that the Basque culture had developed distinct social norms with a foundation of pre-Christian beliefs. These pre-Christian symbols and beliefs miscommunicated throughout their confessions, empowered the accused through the

assertion of a distinct cultural identity while further eroding inter-cultural dialogue and ultimately bolstering the witch-craze between the years of 1608-1614.

I suggest that this example of religious acculturation of Basque pre-Christian cultural beliefs and Catholicism be viewed within the framework of what Mary Louise Pratt refers to as a *contact zone*.³ Mary Louise Pratt's formative work in linguistics describes *contact zones* as, "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world."⁴ Pratt demonstrates one of the multifaceted connections of the *contact zone* by highlighting an auto-ethnographic text of Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, an Andean indigenous man, written to the King Phillip III of Spain in 1613. Using both Quechua and Spanish, the text depicts indigenous people "in ways that engage with representations others have made of them" and uses "the conqueror's language to construct a parodic, oppositional representation of the conqueror's own speech," thus exposing a "conqueror's image of themselves that they often suppress."⁵ Essentially, the texts revealed an alternate voice of the powerless, within the *contact zone* of indigenous Andeans and the Spanish. Similarly, the Basque witchcraft confessions show defiance against the Catholic Church through the use and retelling of pre-Christian symbols and mythology. Their subversive actions demonstrate a form of empowering oneself through community belief and symbolism.

³ Mary Louise Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone," *Profession* (1991): 33-40, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25595469>.

⁴ Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone," 34.

⁵ Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone," 35.

The Inquisition tried Basques for witchcraft in both Spain and France since Basque country straddled the border between the two countries. The Basque witch trials of Spain, known as the Logrono trials, became one of Spain's most significant witchcraft prosecutions and resulted in thirty-one convictions at the *auto de fe* in 1610.⁶ In total, thirteen individuals died in prison, six witches were burned to death at the *auto de fe*, and the remaining twelve, demonstrating contrition, received less severe punishments.⁷ The six witches burned alive, along with five witches burned in effigy, were some of the last witches sentenced to death by the Spanish Inquisition.⁸ The Spanish Inquisitor Alonso de Salazar Frias focused his investigations in the Basque region and sought to gain empirical proof of witchcraft from the accused's statements. Almost simultaneously in 1609, across the border in France, Inquisitor Pierre de Lancre conducted his investigation of witchcraft among the Basques and sought to contain the witch craze in his region. Both Inquisitions and trials occurred within the *contact zone* of the Basques' social-cultural space and the dominant power of the Catholic Church. This research focusing on the Basque trials aims to demonstrate an underlying power struggle between symbol, culture, and values.

Historical investigation is needed to address the pre-Christian religious beliefs that shaped the environment of those involved in the witch trials. Such connections of Basque history, archeology, anthropology, ethnography, myth, and folklore demonstrate how Basque culture and society remained similar to other European people groups but

⁶ Gustav Henningsen, *The Witches' Advocate: Basque Witchcraft and the Spanish Inquisition (1609-1614)* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1980), 27.

⁷ Henningsen, *The Witches' Advocate*, 197.

⁸ Susana Calvo Capilla, "Auto de fe," *Arte*, http://cvc.cervantes.es/el_rinconete/anteriores/agosto_03/19082003_02.htm (accessed May 2, 2013). The image is a fifteenth-century painting by Pedro Berruguete, *Auto de Fe presidido por Santo Domingo*. The example demonstrates how the *auto de fe* of Labourd France and Logrono Spain may have appeared.

were also unique in their ability to adhere to pre-Christian beliefs such as the tile amulet. My analysis of the Basque witch trials reveals a historical event that does not fit solely within previous historians' perspectives of political, religious and legal descriptions, causes, and interpretations. My research demonstrates that within the *contact zone* of syncretism, the cultural and societal norms of pre-Christian belief and mythology heightened the accused's use of familiar symbols that also reflected witchcraft terminology. The Basque's may have been asserting their cultural socio-religious norms, but the Inquisitors alternately viewed their testimonies as proof of witchcraft in the Basque region.

Few scholars have investigated the records of the Basque witchcraft trials with sensitivity to the uniqueness of Basque traditions and culture. Current history texts on witchcraft are limited in their coverage of Basque society and culture. Instead, they represent broader research on European witchcraft with a focus on ideologies and beliefs of witchcraft popular in the early modern period, rather than the cultural contexts in which they occur.⁹ This trend of twentieth-century historiography, more fully discussed in chapter two, lumps Basque history into Spanish and French accounts indiscriminately. The discrepancy reflects a degree of social and political oppression and a disregard for the culture or national identity of the Basque people by authors and historians. In sum, the historiography about Basque witch trials reveals a significant focus on the trials, testimonies of the accused, and generalized, non-culturally specific witchcraft ideology of the early modern period. Assessment of the traditions and cultural norms that influenced the statements of witches and actual practices rarely appears in the scholarship.

⁹ Gary K. Waite, *Heresy, Magic, and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 1-7.

Additionally, past historical work does not demonstrate the multiple factors of history, culture, and tradition that contributed to the social environment surrounding the Basque trials of the early seventeenth century.

The following contributive historical work builds upon multidisciplinary facets of Basque history. Archaeology, anthropology, ethnography, and folklore studies reveal varied influences on the Basques but, additionally, a unique people that remained distinct in both their traditions and heritage. Specifically, beliefs in magic, witches, and superstitions originated in older traditions that remained common among the Basques throughout the trials of the Inquisition and beyond. Regarding the Basque people, historian anthropologist, Julio Caro Baroja, notes that “The taboos of daily life are extremely numerous. The use of powers in a positive way gives rise to magic in its broadest sense. In any case, almost every qualm or act that concerns us is most often considered superstition.”¹⁰ The story of the new mother wearing a tile amulet demonstrates how belief, or as Caro Baroja suggests, “superstition,” effects everyday life. Therefore, the focus on the socio-religious aspects of the period add a new, culturally-encompassing perspective to the research on the Basque witch trials.

The subsequent research focuses on understanding the *contact zone* between the accused witches, inquisitors, and socio-religious environment contemporary to the Basque witch trial events. This study focuses on the non-Christian aspects of Basque culture and society that influenced Basques’ acceptance and understanding of the supernatural of witchcraft or mirrored wider, mainstream European beliefs in witchcraft. It examines how Basque understandings of symbols or characteristics came out in

¹⁰ Caro Baroja, *The Basques*, 215.

testimonies and how Inquisitors may not have comprehended the particularly Basque beliefs being expressed. A work of similar consequence, written by Carlo Ginzburg, surveyed the inquisitional records with the culture and traditions of an accused agrarian cult in Italy. In *The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, Ginzburg explored how individuals, known as *benandanti*, participated in an agrarian fertility cult.¹¹ Ginzburg uncovered the differences between the cult's local traditions centered on seasonal agricultural changes and the Inquisition's idea of a sabbat-centered cult known to be synonymous with witchcraft and devil worship. Ginzburg's research on the *benandanti* functions as a foundational example for the following study in that he exposed older traditions and local myths that had a connection to the later witchcraft. Emulating Ginzburg's approach, I will demonstrate that specific Basque history and traditions were influential in accused witches' belief in – or acceptance of – ideas and practices about night flights, animal metamorphosis, and other phenomena that Inquisitors simply labeled witchcraft. Moreover, the testimonies of the accused witches can and should be evaluated within the *contact zone* that includes Basque traditions, myth, and folklore, which broadens the analysis and demonstrates a cultural foundation of pre-Christian belief that Inquisitors never understood was present.

In addition to Pratt's work regarding *contact zones* and the existing historiography of the Basque witch trials, I utilize the sociological framework of Symbolic Interactionism in order to evaluate the interactions between Inquisitors and the accused during the trials. Symbolic Interactionism provides a cyclical conceptual framework to

¹¹ Carlo Ginzburg, *The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. John Tedeschi and Anne C. Tedeschi (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1992).

describe the development of symbols, myths, and action (both individual and joint) as they contribute to the construction of social systems.¹² These systems (i.e., Basque culture and society), in turn, inform the symbols, myths, and social interactions of cultural participants. Throughout my thesis, I relate this approach directly to Mary Louise Pratt's notion of *contact zones*, in that the Basque people demonstrate a pattern of symbolic interaction through their utilization of pre-Christian belief and mythologies in interaction with Catholic practices and understandings.¹³

The following research reveals the multiple factors that influenced the accused and further explains that the individuals investigated by the Inquisition held traditional connections to the cultural beliefs of the Basque region and applied traditional symbols and descriptions within their testimonies. Unfortunately, the Inquisitors viewed the symbols within their understandings of nefarious witchcraft. These different understandings of the same symbols between the accused and the Inquisitor within the *contact zone* heightened the already tenuous environment.

In the first chapter of this work, I survey Basque history in an effort to demonstrate how the Basques struggled for centuries under oppressive political and cultural influences yet maintained their unique identity and traditions. An example of such a phenomenon is illustrated in the opening story of the house tile used as an amulet for the mother, as the Basque house was not only a place of habitation, but also a sacred

¹² Joel M. Charon, *Symbolic Interactionism: An Introduction, An Interpretation, An Integration*, 10th ed. (Boston: Prentice Hall, 2010), 69.

¹³ Although a comprehensive presentation of symbolic interactionism is beyond the scope of this thesis, the sociological framework is useful when looking at symbolism and mythology among Early Modern Basques in the 17th Century. I will use terminology and concepts from symbolic interactionism as I analyze and add to the existing narrative surrounding the Logrono Witch Trials and how individuals participated in their normative social system even under duress.

place that protected the family. This cultural belief in the home and its sacredness demonstrate connections to other Basque religious norms that are outside of the Christian context. Additionally, Basque history, linguistics, archeology, and ethnography all reveal symbols of ancient belief, and therefore a socio-religious system, of the Basque people frequently utilizing and engaging with pre-Christian symbols. Furthermore, the Basque historical record shows that the power play of the Inquisition upon the Basque community was not a one-time event, but one of many historical moments where the Basque people held to their culture and cultural symbols within the context of oppression or domination.

In chapter two, I analyze the trends of the previous historiography on the Basque people and Basque witchcraft. As with many genres, the authors' scholarly interests are based on their contemporary historiographical trends. Thus, the Basque scholarship coincides with popular foci on religion, politics, and legal perspectives. For example, the twentieth-century discussions of nationalism in Spain essentially suppressed micro-investigations into the uniqueness of the Basque people, relegating Basqueness to an unfashionable topic for research. The works on witchcraft mention the Basque trials but have a primary focus on other European areas. Therefore, this thesis functions as an additional contribution to the historiography, in that it expands the multilayered history with a focus on pre-Christian cultural symbols that the accused utilized within the *contact zone* of the Inquisition.

In chapter three I review the primary sources and how they should be utilized and evaluated. Additionally, I explore the characteristics of Basque gods, folklore, and cultural traditions and highlight that such symbols and practices shaped the normative

cultural behavior and experiences of the Basques. The pre-Christian symbolism and mythology contributed to the formation of the Basque socio-religious system through not only personal and communal belief but through physical action in personal and social activities. Therefore, when the accused communicated with an Inquisitor, their addition of pre-Christian symbols that were part of their traditional worldview became easily used by the Inquisitors to interpret the accused's beliefs and actions as evidence of mainstream European witchcraft involving black magic and maleficia.¹⁴

Chapter four analyzes Basque history, Basque popular beliefs, and the accused's statements. Taken together, they demonstrate a sharing of symbols within the *contact zone* of the Inquisition and establish the connection between the socio-religious customs particular to the Basques, the questions of the Inquisitors, and the comments made to the Inquisitors. As the story of the woman and her amulet tile reveal, Basques functioned for many generations in a community that shared both pre-Christian and Christian social and religious beliefs, and additionally, these norms are evidenced in the witches' confessions. I assert that these connections, whether intentional or not, were commonplace and that the natural usage may have empowered the witches during the tenuous period of the Inquisition. The Basques utilized familiar symbols to communicate with the Inquisitors and continued to elevate their social system of an amalgamated pre-Christian and Christian society. Therefore, as the Inquisitors sought to eradicate evil or any form of non-Catholic Christian practices, they were confronted with diverse non-Christian Basque socio-religious symbols that they misinterpreted as unproblematic evidence of the witchcraft of the type they expected to find.

¹⁴ Brian P. Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*. 2nd. ed. (Essex: Longman Group Limited, 1995).

CHAPTER 1: HISTORY AND SOCIETY AND THE MAKINGS OF MYTH AND FOLKLORE

Basque Early History

Widespread scholarly interest in Basque history did not become common until the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.¹⁵ Previously overshadowed by the more dominant histories of Spain and France, the Basques' unique language, culture, and ethnicity lacked scholarly documentation. Contemporary texts, as well as the following research, begin to rectify the academic void and offer a more comprehensive record of Basque history. I contend that the subsequent Basque history that researchers have uncovered reveals a social and ethnic group that consistently managed to create and maintain its own cultural identity over hundreds of years despite multiple *contact zones* that privileged more dominant cultures.

Over the centuries, historical works have included minor acknowledgments of the Basques. Ancient scholars such as Greek geographer Strabo (c.63 BCE) and Roman geographer Ptolemy (c.168 CE) mentioned the Basques. They described four tribes being fierce and pagan.¹⁶ The first documentation of Basque words occurred scattered throughout charters, laws, and chronicles from the eleventh to the sixteenth centuries. Sixteenth-century texts reveal a new European interest in Basque culture through specific

¹⁵ Caro Baroja, *The Basques*, 422, n. 1. Scholarship in Basque myth and oral traditions started at the end of the eighteenth century.

¹⁶ Marianne Heiberg, *The Making of the Basque Nation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 14.

works that mentioned Basque linguistic lists, speeches, and ballads.¹⁷ Finally, in 1571, genealogist Esteban de Garibay focused explicitly on Basque history and wrote the *Compendio Historial*.¹⁸ Such examples that referenced Basque words and phrases over a period of six centuries clearly suggest a minor ethnic group that maintained a cohesive culture.

In the absence of additional, detailed documentation of Basque history and society, historians rely on other types of empirical evidence. Archeology reveals people groups living in caves and open-air sites in the mountains and valleys of the Pyrenees during the Bronze Age (c. 2000 - 900 BCE). Scattered throughout the Basque region are rock structures known as dolmens and megaliths. Whether the structures are of a religious nature or constructed for seasonal shelter, the remnants reveal established permanency of the ancient people.¹⁹



Figure 1: Megaliths of Gipuzkoa²⁰

¹⁷ Philippe Veyrin, *The Basques of Lapurdi, Zuberoa, Lower Navarre: Their History and Their Traditions*, ed. Sandra Ott, trans. Andrew Brown (Reno: Center for Basque Studies, University of Nevada, 2011), 264.

¹⁸ Roger Collins, *The Basques* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, Ltd., 1986), 257.

¹⁹ Collins, *The Basques*, 22-25. Historian Roger Collins suggests the various sites might merely be the results of the geography and climate of the region.

²⁰ Eusko Jaurlaritza – Gobierno Vasco, “Megaliths of Gipuzkoa,” *Department of Education Language and Culture*, http://www.kultura.ejgv.euskadi.net/r46-7772/en/contenidos/informacion/gipuzkoako_megalitoak/en_12921/trikuharriak.html (accessed May 1, 2013). La Txabola de la Hechicera dolmen, in Elvillar, Álava. Dolmens are rock structures created by ancient humans. Dolmens, historically understood to be ancient burial sites are scattered throughout the Basque region.

Writings from Greek historian Plutarch mention Roman slaves of Basque origin in the first century. Earlier, around 77 BCE, Pompey established Pamplona, which eventually became the capital of Navarre.²¹ Archeological evidence shows the Romans developed a system of roads that connected various locations. Sites in these regions reveal functioning Roman societies, complete with baths and temples. Collins suggests that the Roman rule of almost 400 years may have been mutually beneficial for both societies. He asserts Basque military units mixed within the greater Roman army and that no significant Basque and Roman conflicts were documented.²²

With the invasion of the Visigoths in the mid-fifth century and the removal of Roman authority, the Basque region became centered between two opposing forces, the Franks and the Visigoths. Collins theorizes that fifth-century tensions pushed the Basques of the highlands and lowlands to make meaningful choices resulting in cultural adaptation or cultural isolation. Collins interprets shifts in population during that time as more of a conscious decision of isolation and reversion to older traditions.²³ Writings from medieval Franks and Visigoths show that the Basques, caught between the two powers, became involved in slave trading and aggressive raiding.²⁴ Additionally, the seventh and eighth centuries reveal an expansion of the Basque territory. Collins suggests that the growth of population or the assimilation of Basque language and culture by other lowland groups may be the cause of this expanded Basque area. Additionally, the Basque tradition of matrilineal heritage created the need for individuals to extend past the house of their

²¹ Collins, *The Basques*, 38.

²² Collins, *The Basques*, 44-47. Inscriptions of Basque assistance in a north England fort, 216 CE.

²³ Collins, *The Basques*, 81-83.

²⁴ Collins, *The Basques*, 80-98.

youth.²⁵ Further explained in the upcoming section, Basque Society and Culture, the house functioned as a familial identifier and often had an established matriarchal or patriarchal head which created the need for some children to further their position by moving into other households through the avenue of work or marriage.

The eighth through the tenth centuries reveal the Basque country surrounded by additional opposing forces. The 711 CE invasion by Arabs and Berbers resulted in the removal of the Visigoth rulers. The effect of the encroachment left the Basques cornered by the Christian Visigoths to the northwest, the Arabs and Berbers to the southwest, and Franks in the north. The later years of the eighth century through the early eleventh century found the Basque region pulled back and forth from Frankish rule to Muslim rule. Stability finally came through Sancho the Great (1004-35) but remained fleeting after the division of the Navarra kingdom between his sons.²⁶ The early and late middle ages offered minimal change for the Basque people caught between the more significant French and Spanish powers north and south of the Pyrenees, during which time the Basque people continued their struggle with feuding rivals and political instability.²⁷ Eventually, the Treaty of the Pyrenees in 1659 created a distinct border between France and Spain, thus splitting the Basque lands politically but not alleviating underlying turmoil and cultural identity problems of the area.

I contend that these early formative centuries helped to build a lasting, distinctive, cohesive culture among the Basques, due to Basque survival in a geographically challenging environment and Basque resistance to social pressures and colonization.

²⁵ Collins, *The Basques*, 100.

²⁶ Collins, *The Basques*, 114-180.

²⁷ Collins, *The Basques* 248-261.

Despite numerous direct challenges to their autonomy and cultural practices, the Basques maintained a cohesive culture throughout 400 years of Roman invasion, centuries of Christian and Muslim conflicts, and centuries of alternating French and Spanish domination. Their fortitude demonstrates the strength of culture and identity as Basque people. Furthermore, Collins' notion of isolation by choice offers an understanding of the continuing usage of pre-Christian symbols that we find in early modern Basque Inquisition statements.

Basque Society and Culture

I assert that in spite of their tumultuous political history, the Basques formed distinct cultural and societal norms that survived numerous direct challenges and efforts to eradicate them. The Basques managed to survive and carve out their own unique identity while being continually caught between stronger political rivals. The adversity of both the political and geographical environment brought the people of the Pyrenees together under shared cultural and linguistic norms. The following examples of society and culture demonstrate how the Basques maintained their cultural identities.



Figure 2: 16th Century Basque Agricultural workers. ²⁸

The Basque people dominated a region of the Iberian Peninsula that contained extreme geographical and seasonal patterns. The coastal areas offered the Basques opportunities for fishing, whaling, and nautical occupations. The lowland valley areas provided agricultural opportunities, and the mountainous regions made excellent seasonal grazing for rural families.

Various occupations among the Basques, from agriculture to whaling, created avenues for further contact with other cultures. I again affirm that Basque cultural identity maintained its strength even with exposure to new people and lands. An example of this continued identity involving pre-Christian belief comes through sightings of an ancient Basque goddess known as Mari that continue even into the present day. Myth and legends reveal Mari to be an ancient entity that influenced the growth and production of agriculture by controlling the cosmos. Explained in more detail in chapter three, Mari holds an important place the socio-religious environment of the Basques from ancient times through the period of the witch trials and to today. The various sightings of Mari flying, from caves in the Pyrenees of Spain and France to the mountains of Idaho,

²⁸ Gipuzkoako Foru Aldundia, "History of the Farm House," *Bertan*, <http://bertan.gipuzkoakultura.net/bertan4/ing/1.php> (accessed May 7, 2013). The engraving by Georgio Housnaglio in 1567 illustrates sixteenth-century Basque agricultural workers.

demonstrate that through hundreds of years, symbols and belief in pre-Christian myths hold a position of importance in Basque identity.²⁹ Though these examples span multiple eras and locations, they indicate the extent to which Basque symbols sustained their meaning and cultural value.

The social structure of the Basque people formed around a type of feudal system that occupied the open land.³⁰ Within a loose feudal system, the Basque communities remained unique due to their *fueros*, or laws. These laws regulated public and private affairs and balanced the relationships within the community and with those who ruled the larger territories. For example, the *fueros* specified dowries, homesteads, and even political alliances with the Spanish Crown. In the fourteenth century, the Basque area had a *fuero* agreement with Castile that released them from military duty if they protected the border between Spain and France. The *fueros* remained the underlying structure of the social and political environment of Basque areas.³¹

In contrast to feudal systems more common in France and Spain, Basques considered themselves free and not bound to forms of servitude but instead to the familial structure of their house. The position, wealth, and landholdings of a house established the loose social hierarchy.³² The Basque house, the center of the family and society, offered individuals a more distinct identity. Household heads functioned in village leadership. House names, different than surnames, were acquired through the structure's physical

²⁹ William Douglass and Joseba Zulaika, *Basque Anthropological Cultural Perspectives* (Reno: Center for Basque Studies, University of Nevada, 2007), 277.

³⁰ Veyrin, *The Basques of Lapurdi, Zuberoa, Lower Navarre*, 129.

³¹ Heiberg, *The Making of the Basque Nation*, 20-21.

³² Veyrin, *The Basques of Lapurdi, Zuberoa, Lower Navarre*, 129-131.

location or identification; the occupation of the family; or the name of the original owner. Consequently, house names became used more than surnames.³³

The house functioned as a place of habitation but also as a sacred place that protected the family. Thus, even walking around the outside of the house was deemed a possible danger. Individuals offered prayers of protection for the house while extinguishing the hearth fire.³⁴ Fires remained at the center of the house, and a deserted house was considered an “extinguished fire.” An old saying ties the house with that of the body, stating, “a house without fire is a body without blood.”³⁵ Even in death, the house offered security. If a child died before baptism, the family buried the child close to the house, under the eaves, so that the child could receive protection from the house. Additionally, a ritual involving objects, animals, or individuals circling the stove made the house stronger.³⁶ The opening story about the young mother and her house tile amulet demonstrates the home as a sheltered, sacred place containing a blending of traditional Basque and Christian symbols and revealing the cyclical pattern of the Basque socio-religious system; The Basques identified with symbols and myths of both pre-Christian and Christian origin that in turn shaped Basque culture and society.

The family or house dwelt within the larger Basque community, which provided additional support and assistance to individuals and family units. Basque communities either formed a cluster of houses around the town center or spread out houses with a

³³ Juan Carlos Etxegoien, *Orhipean: the country of Basque* (Navarra: Ona Industria Grafica, 2006), 28-31.

³⁴ Caro Baroja, *The Basques*, 307. Prayers may have been offered within the beliefs of Catholicism which is the dominant faith of Basques, but the lingering animist or polytheistic beliefs may have influenced the petitioner to pray to *Andre-Mari* spirit symbolized by the fire. *Andre-Mari* may be the anthropomorphic form of the Earth. Jose Miguel Barandiarán and Jesús Altuna. *Selected writings of José Miguel de Barandiarán*, 80, 109.

³⁵ Etxegoien, *Orhipean*, 32.

³⁶ Caro Baroja, *The Basques*, 218.

small grouping around a church. Neighbors formed important reliance on one another for support and interacted through games, holidays and ceremonies.³⁷

In addition to community games, the Basques enjoyed dancing. As early as the first century BCE, Strabo referenced dancing among people living in the Pyrenees region. In 1565, an additional chronicler mentioned Basques dancing.³⁸ Basque games and dancing mixed within the Christian holidays and religious ceremonies that often had ties to ancient seasonal festivals and pre-Christian rituals. As Christianity increasingly influenced Basque society, traditional Basque holidays transitioned into Christian holidays.



Figure 3: San Inazio Basque Festival³⁹

Religious Syncretism

Cultural and religious syncretism is evident in the histories of Basque holidays and saint veneration. For instance, communities throughout the Basque region participate in organized masquerades. The masquerades start at the beginning of January, labeled as

³⁷ Etxegoien, *Orhipean*, 36.

³⁸ Veyrin, *The Basques of Lapurdi, Zuberoa, Lower Navarre*, 351.

³⁹ Dana Oland, "San Inazio Basque Festival Scheduled," *Idaho Statesman*, <http://media.idahostatesman.com/smedia/2012/07/26/18/40/Brnda.AuSt.36.JPG> (accessed May 7, 2013). The image is of Oinkari Dancers celebrating patron St. Ignatius of Loyola during Boise Basque Festival.

ancient rites that represent seasonal changes of the end of winter and the coming spring. Caro Baroja notes that in the modern era the “old pre-Christian rites of community security” found within the ancient masquerades have changed and lost the original religious intent as the contemporary masquerade met the community’s *burllesque* need.⁴⁰

Similar to other Early Modern European communities, localized patron saint holidays connect the past social or spiritual needs to the current dominant Catholic faith. For example, Saint Agatha’s Day, February 5, is a celebration of fertility of married couples and for the health of nursing women. Saint Mark’s Day, April 25, focuses on farmers and shepherds and the sowing of beans and corn. Saint John’s Eve, June 23, is a major Catholic holiday for Basque communities but also has significant ties to the pre-Christian summer solstice celebrations. Caro Baroja considers the syncretism of traditions with the dominant Catholic influences to be the work of ecclesiastical authorities that found a balance of integrating Christianity within interests of the local people, such as protection and fertility.⁴¹

I examine how the Inquisitional trials and confessions reveal a breakdown of this integration that Caro Baroja claims because the accused’s testimony so often reveals details that are not Catholic or pre-Christian symbols or traditions common in other parts of Europe. They are distinctly Basque. I assert that within the *contact zone*, the Inquisitor and accused did not communicate from equal positions of power as the Catholic Church attempted to remove anything not aligned with its theology. The melding that had

⁴⁰ Caro Baroja, *The Basques*, 287-291.

⁴¹ Caro Baroja, *The Basques*, 292-303.

occurred became buried under testimonies that the Inquisitors labeled witchcraft and which scholars have not yet uncovered.

The level of integration of Christianity within Basque society is a matter of speculation for scholars. The lack of documentation on early Basque history leaves scholars uncertain regarding the timeframe when Christianity reached the Basque region and how far it reached into the Pyrenees. In 589, a bishop of Pamplona was mentioned in the Third Council of Toledo writings, but Collins suggests that the effectiveness of his evangelism into the heart of the Basque area is pure speculation.⁴² Collins emphasizes that the silence of the documents may prove that they were indeed Christianized. Alternatively, the non-documentation of Basque beliefs does not necessarily indicate Basques functioned with strong Christian beliefs. The Inquisition scribes may simply have chosen not to record such beliefs or didn't understand their significance, as discussed later in Chapter 3. This lack of definitive evidence regarding the level of Basques' Christianization allows for historical speculation about both early and later Christianization.

Additional archeological evidence of cave churches and hermitages of the seventh century reveals the existence of Christian Basque areas.⁴³ To understand this early sign of Christianity, Caro Baroja mentions that Christians may have fled from the initial Arab occupation in the southern Iberian peninsula and settled in the Basque area.⁴⁴ Moreover, substantial evidence of monastic involvement within the Basque area is not available

⁴² Collins, *The Basques*, 58-66.

⁴³ Collins, *The Basques*, 152.

⁴⁴ Caro Baroja, *The Basques*, 252.

until the tenth century.⁴⁵ Therefore, the Basque region did not appear to get the full attention of the Church until much later than its neighboring regions did, thus allowing the older traditions of an ancient polytheism to predominate in Basque culture.⁴⁶

Ethnographer José Miguel Barandiarán notes that the Basque assimilation of Christianity was a slow and gradual process. One myth documented in the village of Ataun tells of the transition of the Basque people to Christianity:

...the pre-Christians were enjoying themselves one day on Argaintxabaleta Hill in the Aralar mountains, when they saw a luminous cloud moving toward them from the east. Frightened by the phenomenon, they consulted a wise elder and took him to the site so he contemplate the mysterious cloud and tell them what it meant. The old man told them, “The *Kixmi*⁴⁷ is born and the end of our race has come; throw me over that precipice.” Then followed by the miraculous cloud, they all ran toward the west, and when they came to the small valley of Arraztaran, they hurriedly entombed themselves beneath a huge gravestone, that has been called *Jentillarri* (stone of the pre-Christians).⁴⁸

I suggest that the lack of ecclesiastical documentation and other evidence demonstrates a much later accommodation of pre-Christian beliefs to Christian beliefs in the Basque areas than in other regions of Western Europe. Furthermore, the variable leadership in the Basque region during the middle ages coincided with a disorganized church presence. Lacking the authority of the Catholic Church, given an isolated geographic and political environment, and imbued with resilient cultural traditions, the Basques maintained a significant amount of pre-Christian beliefs and traditions that continue to this day. The evidence of pre-Christian beliefs in Basque linguistics,

⁴⁵ Collins, *The Basques*, 156.

⁴⁶ Caro Baroja, *The Basques*, 276.

⁴⁷ *Kixmi* meaning monkey, also the pre-Christian reference for Christ.

⁴⁸ Barandiarán and Altuna. *Selected writings of José Miguel de Barandiarán*, 118.

mythology, folklore, ritual, and archeology are reliable indicators that a pre-Christian belief system influenced Basque society both before and after the early modern period.

Caro Baroja stated that “the most efficient transmitter of culture is language, which is simultaneously offered to us as a sort of cultural index.”⁴⁹ The Basque language

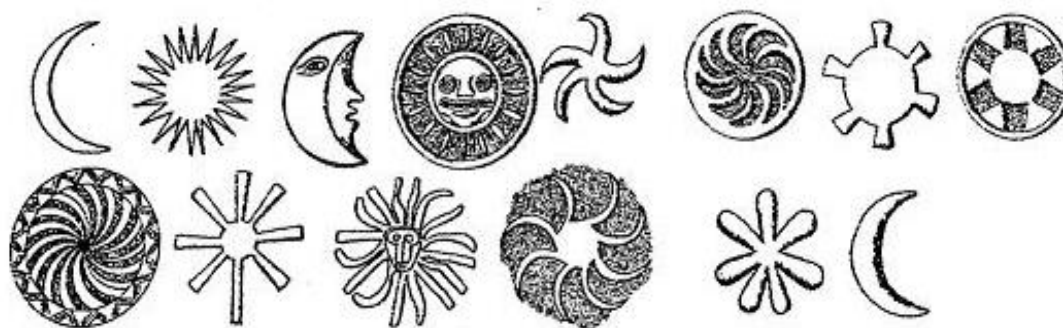


Figure 4: Sun and Moon Images Found throughout Basque region.⁵⁰

reflects pre-Christian beliefs. Linguistic traces of pre-Christian beliefs in the meanings of words such as moon, sun, sky, and night reveal a definite connection. The word moon, *illargui*, demonstrates the ancient ties through its definitions, “light of the month,” “light of the dead,” “light of death,” and “light of darkness,” which all reveal a pre-Christian heritage.⁵¹ The ancient word for sky, *urcia*, stemmed from the root *ortz* and held a definition of heavenly or divine connotations. Barandiarán reveals that a variety of Basque words that tie with thunder, lighting, and storms are connected linguistically to the sky god, *Urte*.⁵² Caro Baroja and Barandiarán suggest that the Basques were similar

⁴⁹ Caro Baroja, *The Basques*, 357.

⁵⁰ Etxegoien, *Orhipean: the country of Basque*, 48. The images of the sun and moon can be found in various places such as church seats, door lintels, and cemeteries.

⁵¹ Caro Baroja, *The Basques*, 275.

⁵² Other names of the sky god *Urte* include *Urcia*, *Urzi*, *Orte*, *Ortzi*, *Ost*, and *Egu*. Barandiarán and Altuna, *Selected Writings*, 115, 179.

to other ancient Europeans in their understanding of, and belief in, the cosmos and its divine connections.⁵³



Figure 5: Stele with Sun Symbol⁵⁴

In addition to the linguistic tie to pre-Christian ideas, archeological evidence reveals the ancient Basques' pre-Christian beliefs. Sun and moon images found throughout the Basque region decorate such things as door lintels and cemeteries.⁵⁵ The symbols show lingering connections to celestial beliefs. Dolmens, dating from the Bronze Age, scattered throughout the Basque region may have been merely areas of shelter, or as Barandiarán suggests, may have had ties to rituals and sacrifices to the sun god, *Ekhi*.⁵⁶ The funerary objects found around the excavated dolmens suggest a religious use. Additionally, artifacts and carvings in tombs and caves uncover a culture influenced by religious ideas tied to nature, the cosmos, and ancestry.⁵⁷ Furthermore, the mystery and superstition that would have surrounded the dolmens in the early modern era added to the pre-Christian environment of Basque society. In symbolic interactionist language, the

⁵³ Caro Baroja, *The Basques*, 274-276.

⁵⁴ "Argineta Necropolis and Hermitage," *Natural Areas*, accessed May 7, 2013, <http://www.nekatur.net/Lugar-interes.aspx?Id=295&lang=en-US#>. Steles display ancient sun symbols.

⁵⁵ Etxegoien, *Orhipean: the country of Basque*, 48.

⁵⁶ Other names of the sun god, Ekhi, include *Eguski*, *Iguzki*, *Eguzku*, *Ekhi*, and *Iki*. The Sun is understood to be the daughter of the Earth. Barandiarán and Altuna, *Selected Writings*, 109.

⁵⁷ Barandiarán and Altuna, *Selected Writings*, 177-179.

meaning ascribed to beliefs, objects, and rituals translates into concrete actions and interactions among cultural members. It is clear that in this context, the symbolic meaning surrounding these objects impacted the Basques' behavior and the importance given to these memorial artifacts.

Funerary steles from the middle ages and early modern period also reveal pre-Christian beliefs. Astral symbols support the ancient Basque language's focus on deities in the universe. The steles display both Christian and non-Christian symbols, as well as symbols of the profession of the deceased.⁵⁸ The terrestrial and cross symbols display an overlapping of belief systems. As the funerary steles represented the deceased, the carvings symbolized those objects and beliefs that held significant value for the individual. The linguistic and archeological evidence tells of a time before the dominance of Christianity and reveals the syncretism within Basque culture. A specific example of these combined symbols can be observed on a stele in Bidarray, a French Basque town along the Spanish and French border. The date of "1692" demonstrates, almost eighty years after the French and Spanish Inquisitions, that the Basque socio-religious environment continued to utilize pre-Christian and Christian symbols, revealing a melding of belief.

⁵⁸ Caro Baroja, *The Basques*, 326-329.



Figure 6: Stele with Celestial and Cross Symbols ⁵⁹

Caro Baroja noted that language showed a mix of an earlier religion that had leanings toward animism and polytheism.⁶⁰ Barandiarán made a connection with the objects and nature in myths and tied it to the underlying animism that pervades Basque culture. Barandiarán noted that not many written sources showed the pre-Christian animist views but that archeological evidence provides a glimpse into ancient Basque religious norms.⁶¹ Barandiarán wrote,

Animism in particular is the propitious environment for myth. Animism posits a spirit or divinity in the face of every function, every phenomenon, and behind every mystery: everything is pervaded by divinity, things are divine, sacred, with no need for action by secondary causes.⁶²

Caro Baroja suggests that Basque religious belief expanded beyond animism. The traditions, myth, and folklore of the Basques illustrate early animist beliefs. Nevertheless, highlighting the linguistic connections to gods contained in legends such as those about Mari, Caro Baroja proposes a more involved polytheism with anthropomorphic or

⁵⁹ Wikimedia Commons, “Bidarray Tombstone,” [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bidarray_tombstone_01_\(1873192062\).jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bidarray_tombstone_01_(1873192062).jpg) (accessed May 7, 2013). The engravings on the stele show both celestial and Christian cross symbols.

⁶⁰ Caro Baroja, *The Basques*, 307.

⁶¹ Barandiarán and Altuna, *Selected Writings*, 61-65.

⁶² Barandiarán and Altuna, *Selected Writings*, 63.

zoomorphic belief.⁶³ This form of polytheism labels characteristics of human or animal qualities to a deity or non-human.⁶⁴ The human and animal descriptions of Mari, the personified Earth, demonstrate the anthropomorphic belief system that belonged to the earlier belief system of the Basques.⁶⁵ Therefore, these foundational beliefs created a permeable environment for the combining of pre-Christian with Christian belief, which is later observed in the accused's statements.

I maintain that from pre-Christian belief to the addition of Christianity, Basque society effectively blended diverse belief systems. The lack of a strong Catholic presence and the strength of Basque cultural beliefs facilitated an environment where religious syncretism could flourish. The societal accommodation of both pre-Christian and Christian beliefs observed through such examples of funerary steles, celestial engravings, holidays, community dances, and masquerades demonstrates Basque transculturation. Glimpses of religious belief through Basque words illustrate an established polytheism that was confronted by the dominance of Christianity. The many signs of syncretism demonstrate that old beliefs remained active and influential. The pre-Christian symbols highlighted here would have been an integral part of the environment that surrounded the *contact zone* of the accused and the inquisitor. These symbols found on door lintels, in cemeteries, and in churches, remained part of the accused's everyday world, therefore establishing a commonality to the pre-Christian myth and symbols, later observable in trial testimonies, but seemingly unrecognized by Inquisitors.

⁶³ Caro Baroja, *The Basques*, 273-276.

⁶⁴ Graham Harvey, *Animism: Respecting the Living World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 15.

⁶⁵ Barandiarán and Altuna, *Selected Writings*, 109.

It was in this social and religious context that the Basque witch trials took place. The limited dominance of Christianity and a pattern of cultural inclusion of pre-Christian beliefs explain such phenomena as the use of the house tile by the young mother and other syncretic actions documented through confessions and writings of the Inquisitors. In many ways, pre-Christian Basque symbols were both a focal point for Inquisitors and a source of strength and pride for the Basques themselves during the witch trials. Understanding the blended history of the Basques, their everyday language of symbolism, and their mythology adds the conceptual framework to the *contact zone* of the Inquisition.

CHAPTER 2: HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE BASQUES AND THE BASQUE INQUISITION

The academic scholarship on the Basque people displays restrictions of religious, legal, and political agendas or frameworks of interpretations. Such restraints on scholarship narrowed the social and cultural understanding of the Basques to subsequent readers. The limited approach to understanding the Basques through Christian norms, legal trends of the Inquisition, and the political agendas of France and Spain highlights external influences but loses the focus on the Basque. Furthermore, Basque histories were not written by Basques until the early twentieth century. It is therefore unsurprising that the limited research needs new and additional works added to Basque witchtrial historiography.

The first printing of a work in Basque did not occur until the sixteenth century, and even later works of scholarship by Basques or about Basques remained infrequent and limited. Additional academic scholarship regarding Basque history and culture did not become common until the twentieth century. The twenty-first century revealed an increased scholarly interest in Basque history and the desire to rectify the limited information. The following source summary reveals the limited and various agendas that influenced academic scholarship on Basque history primarily focusing on the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Political power plays influenced twentieth- and twenty-first-century historians in their approach to the subject of Basque witchcraft. Early historians Charles Lea and

Montague Summers remain opposites in their approaches to the topic. Lea's text, *A History of the Inquisition of Spain*, first printed in 1906-1907, is an overview of the Spanish Inquisition and therefore limited in scope to the details on witchcraft in the Basque region of Spain, the Logrono trials. However, his section on witchcraft references many fifteenth-through-seventeenth-century documents from ecclesiastical and inquisitional sources.⁶⁶ Within Lea's section on witchcraft, he argues that the Inquisition should be recognized for limiting the number of witch trials and death sentences in Spain. His analysis of the Logrono *auto de fe* and the preceding investigation highlights people being swept up in the witch frenzy while the Inquisition attempted to make a sufficient inquiry into witchcraft. For example, the Inquisition did not reject the reality of witchcraft but sought proof for claims of the accuser or accused.⁶⁷ Though limited in his social history of the Basque region, Lea does address the Inquisitor Salazar's investigation and labels him the source of the restrictions and structures that the Inquisition implemented for witch trial proceedings. Later in 1980, Gustav Henningsen reiterates and expands on Salazar's lasting influences through his text, *The Witches' Advocate*.

Historian Lea appears to have limited knowledge of the Basque people as a cultural group and does not offer analysis specific to their ethnic or cultural identity. His writing in the early twentieth century correlates to a renewed Spanish nationalist movement after 1898 and further resistance to diverse cultural expressions in favor of uniformity. This nationalist trend was a lead up to the Spanish Civil War and Franco's

⁶⁶ Henry Charles Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of Spain IV* (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1966), 206-247.

⁶⁷ Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of Spain*, 240.

rule. Due to suspected witchcraft in the Basque region, Lea does not label the people Basque but “poor ignorant folk” of the mountains.⁶⁸ Even though his work does not offer any insight into culture or traditions that would have been influential on the Basque people, his research remains focused on understanding the witch trials within a politically-focused framework and remains the forerunner to understanding Inquisitor Salazar.

On the other hand, Montague Summers researches witchcraft from the framework of Christianity and thus concludes it originated in heresy. He argues that European witchcraft did involve aspects of pre-Christian beliefs and traditions but holds to the idea that witchcraft was the “spawn of Gnostic heresy, and heresy by its very nature embraced and absorbed much of heathendom.”⁶⁹ Summers writes, “only the trained theologian can adequately treat the subject.”⁷⁰

Summers labels witchcraft a “tragic belief” and does little to criticize the Catholic Church’s involvement in persecutions.⁷¹ His text demonstrates his belief in the reality of witches. He writes, “I have endeavored to show the witch as she really was – an evil liver; a social pest and parasite; the devotee of a loathly and obscene creed; an adept at poisoning, blackmail, and other creeping crimes; a member of a powerful secret organization inimical to Church and State...”⁷²

Summers’ text, *The History of Witchcraft*, published in 1926, primarily written as an overview of witchcraft, offers a revision to the anthropological ideas of Margaret

⁶⁸ Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of Spain*, 226.

⁶⁹ Montague Summers, *The History of Witchcraft and Demonology* (New Hyde Park, NY: University Books, 1966), 29.

⁷⁰ Summers, *The History of Witchcraft*, 45.

⁷¹ Summers, *The History of Witchcraft*, xvi.

⁷² Summers, *The History of Witchcraft*, xxii.

Murray. According to Summers, Murray holds to the belief that European witchcraft of the medieval and early modern period is a remnant of early pre-Christian religions. Therefore, witchcraft and sabbats were, to Murray, a physical reality based upon an ancient pre-Christian cult. Summers denies the idea of a functioning pre-Christian cult and states that witchcraft was in truth a foul and noisome heresy, the poison of the Manichees.⁷³ Summers' analysis of Basque witchcraft mentions the Logrono trial of 1610 and highlights the sabbats held in the Basque areas of Zugarramurdi and Berrocoberro, noting they coincided with religious feasts.⁷⁴ In his follow-up text, *Geography of Witchcraft*, Summers uses a foundational lens of theological ideology, which lends itself to a dismissive view of witches. Within the book, he does not focus on the Basque regions of France or Spain but concentrates instead on the significant areas of witchcraft throughout Europe.⁷⁵

Summers spends little time analyzing the Basques as Basques. His two texts on witchcraft reflect the idea of Spain as a unified, singular state, and that regional differences remain moderated in favor of an overarching, cohesive national narrative. Summers' early twentieth century investigations reflect his religious biases and foci of witchcraft as a Gnostic heresy. Additionally, his limited reference to the social and cultural aspects of those involved in the witch trials reflects his ecclesiastical approach to

⁷³ Summers, *The History of Witchcraft*, 32. Historian Carlo Ginzburg offered another view of Murray's perspective on witchcraft origins. He suggests that it is very likely that Murray is correct in her analysis of witchcraft having connections and roots to ancient pre-Christian cults. But Ginzburg does question Murray's assumptions of the reality of the sabbats and notes that there is not a viable way to prove the validity of the accused confessions nor the accuracy of those documenting the witch trials. Ginzburg, *Night Battles*, xix, xx.

⁷⁴ Summers, *The History of Witchcraft*, 112.

⁷⁵ Montague Summers, *Geography of Witchcraft* (Whitefish, MT.: Kessinger Publishing 1927, reprint 2003).

the subject as well as the nationalistic trend of his era. His texts do remain oppositional to Murray's popular claims of witchcraft as an ancient religion and should, therefore, be understood as foundational works which encouraged other historians to investigate and question Murray's idea.

The 1960s demonstrated a move away from the ecclesiastical and generalist, politically-focused histories of Lea and Summers. Julio Caro Baroja, William Monter, and Hugh Trevor-Roper are examples of scholars including ethnographic and anthropological approaches in their work. The inclusion of tools from other disciplines to explore witchcraft beliefs and persecutions enabled the said scholars to provide glimpses into the cultural and socio-religious influences on the beliefs and events and participants of the witch trials. Additionally, the authors offer regional foci to their research, including the greater Spain and Basque areas.

Julio Caro Baroja's text, *The World of Witches*, published in Spanish in 1961, reveals a Spanish perspective on the witchcraft of Europe and specifically the Basque region. He writes on the history of witches from classical Greco-Roman times through the mid-twentieth century. Caro Baroja notes that the societal acceptance of witchcraft changes and "varies from one period to the next in its social significance. At one stage it is treated as an accepted practice and at another as the activity of a dissident and feared minority."⁷⁶ Caro Baroja argues that past historical research has focused too strictly on the Christian, philosophical, and legal aspects of witchcraft. As an anthropologist, he suggests these foci are important but too simplistic to encompass the complexity of witchcraft and asserts that witchcraft is more multifaceted and hinges on past pre-

⁷⁶ Julio Caro Baroja, *The World of Witches*, trans. O. N. V. Glendinning (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 13.

Christian influences as well as the underlying norms of the society.⁷⁷ For example, the Basque culture's strong ties to the past in the areas of tradition and identity would have been influencing factors on the accused's understanding of their own beliefs and practices and thus add an important lens through which to look at the trials.

The third section of his four-part book focuses on witchcraft in Basque regions and how fundamental norms within Spain's political and religious institutions ultimately affected the Basque witch trials. Dedicating almost fifty pages to the Basque trials, he analyzes trial records and confessions of the accused.⁷⁸ Caro Baroja claims that the Inquisition's standard of necessary proof of the accusation limited the number of witch trials. For example, in 1555, several towns asked the inquisition to come and investigate local witchcraft rumors. In the end, the Supreme Inquisition ruled that there was not enough proof of witchcraft to make an arrest.⁷⁹ Paralleling historian Lea, Caro Baroja's analysis highlights Salazar's skills as an investigator and praises the Inquisitor's expertise at handling the testimonies and empirical evidence of the cases. While focusing on the legal aspects of the trial, Caro Baroja does not offer a connected examination of socio-religious traditions and the statements of the accused, and ultimately leaves room for research such as this thesis that focuses on symbols, myth, folklore and other the socio-religious influences that were familiar to the accused and how they were involved in testimony.

⁷⁷ Caro Baroja, *The World of Witches*, xiv.

⁷⁸ Caro Baroja, *The World of Witches*, 143-198.

⁷⁹ Caro Baroja, *The World of Witches*, 152.

The final two parts of his text provide examples of contemporary twentieth-century Basque understandings and experiences with magic and witches.⁸⁰ Similar to the confessions taken by the Inquisition, some contemporary beliefs and accounts focused on a witch's deeds or the organized gathering of witches. The similarity of belief between the four centuries reveals strong traditions and deeply ingrained beliefs.

Caro Baroja noted that pre-Christian beliefs about witches became apparent during the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939, in the Basque town of Aranaz. For example, in a heightened state of fear and unrest during the war, the town had an increased number of mattress burnings. These burnings eliminate the twisted fibers of the wool within the mattress, which were understood to be the evidence of magic spells. Caro Baroja writes, "witchcraft in that area is ultimately limited by the restricted range of emotions and ideas of those who believe in it; their emotions are closely connected with their day-to-day preoccupations, and consequently fairly rudimentary."⁸¹ I contend that the mattress burnings of the twentieth century not only reveal a continued belief in mythology but also demonstrate a need for the affected people group to have a "scapegoat" for the ills of the community, meaning witchcraft was the ultimate cause of the tragedies of war.

Caro Baroja's text functions as an early example of Basque historiography, changing from utilizing solely non-Basque documentary sources to the inclusion of culture, traditions, and oral testimonies of the researched group. Regarding the witch trials, his text is a survey on witchcraft that highlights legal aspects of the trial. His

⁸⁰ Caro Baroja, *The World of Witches*, 227-257.

⁸¹ Caro Baroja, *The World of Witches*, 238.

writing remains a foundation for Basque witchcraft studies that move past strict religious and political foci.

Similar to Caro Baroja, William Monter's edited volume, *European Witchcraft*, seeks to examine witchcraft from a variety of contexts such as early modern works focusing on political and religious aspects of witchcraft and later twentieth-century works that include the influences of culture and society on witchcraft belief. Monter sets out to bring a modern twentieth-century analysis to the European "witch craze." Monter's anthology stays away from the earlier religious and political histories on the subject and brings social and cultural influences to the conversation. Monter's text functions as a collection of leading scholarship of his day that contributes to the discussion of European witchcraft but does so from the modern belief that true witches did not exist.⁸² He does not directly acknowledge the Basques but indirectly draws attention to their society through his inclusion of Hugh Trevor-Roper's research.

Hugh Trevor-Roper's chapter in Monter, "Religion, the Reformation, and Social Change," suggests witchcraft persecution originated in the mountainous regions of Europe along the Alps and Pyrenees.⁸³ He notes that sometimes, as with the Basques, race did factor into the reasons for persecution.⁸⁴ Trevor-Roper suggests that the reason witchcraft originated in mountain regions had less to do with belief systems than with social structure that differed from residents of the lowland areas. He suggests mountain groups and plains people evolved vastly different social communities. Trevor-Roper

⁸² William Monter, *European Witchcraft* (New York: Wiley, 1969).

⁸³ Hugh Trevor-Roper, "Religion, the Reformation, and Social Change." In *European Witchcraft*, by William E. Monter, 27-34 (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1969), 27.

⁸⁴ Trevor-Roper, "Religion, the Reformation, and Social Change," 33.

highlights the Basques' social structure as a detriment rather than a unique quality of the distinct cultural group.

He contends the plains regions were characterized by past feudal systems, which quickly received the structures of Christianity, while the mountain regions, with their rural, individualistic inhabitants, did not embrace the doctrines of Christianity as well. Trevor-Roper emphasizes, "in those closed societies a lightly rooted orthodoxy was easily turned to heresy or even infidelity."⁸⁵ Furthermore, "the old rural superstition, which had seemed harmless enough in the interstices of known society assumed a more dangerous character when it was discovered in strange, exaggerated form, among the barely subdued 'heretics' of the highlands."⁸⁶ Therefore, for Trevor-Roper, the saturation of witchcraft in the Basque region stemmed more from non-feudal social structure than from cultural, religious, or political motives. Trevor-Roper's view of the Basque culture and people as inferior reveals more about his personal beliefs than it does about the social structure of the Early Modern Basques.



Figure 7: Anti- Franco Protest⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Trevor-Roper, "Religion, the Reformation, and Social Change," 33.

⁸⁶ Trevor-Roper, "Religion, the Reformation, and Social Change," 34.

⁸⁷ Wisconsin Historical Society, "Anti Franco Demonstration," *Wisconsin Historical Images*, <http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/whi/fullRecord.asp?id=3202> (accessed May 6, 2013). Image shows an

The three historians of the 1960s revealed receptiveness to methods of social and cultural approaches to the Basque region and its connection to witchcraft. Julio Caro Baroja's research focused considerably more on the Basque culture than previous works. While William Monter surveyed European witchcraft in a general way without making value judgments, his inclusion of Trevor-Roper's essay demonstrates his receptiveness to minority social groups.⁸⁸ Trevor-Roper analyzed witchcraft in European mountain areas and noted that the regions had a propensity towards witchcraft due to their unique societal structure, disparaging them for their cultural "backwardness." Additionally, all three works reveal the political influences of the 1950s and 1960s that affected Basque society and identity. Spanish dictator Franco's disregard for the cultural uniqueness of the Basques appears to have a significant influence on the histories written during that period. On the other hand, Caro Baroja's familial ties to the Basque people and his Spanish heritage reflect his predominant use of the Basques as an example of societal norms and witchcraft.

The works of the 1980s and 1990s demonstrate a continued interest in witchcraft histories with an underlying historical approach focused on the political and legal influences of the Inquisition. While the histories acknowledge the uniqueness of the Basque trials relating to Spanish or French political norms or Catholic norms, they do not investigate the distinct, blended socio-religious culture of the Basques. Historians Gustav Henningsen, Stephan Haliczer, Brian Levack, Gerhild Scholz Williams, and Jonathan

organized demonstration in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, regarding Franco's executions of anti-fascists, March 1946. The picture reveals the international concern of Franco's control in Spain.

⁸⁸ William Monter, "Witch Trials in Continental Europe 1560-1660." In *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: The Period of the Witch Trials*, edited by Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark, 1-52. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

Pearl focused their research on the European witch trials. This witchcraft research, except Henningsen's work, built upon the general histories while merely offering more limited information on Basque witchcraft.

Gustav Henningsen's research, the exception, focuses solely on the Basque region of northern Spain. He writes that "only when we turn to the study of witchcraft in its social setting do we begin to understand why so many people were suspected of being witches."⁸⁹ Henningsen opens his text with the thesis that the Basque witch trials of Logrono were unique in that new and different procedures were used in witchcraft evaluation. His text, *The Witches' Advocate*, centers on Inquisitor Alonso de Salazar Frías and his role in the Basque witch trials of 1610 and focuses on the statements of the accused and the legal proceedings of those involved, and aims to recreate the trial and investigation while demonstrating the "psychological and social reality witchcraft held for those persons and communities" involved.⁹⁰

Utilizing the documents provided by Salazar and the trial, Henningsen recreates the inquisition of witchcraft in the Basque area for a modern audience. The text gives detailed information about the sabbats and the confessions of the witches. However, Henningsen does not offer cultural background on the Basques but uses inquisition transcripts, trial records, letters, and reports to demonstrate the pervasiveness of the witchcraft and reveal the details gathered by the investigations. For example, Henningsen takes a systematic approach to the investigations and identifies "three phases" of the witch craze that occurred in the Basque regions, beginning in 1608. In phase one, the

⁸⁹ Henningsen, *The Witches' Advocate*, 9.

⁹⁰ Henningsen, *The Witches' Advocate*, xxvi.

Basque people received indoctrination from local priests or traveling preachers teaching about the dangers and effects of Satan and witches. The information created fear and a frenzy of confessions. In phase two, a dream epidemic created more fear and confessions. The dream flights, experienced mostly by children, were claims made by the accused that they traveled to the witches sabbat via flying. They were understood to be not in the mind but a physical travel experience to the sabbat. In phase three, local communities forced confessions from children and adults, which resulted in abuse and torture. Henningsen's three phases address the chronology of the events but do not approach the superstitious culture of the Basque community as a whole.⁹¹

Rather than focusing on the influences of one individual such as inquisitor Salazar, historian Stephen Haliczer's research focuses on answering why Spain historically had fewer witch trials than other areas of Europe. Haliczer sets out to demonstrate that the Jews, Jewish converts, and those labeled as "other" within Spain were the focus of aggressive hatred and scapegoating by the Spanish Christian populace, while most other European countries' scapegoating centered on witches. Haliczer suggests that the Basque region was the setting for a majority of Spain's witch trials precisely because there were few Jews in the area, so, therefore, the Basque could be understood as the "other." "For the rest of the country, the converted Jew substituted for the witch as a pariah, reflecting through antithesis and projection society's most ingrained fears and repressed longings."⁹² Haliczer suggests that the Spanish Inquisition attached

⁹¹ Gustav Henningsen, ed., *The Salazar Documents: Inquisitor Alonso de Salazar Frias and others on the Basque Witch Persecution* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 50-75.

⁹² Stephan Haliczer, "The Jew as Witch: Displaced Aggression and the Myth of the Santo Niño de La Guardia." In *Cultural Encounters: The Impact of the Inquisition in Spain and the New World*, edited by Mary Elizabeth Perry and Anne J. Cruz, 146-156 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 154.

“medieval and anti-Semitic folk traditions” onto the *conversos*, thus creating a target for social aggression. Therefore, unlike the rest of Europe which focused its attack on witches, Spain focused on *conversos*, except in the Basque region.⁹³ For Haliczer, Basque traditions and magical beliefs were less of a cause for persecution, so they remained unexamined. Instead, he highlights the Jewish culture, thus offering historians an alternative sociological cause of the witch trials.

Moving away from an individual or group-focused research of micro-histories, Brian Levack, Gerhild Scholz Williams, and Jonathan Pearl all concentrate their analysis within a secure context of political and legal influences on witch trials. The works add to the historical analysis of the Basque trials by demonstrating that the trials were the result of multiple influences. Levack’s text, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, primarily seeks to prove that the witch hunts were not the product of one single cause. For example, Levack suggests that witchcraft persecution was caused by multiple factors such as political, religious, and social tensions.⁹⁴ Throughout the text, Levack mentions the witch trials of the Basque area, and he notes various causes of the trials; such as elite theological ideas impacting lower-class belief away from magic to devil worship, and political resistance of the Basques which created political investigations under the guise of witchcraft control.⁹⁵ Additionally, Levack demonstrates the lower numbers of witchcraft executions in Spain as a whole were due primarily to Catholic dominance in the region that created less religious friction during the Reformation era so that the

⁹³ Haliczer, "The Jew as Witch: Displaced Aggression and the Myth of the Santo Nino de La Guardia," 154.

⁹⁴ Brian P. Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*. 2nd. ed. (Essex: Longman Group Limited, 1995), 3.

⁹⁵ Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 58, 66.

Inquisitional procedures limited the torture and ultimate fatality of the accused.⁹⁶ Within the legal and political context of Levack's explanation on witchcraft he does not go into further detail in analyzing the local Basque culture but does briefly mention Ginzburg's *benandanti* and in comparison notes that "learned beliefs were able to penetrate social barriers," therefore acknowledging for the need for additional research.⁹⁷

Gerhild Scholz Williams and Jonathan Pearl, similar to Levack, demonstrate how the agendas and politics of the greater powers of Spain and France influenced the investigation of the witches and the outcomes of the witch trials but allow for further investigation into the socio-religious traditions of the Basques and how pre-existing Basque beliefs and practices impacted the trial, which my thesis helps to rectify. Williams' work centers on Early Modern women and their involvement with and utilization of magic within society. Williams' text focuses on three areas of witchcraft in Europe: its relationship with women, science, and alternative religious practices. Mentioning the Basque trials of both Spain and France, Williams gathers information from Pierre de Lancre's writings and reveals political agendas and societal biases against the Basques within French borders that influenced the trials. Lancre believed that women's involvement in witchcraft would consequently affect the individual, community and the state by creating social unrest. Additionally, Lancre held to the notion that the French Basque region was susceptible to political and economic unrest, being far from the control of Paris.⁹⁸ Williams notes that the witchcraft "prosecutions had not only

⁹⁶ Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 116, 226.

⁹⁷ Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 59.

⁹⁸ Gerhild Scholz Williams. *Defining Dominion: Discourses of Magic and Witchcraft in Early Modern France and Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 90.

religious but political motives as well. These prosecutions formed part of the French move toward the absolutist state.”⁹⁹

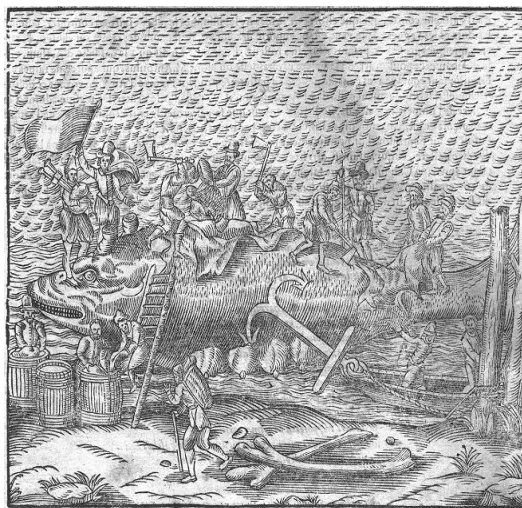


Figure 8: Basque Whaling¹⁰⁰

After highlighting the political agenda within the Basque witch trials, Williams also gathers information about local social traditions through Lancre’s observances. French Judge Lancre viewed the Basque people’s culture as primitive because they found sustenance from water instead of trade or farming.¹⁰¹ Lancre also noted the long time spans that men spent away from the home to fish, which left their dependents susceptible to the practice of witchcraft without the guiding authority of the head of the household. Without male supervision, women were inclined to turn their passions toward witchcraft and Satan.¹⁰² Such observations by Lancre display his biases but also reveal societal norms for the Basques of that region. Williams’ research, similar to Henningsen’s, utilizes documents written by those involved in the Basque witchcraft trials and

⁹⁹ Williams, *Defining Dominion*, 90.

¹⁰⁰ Penobscot Marine Museum, “Basque Whaling,” *Collection Object*, <http://penobscotmarinemuseum.org/pbho-1/collection/basque-whaling-1575> (accessed May 2, 2013). The illustration depicts sixteenth century Basque whalers. *On the Taking of Whales*, Andre Thevet 1575. Figure 9.

¹⁰¹ Williams, *Defining Dominion*, 109-112.

¹⁰² Williams, *Defining Dominion*, 112-113.

highlights the additional examples of the local society made within the documents. It is a first step but not sufficient to understand Basques' understandings of the trials. Such observations by Williams and Henningsen emphasize the multiple factors of politics, religion, and society that influenced individuals affected by the trials, but neither author investigated the testimonies and compared them with local beliefs and traditions.

Jonathan Pearl's work highlights Basque involvement from the French political movements of the late 16th and early 17th centuries. Pearl seeks to place the French witch trials within the larger context of the influences of the Wars of Religion in 1562-1598. Also, Pearl suggests that demonology was not only a religious phenomenon but a political one, as well.¹⁰³ Focusing on the literature written by the demonologists of that period, Pearl demonstrates that the writings reflect various political agendas that did not necessarily influence the actual investigation of the witch, but were rather Christian propaganda writings that helped to sway people to Catholicism. He does not discount the influence of religion but stresses that the demonologists had politically aligned themselves to various parties.¹⁰⁴ Pearl's work on French witchcraft focused on, but does give insight into, Lancre's actions that the witchcraft trials in the Pyrenees were multifaceted and politically tied to French agendas.

Pearl also notes that Lancre's literary work reflects societal opinions about the inferiority of the female gender, Jews, and peasants. Lancre did make some sociological observations of the Basque people, though, noting their illiteracy, poverty, and fishing, while portraying them as backward and "other." Lancre viewed the Basque communities

¹⁰³ Jonathan Pearl, *Crime of Crimes: Demonology and Politics in France 1560-1620* (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1999), 4-6.

¹⁰⁴ Pearl, *Crime of Crimes*, 6.

as abnormal within French society due to the seasonal work of fishing which led to the absence of men which resulted in leaving the weak members of society, particularly women, open to the Devil.¹⁰⁵ For Lancre, the political and sociological differences between the influential French and inferior Basque people grated on his elitist social values. Lancre's beliefs were not uncommon among his contemporaries, but the result of his four-month investigation, which led to the burning of close to eighty individuals, was zealous.¹⁰⁶

The above-mentioned histories of the 1980s and 1990s concentrate on political and legal aspects of the historical witch trials and bypassed connections between the accused's statements their particular Basque cultural and religious roots. The nationalist political environment of Spain during the 1980s and 1990s further influenced the texts. Additionally, in the 1980s, Spain was learning to function as a newly formed democracy after the fall of Franco's dictatorship. Globally, the late 1980s and 1990s were influenced by the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War. Such momentous political events influenced historians' research foci, lending a political slant to the Early Modern witch trials that minimized the regional distinctiveness of a unique minority culture such as the Basques. Because of the more significant national movements globally, historians focused on the politics of the past in their prospective study.

The more recent texts of the 21st century that focus on witchcraft similarly lack insight into Basque society and culture. The texts emphasize the general European understandings and perspectives of those accused. For example, editors Alan Charles

¹⁰⁵ Pearl, *Crime of Crimes*, 140.

¹⁰⁶ Pearl, *Crime of Crimes*, 133.

Kors and Edward Peters cover European witchcraft from 400-1700 C.E. They suggest that to comprehend Early Modern European witchcraft an understanding of how witchcraft was viewed prior and during the persecutions is necessary. Using documents from the period, the editors seek to re-create a European worldview, which influences their perspective on witchcraft.¹⁰⁷ Again, such a broad-based approach tends to ignore experiences of minority groups such as the Basques. Taking a chronological approach, Kors and Peters compile archival, literary, and pictorial works to demonstrate the European transformation of witchcraft beliefs. They note Salazar's documents pertaining to the Basque witch trials and his adherence to a critical ideology that took place among the more educated of the early seventeenth century.¹⁰⁸ The editors did not use Salazar's writings to demonstrate the Basque social and cultural uniqueness, but similar to Henningsen, highlight the legal prowess of Salazar.

Similar to Kors and Peters, historian Gary Waite emphasizes the dominant European narrative and never focuses on the unique traditional and cultural influences of the Basques. In the text, *Heresy, Magic, and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, he argues that beliefs and perspectives of witchcraft were shaped by religious beliefs and then influenced by political, economic, and social factors. Focusing on the influence of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, Waite returns to the early twentieth-century focus on analyzing witchcraft through the major religious institutions and conflicts.¹⁰⁹ Waite does mention the Basque witch trials but focuses on Salazar's investigation and

¹⁰⁷ Alan Charles Kors and Edward Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe, 400-1700: A Documentary History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 2.

¹⁰⁸ Kors and Edward Peters, *Witchcraft in Europe, 400-1700*, 407-419.

¹⁰⁹ Gary K. Waite, *Heresy, Magic, and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 1-7.

strategies, thus demonstrating how his recommendations influenced Spain's lenient view of witches. The overall lack of attention paid to Basque traditions and culture is predictable in light of Waite's focus on the Catholic Church's priorities. However, Waite's attempt to balance previous histories written with a primary political focus demonstrates his concern for expressing the multiple factors that influenced witchcraft in Europe.

An alternative to the contemporary historical works on European witchcraft of Kors and Peters and Waite are texts that focus on Basque culture from different disciplines. For example, William Douglass and Joseba Zulaika's anthropology text, *Basque Anthropological Cultural Perspectives*, offers a different method of evaluating Basque society than from a purely historical view.¹¹⁰ The authors highlight several witch trials of the Basque region in Spain and France but do not attempt to analyze the cultural or social traditions that may have been intertwined with the confessions due to the authors' greater anthropological focus. They briefly highlight the evidence gathered by the confessions, such as witches putting spells on crops, causing storms, vampirism and changing into animal form and focus further on the chronology of the events and the perspectives of Lancre and Salazar.¹¹¹ Douglass and Zulaika quote Caro Baroja, saying of the Basque people,

They were cut off and protected from the world outside by their strange language, and so they still clung to the same conception of the world as their forefathers, a view of life rooted in antiquity, full of mystery and poetry and even, at times, humor. Witchcraft and magic were still very much realities for them.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Douglass, and Zulaika. *Basque Anthropological Cultural Perspectives*, 7.

¹¹¹ Douglass, and Zulaika. *Basque Anthropological Cultural Perspectives*, 277-292.

¹¹² Douglass, and Zulaika. *Basque Anthropological Cultural Perspectives*, 286.

The anthropological research additionally describes the folklore and mythology of the Basque people, such as the myth of Mari.¹¹³ In regards to the Basque witch trials, Douglass and Zulaika's anthropological perspective does not investigate further into the cultural and social connections between the pre-Christian folklore and mythology that can be made from the accused confessions.



Figure 9: Witches' Sabbat¹¹⁴

In addition to anthropology, the ethnographic study of José Miguel de Barandiarán and Jesús Altuna offers an alternate perspective on the traditions and culture of the Basque people, by observing the society from within. The text, *Selected writings of José Miguel de Barandiarán: Basque prehistory and ethnography*, offers detail of the mythology of the Basques.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, the writings illustrate early artifacts and evidence of ancient Basque people. The text reveals an ancient people whose cultural influences appear in the linguistics and culture of the contemporary Basque people.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Douglass, and Zulaika. *Basque Anthropological Cultural Perspectives*, 268-278.

¹¹⁴ John Malyon/Specifica, Inc., "Claude Gillot," *Artcyclopedia*, http://www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/gillot_claude.html (accessed May 5, 2013). The illustration from French artist Claude Gillot (1673-1722) depicts a witch's sabbat attendees involved in vampirism acts.

¹¹⁵ Barandiarán and Altuna, *Selected writings of José Miguel de Barandiarán*, 107-109.

¹¹⁶ Barandiarán and Altuna, *Selected writings of José Miguel de Barandiarán*, 179.

These influences indicate the continued use of symbols, mythology, and ritual that have ties to pre-Christian origins, further revealed in the accused's testimonies. Therefore, the preceding anthropological and ethnographical texts offer additional insight into Basque history that cannot be gained by the sole assessment of historical documents. Through his ethnographic work, Barandiarán reveals glimpses of an ancient people that inhabited the Basque region. For example, where historical texts are unavailable, investigations of illustrations on cave entrances and walls reveal a people who had religious leanings to nature and a celestial being, thus establishing a foundation for later beliefs of Mari and other divinities.

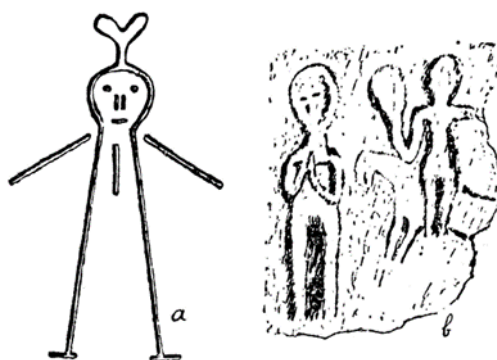


Figure 10. Cave Engravings, Bronze Age (1200-600 BCE)¹¹⁷

These twenty-first-century texts reveal a reversion back to general histories of witchcraft but also an increased investigation of the Basque people in multiple disciplines other than history. For example, Waite's writing displays a general focus on witchcraft while Douglass and Zulaika reveal an anthropological overview of the Basques but without an in-depth analysis of witchcraft among the Basques. The recent increase of

¹¹⁷ Barandiarán and Altuna, *Selected writings of José Miguel de Barandiarán*, 178. Cave engravings from El Montico and Santa Leocadia date to the Bronze Age (1200-600 BCE).

study of the Basque people presents in academia an acceptance of their unique ethnicity, culture, and traditions within academia. Also, Basque scholarship suggests that scholars are attempting to compensate for the years of academic repression under the dictator Franco. Because of such social, cultural, and academic oppression, the Basque region and people are due additional historical analysis and contributions.

Of the evaluated texts, both primary and secondary sources reveal connecting threads of religious, political, and legal agendas. As the previous historiography reveals, the Basque witch trials are primarily referenced for the inquisition records, trial statements, or literature written about the trials. The authors mainly focus on the motivators of religion and politics without offering much insight into the culture or traditions of the Basque society. The sole exception came from historian and anthropologist Caro Baroja's appreciation of both the culture and history of Basques.¹¹⁸ Similarly, this work values the culture and history of the Basques and seeks to understand how the accused witches may have experienced the Inquisition investigation and how their cultural symbols and norms were utilized in the confessions, thus rectifying this absence from the previous scholarship.

Connections between the inquisitional records and the social and cultural history of the Basques of the period remain absent from previous analysis on the Basque witch trials. The following chapter combines Basque history, archeology, myth, folklore, and the inquisitional records in an attempt to fill the void by demonstrating the presence of pre-Christian traditions and their influence on the accused in the witch trials. Evaluating the contribution of non-Christian beliefs within the *contact zone* of Inquisitor and accused

¹¹⁸ Caro Baroja, *The World of Witches*, 156-198.

adds the aspect of communal belief and individual experience to the historical narrative of religious, political, and legal contributing factors. This addition to the cultural and social history reveals another layer in understanding the witch craze of the Basque area.

CHAPTER 3: THE ACCUSED WITCHES: CONFESSIONS AND EMPOWERMENT THROUGH BASQUE CULTURAL NORMS

From the witch trials in both Spain and France, several primary source works have survived and are invaluable for understanding the trials. These sources allow twenty-first-century observers firsthand accounts of accused Basque witches' perceptions of their actions and the trial. I argue that the following confessions of the accused highlight the interaction of cultural beliefs about witchcraft promoted by the Catholic Church with Basque socio-religious norms that lean more towards mythology and folklore. Again, pre-Christian myths and symbols clearly influenced Basque behavior and their *contact-zone* interactions with the externally imposed symbols and rituals of the Catholic Church. The accused's use of familiar mythological folklore and beliefs also demonstrates how oppressed individuals may have empowered themselves by mixing into their confessions the religious beliefs and norms specific to the Basque people.

The following examples of the conflict between the accused and the Inquisitors are from a range of sources that enable us in the twenty-first century to grasp the intricacies of the *contact zone* as it existed during the period of the Basque trials. Florencio Idoate's text, *Un Documento de la Inquisición Sobre Brujería en Navarra*, is a Spanish-published Inquisitional record from 1613, located in the Archivo General de Navarra in Pamplona.¹¹⁹ It was republished in 1972. Idoate prefaces the record by

¹¹⁹ Florencio Idoate, *A Documento de la Inquisición Sobre Brujería en Navarra* (Pamplona: Editorial Aranzadi, 1972).

highlighting historical trends of Basques' involvement in the witchtrials. Idoate mentions the document was originally written by inquisition secretary Juan de Aguero and inquisitor Valle Verrca, which displays most inquisitors' underlying preference for preselecting the accused's statements based upon the most fantastic and symbolic statements by the witches.¹²⁰ Therefore, as a source, we have to take into account the agenda of the authors and realize that we are missing the before-and-after statements of the accused, thus not receiving the complete picture of the *contact zone*.

Juan de Mongaston, printer of *Auto de Fe in Logrono 1610*, promotes the piece as a first-hand account, with a January 7th printing date. The anonymously-authored text purports to provide authentic detail of the *Auto de Fe* and the charges and sentences that were read out loud to the public on the two days. The reader is given a glimpse into the physical appearance of the stage, those persons involved, and the accused individuals. What must be considered about this work is that, much like today's news, the more sensational news attracts larger audiences to read, discuss, and desire the original work.¹²¹ Additionally, the Inquisitors had multiple agendas in the *Auto de Fe*, including making examples of the convicted witches, forgiving and reconciling the contrite accused, and using the *Auto de Fe* as a venue to promote their successes as Inquisitors.

¹²⁰ There is an underlying tension surrounding the documents and beliefs of the Inquisitors involved in the Basque witch investigation. Salazar sought to rationally investigate the accused and statements while Inquisitors Valle and Vecerra disagreed with Salazar's perspective and approach. The document that Idoate printed is a formal response from Valle and Vecerra to *la Suprema* regarding Salazar, and appears, by its structure, to be highlighting the common witchcraft practices in the hope of offering proof to the reality of witchcraft.

¹²¹ Pierre de Lancre cites the sensational testimonies within his work *On the Inconstancy of Witches 1612*, revealing another printer of the same event or the wide spread use of Mongaston's printing.

Therefore, again, the agendas of the printer and the inquisitors should be taken into account when information is analyzed.¹²²

Gustav Henningsen, in, *The Witches' Advocate*, translates, quotes, and summarizes Salazar's Inquisitional documents sourced from archives in the Archivo Historico Nacional, Madrid, Spain. Combing through five thousand files, Henningsen aimed to recreate the events of the Inquisition by following the investigation of Salazar.¹²³

Pierre de Lancre's report, *On the Inconstancy of Witches 1612*, written from his Inquisitional investigation of the French Basque area of Pays de Labourd from 1609 – 1612, remains the only available source for the French Basque inquisition due to the loss of Inquisitional records in a fire in Bordeaux, France, in 1710. Lancre's report sheds light on the French perspective on the French Basque witchtrials and adds some cultural insights, even though Lancre remains dismissive of the Basque culture on the whole.

Henningsen's compilation, *The Salazar Documents*, records Alonso de Salazar Frias's experiences and findings from the Inquisition in a report written to the Inquisitor General between 1612-1614. Henningsen translates several of the complete reports, allowing historians and the general reader to experience Salazar's first-hand accounts, experiences, and perspectives. Salazar's reports are written to a specific audience and should be understood within the context of a man writing to his superiors; therefore, the agenda of promoting oneself in a favorable light should not be discounted when utilizing the sources.

¹²² Gustav Henningsen cross-referenced the accounts of the accused testimonies and notes that the information appears to be sourced from inquisitor's records and not all read aloud at the *Auto de Fe*.

¹²³ The primary Inquisition records were destroyed during the Napoleonic war, from the Tribunal at Logrono in 1808.

In summation, the primary sources display a wealth of knowledge and purportedly direct quotes from the inquisition investigation and the accused witches. However, each original author's agenda must be taken into account when evaluating the information. Therefore, acknowledgment is given that the sources are not perfect, but the information gained through them is invaluable to the degree that it allows us to view the Basque society in a *contact zone* as it confronted the Catholic Church.

Statements by accused witches and documents written by Inquisitors demonstrate how the seventeenth-century accused witches' descriptions of their own activities reflect characteristics of Basque gods, spirits, and common social practices. More specifically, the confessions display a replication of powers and abilities linked to the Goddess Mari, Akerbeltz (He-Goat), Lamiaks, folktales, and festivals. A belief in Basque spirits and Mari linked seventeenth-century Basques to pre-Christian traditions and myths and were important to Basques' understanding of their place in the environment and the greater cosmos. Even though these spirits and gods have pre-Christian origins, they remained a part of the broader Basque culture and traditions even after the integration and dominance of Christianity.

I claim that the established relationship the Basque culture had and continued to maintain with the ancient goddess Mari and other culturally-accepted spirits created a compelling foundation for what Inquisitors labeled witchcraft. Belief in various magic and non-Christian deity forms was an understood and accepted part of the Basque culture. Within the *contact zone* of the Basque Inquisition, the accused made mention of common folklore and mythology. The Inquisitors may have misinterpreted the integration of pre-Christian symbols within everyday society as evidence of witchcraft as defined by the

Catholic Church. This miscommunication ultimately became accentuated through the trials.

Mari in Confessions

Mari, a benevolent goddess believed to be a woman, has mythological connections to the cosmos. Her characteristics of flying, controlling the weather, and even changing forms were common and accepted within the Basque cultural norms. When these characteristics of a common belief were used within the *contact zone* between accused and Inquisitor the meaning and symbolism remained lost on the Inquisitors. Alternatively, the Inquisitors gained evidence of witch flights, storm conjuring, and metamorphizing to animals, all of which they understood to be traits of diabolic and malefic witchcraft.

Many of the accused witches claimed the ability to transport from one location to another through flying, which parallels characteristics of the Basque goddess, Mari. Writing a report to the Inquisitor General, Salazar notes that the witches, “usually went [to sabbat] and came back flying through the air.”¹²⁴ Additionally, accused witch Juana de Echegui said that she took on the form of a housefly while Catalina de Sastrearena became a raven to transport to the sabbat.¹²⁵ Francisco de Echeverria claimed to have been “taken out and carried a great distance thence through the air...”¹²⁶ A slight variation of actual flying comes from French Inquisitor Pierre de Lancre’s writings. He notes Marie de Ralde claimed to have gone on foot as quickly as if she had flown.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Alonso de Salazar Frias, *Second Report of Salazar to Inquisitor General*, Logrono, March 24, 1612, quoted in Henningsen, *The Salazar Documents*, 272.

¹²⁵ Salazar Frias, *Second Report of Salazar to Inquisitor General*, 272.

¹²⁶ Salazar Frias, *Second Report of Salazar to Inquisitor General*, 304.

¹²⁷ Lancre, *On the Inconstancy of Witches*, 118.

Accused Jeanette d'Abadie had a flashing experience of being at home one instant and then at the sabbat the next. Also, Marie Dindarte claimed that the Devil carried her through the air to the sabbat.¹²⁸ Such testimonies by both French and Spanish Basque witches reveal a mode of air transportation that is similar to the capabilities of goddess Mari. The connection made with the Basque witches and Mari's abilities demonstrates Basque familiarity with the phenomenon of supernatural travel, tying familial, cultural norms into the tenuous *contact zone* of the inquisitor and the accused.

In addition to flying, many witches claimed the ability to change into animals. The accused witches claimed an ability to transform into various animals such as pigs, horses, cats, and dogs.¹²⁹ Lancre writes that Jeanette d'Abadie,

...said that she saw witches transform themselves into wolves, dogs, cats and other animals. Washing their hands with some kind of water from a jar, they regained their original appearances whenever they wanted. And this occurred at the sabbath, along the roads, and in all places, and once they were transformed, they could not be seen. One could see nothing around them except a certain glow.¹³⁰

Another woman, Jeannette de Belloc, states that the sabbat was like a "fair" and some witches appeared as themselves while others "were transformed into dogs, cats, asses, horses, swine, and other animals."¹³¹ Similarly, inquisitors Salazar Frias, Valle Alvarado, and Beccera mention to King Phillip III the ability of the witches to change into animal forms. They describe the witches traveling through the air in human form but

¹²⁸ Lancre, *On the Inconstancy of Witches*, 121.

¹²⁹ Henningsen, *The Witches' Advocate*, 78. Sourced from *Joint Sentence* f. 397 Lib. 835, Archivo Historico Nacional Madrid.

¹³⁰ Lancre, *On the Inconstancy of Witches*, 156.

¹³¹ Lancre, *On the Inconstancy of Witches*, 151.

also in the shapes of dogs and cats on their way to the sabbat.¹³² The three Spanish inquisitors noted,

They [witches] also amuse themselves by going forth to frighten and harm travelers, appearing in the shapes of cats and dogs to avoid recognition. For it seems that the Devil changes them into these shapes and likenesses as well as into swine, goats, sheep, mares and other animals, according to what best suits his purposes.¹³³

An additional familiar topic in accused witches' testimonies and Inquisitors' reports involved manipulating the weather. Similar to goddess Mari who is known for controlling weather and who punishes by enacting destructive weather such as hail, lightning, and rain, accused witches Miguel de Goiburu and Graciana de Barrenechea claimed involvement in changing the weather.¹³⁴ They confessed that a group of witches flew to sea and conjured a storm that destroyed several ships.¹³⁵ Additionally, Jeannette d'Abadie contended that she and other witches flew to Newfoundland "to stir up thunderstorms and windstorms so that ships would perish." Catalina de Aresu stated she went to a sabbat and participated in the conjuring of a storm.¹³⁶ Similarly, Isabel de Castro claimed "that she was present in the storm stirred up by the witches," upon Salazar's arrival to San Sebastian.¹³⁷ In addition to the testimony of the accused witches, Salazar noted that preacher Fray Domingo de Velasco expressed that "not one of the

¹³² Henningsen, *The Salazar Documents*, 116.

Alonso de Salazar Frias, Alonso Becerra, and Juan de Valle Alvarado, *An Account of the Persons to be Brought Forth at the Auto de Fe*, Logrono, October 31, 1610, quoted in Henningsen, *The Salazar Documents*. The first hand account published by Juan de Mongaston also noted that the witches claimed to turn into "dogs, cats, pigs, and goats." *Auto de Fe in Logrono 1610* (Juan de Mongaston, printer).

¹³³ Henningsen, *The Salazar Documents*, 118.

¹³⁴ Barandiarán and Altuna, *Selected Writings*, 106, 107.

¹³⁵ Henningsen, *The Witches' Advocate*, 470. Sourced from Joint Sentence ff. 391. Lib 835 Archivo Historico Nacional Madrid. Also included in *Auto de Fe in Logrono 1610*.

¹³⁶ Henningsen, *The Salazar Documents*, 286.

¹³⁷ Henningsen, *The Salazar Documents*, 306.

many hail or thunderstorms during the last few months had been of natural origin, but rather freaks brewed up by the witches.”¹³⁸

Within these testimonies, the symbolic references used and statements made were not understood nor had the same meanings for both individuals within the *contact zone* of accused and Inquisitor. The accused related stories and characteristics of Mari, whom they did not believe to be evil. Alternatively, the Inquisitors understood the statements as evidence of diabolic witchcraft and claimed such actions to be evil.

Mari’s control of the cosmos and the accused witches’ claims of similar weather manipulations reveal a continued belief in the supernatural involved in the atmosphere. Thus, whether Mari or accused witches were the cause of weather changes, the accused Basque witches created a justification for the weather and destruction and furthermore empowered themselves by showing control over something more significant than their current conflict with the church.



Figure 11: Witches Conjuring a Storm¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Henningsen, *The Salazar Documents*, 336.

¹³⁹ Dijitalimaj, “Witches Conjuring a Storm,” <http://www.dijitalimaj.com/alamyDetail.aspx?img=%7B2B92075D-16AB-4145-9F48-1A854DA89F23%7D> (accessed June 24, 2013). Image from *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus* of Olaus Magnus, Rome 1555.

Analyzing these stories using symbolic interactionism and *contact zone* frameworks, I suggest that flying, anthropomorphic abilities, and control of the cosmos are examples not of European witchcraft belief but Basque pre-Christian beliefs. These commonly known attributes reflect Basque cultural aspirations utilized by the accused in testimonies and alternatively reveal that Basque religious beliefs were systematically identified by Inquisitors as evil and heretical. The connection made with the Basque witches' abilities demonstrates a familiarity with the concept of flying when it comes to experiences outside the physical realm. These claims by the accused highlight the *contact zone* of Catholic Christian norms meeting traditional mythologies of the Basque people. This contact occurred in a highly volatile environment wherein a societal power struggle between tradition and the authority of the Spanish Catholic Church took place. These similar ties between pre-Christian beliefs and the witches' actions are examples of the greater Basque society's handling of external, dominant powers. The parallels suggest the Basque accused may have been making confessions to the Inquisitors using already familiar constructs of Mari and her powers. In this way, the Basques empowered themselves through storytelling and the description of fantastic feats within the *contact zone* between a powerful Catholic Church and the accused. The Inquisitors, however, would have interpreted such confessions as evidence of diabolic and malevolent witchcraft and punished the accused witches accordingly.

I suggest the area of communication and symbolism should be addressed and acknowledged as lacking a clear unilateral understanding by all participants. As Mary Louise Pratt notes, "...when speakers are from different classes or cultures, or one party is exercising authority, and another is submitting to it or questioning it," there is an

assumption that all members of a community are equally participating in the communication.¹⁴⁰ For the accused, there was not equality of communication nor equal understanding of what Inquisitors understood flight, animal metamorphosis, or weather magic to mean. Additionally, the Inquisitors did not necessarily know how the accused witches were perceiving their questions. The pre-Christian symbols not only gave the accused something extravagant to say but also may have been tied to an alternate agenda of claiming something – anything – that they thought could later be recanted in order to absolve the accused of guilt. Even in this latter instance, the Basques used familiar cultural symbols and meaning in order to challenge, survive, or otherwise navigate an imposed social and religious order.

¹⁴⁰ Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone," 38.

CHAPTER 4: BASQUE AND CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

Goddess Mari and the Contact Zone

For the Basque people of the 17th century, a belief in witches was not a foreign concept unexpectedly imparted to the region by the Inquisitors. Witch trials had occurred previously and centered more on correcting the individual's errors and preserving the community. In 1466, Guipuzcoa province appealed to Henry IV of Castile to assist in handling a witch problem. In 1507 and 1527, the Basque area experienced several more substantial organized witch investigations. Between 1526 and 1596, the Basque region hosted nine more witchcraft cases.¹⁴¹ The historical record reveals that these earlier witch encounters developed from local conflicts and did not balloon into the mass witch hysteria of the early seventeenth century. The civil persecution of witches in Ceberio, between 1555 and 1558, for example, reveal that the local authorities viewed the issues within the context of family and individual animosities, not as part of a greater witchcraft problem.¹⁴²

Sorguiñ, the Basque name for witch, refers to those persons who participate in the witches' Sabbath, but is also synonymous with an ancient pre-Christian, Basque night spirit that lives in caves and adheres to the wishes of goddess Mari. Additionally, the

¹⁴¹ Caro Baroja, *The World of Witches*, 143-146, 155.

¹⁴² Caro Baroja, *The World of Witches*, 143-146, 154.

spirit is thought to be a protector of women during childbirth.¹⁴³ Barandiarán notes that, “By extension this name has also been applied to men and women whose conduct seemed extravagant and mysterious to their neighbors.”¹⁴⁴ The word *sorgin* or *sorguiñ* (*sor*, meaning “luck” in Castilian) / (*gin*, meaning “to make/to do”) connotes a mystical, magical leaning and not a nefarious one.¹⁴⁵ The definition of the word *sorgin* or *sorguiñ* and its association with the spiritual realm is consistent with Basques’ varied beliefs of goddess Mari’s powers and characteristics.

Remnants of an older belief system mixed with the medieval and early modern understandings of witches appear in folklore surrounding Mari and her deeds. To understand the layered history and belief system of the Basque, Luis de Barandiarán Irizar writes:

The Basque Country, too, abounds with a variety of oral literature in the form of fables, stories, legends, traditions, and beliefs that somehow brings into the present a distant past that has survived in the minds of the people. It is this collective knowledge, archived and handed down from generation to generation, that provides us with valuable material from which we may piece together the spiritual physiognomy of our ancestors.¹⁴⁶

The excerpt from de Barandiarán Irizar highlights that a connection to the past remains part of the Basque psyche and additionally demonstrates the layered complexities of the accused’s confessions.

¹⁴³ Barandiarán and Altuna, *Selected Writings*, 89.

¹⁴⁴ Barandiarán and Altuna, *Selected Writings*, 130.

¹⁴⁵ Spain, Archivo Histórico Provincial de Álava, and Archivo Histórico Nacional Spain, *¡Brujas! = Sorginak! : los archivos de la Inquisición y Zugarramurdi* (Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura, Dirección General del Libro, Archivos y Bibliotecas, Subdirección General de los Archivos Estatales, 2008), 21.

¹⁴⁶ Luis de Barandiarán Irizar, ed., *A View from the Witch’s Cave: Folktales of the Pyrenees* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991), xvii.

As a young girl, Mari disobeyed her mother and consequently found herself placed in the depths of the underworld. Transformed from a disobedient child to a goddess, Mari now controlled storms and droughts. Goddess Mari may take on the form of an animal such as a ram but usually remains a woman of beauty who flies through the air followed by a trail or ball of fire.¹⁴⁷



Figure 12: Goddess Mari¹⁴⁸

Mari worshipers range from town folk to shepherds.¹⁴⁹ The devotees offer gifts to her and make pilgrimages to her caves. In return for such devotion, they receive her assistance.¹⁵⁰ Mari is believed to prevent hailstorms from ruining harvests for those who give her an annual offering. Additionally, if advice is sought from Mari, “her oracles are esteemed to be true and useful.”¹⁵¹ Spanish historian Julio Caro Baroja labels Mari as a “sort of

¹⁴⁷ Caro Baroja, *The World of Witches*, 238.

¹⁴⁸ Housetop Care Limited, “Vasconia – Basque Country,” *Women’s Ministries in the Basque Country*, http://www.womenpriests.org/minwest/freilas_overview.asp (accessed May 1, 2013). Picture highlights Mari’s long hair that is at times on fire, and also the Ram, which is believed to be her animal form.

¹⁴⁹ Caro Baroja. *The Basques*, 277.

¹⁵⁰ Douglass and Zulaika. *Basque Anthropological Cultural Perspectives*, 286-277.

¹⁵¹ Douglass and Zulaika. *Basque Anthropological Cultural Perspectives*, 271-272.

Basque Persephone” and notes that she has many titles such as “the lady,” “the woman,” “the witch,” and “the evil one.”¹⁵²

The fourteenth-century work, *Livro dos Linhagens*, written by Pedro de Barcellos, offers a glimpse into prior Basque beliefs and traditions. Within the text, Barcellos focuses on the origins of the Bizkaia lords and their connection to Mari. The account reveals early Basque ancestor Don Diego Lopez de Haro falling madly in love with a beautiful lady of the mountain who seemed to be perfect except for one foot which appeared as a goat’s hoof. Nevertheless, Don Diego asked the woman to marry him, and she agreed if only he would never make the sign of the cross.¹⁵³

This fourteenth-century work demonstrates an early Basque belief in Mari that predates the Basque witch trials of the late Medieval and Early Modern periods and indicates an underlying tension between ancient beliefs and the continued cultural assimilation of Christianity within the *contact zone* between Basques and other Western Europeans. The story is consistent with later documented oral folklore of Mari, locating her in the mountains, her connection to a goat, and her non-Christian origins. The story continues with Don Diego’s capture by the Moors. His son, Iñigo Guerra, seeks out the earth spirits for assistance in getting Don Diego back but is told to go and find his mother, the lady of the mountain. He sees his mother atop a mountain and seeks her advice. She gives him a magical horse that takes him to his father’s rescue.¹⁵⁴ The story emphasizes the revered, well-known status of the lady of the mountain and her valued

¹⁵² Caro Baroja, *The Basques*, 276-277.

¹⁵³ Don Pedro de Barcellos, *Livros dos Linhagens* (14th Century), quoted in Barandiarán and Altuna, *Selected Writings*, 100.

¹⁵⁴ Barcellos, *Livros dos Linhagens*, quoted in Barandiarán and Altuna, *Selected Writings*, 103.

advice and indicates pre-Christian beliefs that were readily accepted by the Basques in spite of Christianity.

Author Pedro de Barcellos mentions that the “mother of Iñigo Guerra is the witch or caster of spells of Bizkaia,” and when the lord of Bizkaia is in residence sacrifices of cow entrails are made to her atop the mountain to bring peace and security.¹⁵⁵ The notion that the lady of the mountain is a witch or caster of spells parallels the many beliefs about Mari, who can control the weather, fly through the air, take on animal form, advise devotees, and resides in caves or mountains. Additionally, the story draws a correlation to the practice of offering sacrifices to the lady of the mountain and regional Basque practices of offerings being presented to Mari in caves throughout the Basque region.

The concept of the accused witches metamorphosing from human to animal form mimics European Inquisitors’ expectations of witches’ practices, but it also parallels the goddess Mari’s anthropomorphic abilities. Mari has been believed to be foremost a woman, but additional legends reveal her as a male goat in Auza del Baztán, a horse in Arano, a cow in Onate, a raven in Aketegi and a vulture in Orozko.¹⁵⁶ The concept of a witch and a goddess changing forms is not entirely equivalent, but belief in metamorphosis in both is apparent. The accused’s claims of changing into animals demonstrate their use of common cultural concepts to explain their actions to Inquisitors and possibly to assert and claim an independent and unique identity within the *contact zone* of the dominating Church, which sought cultural conformity.

Akerbeltz / He-Goat and Lamia Attributes in the Devil of the Sabbat

¹⁵⁵ Barcellos, *Livros dos Linhagens*, quoted in Barandiarán and Altuna, *Selected Writings*, 105.

¹⁵⁶ Barandiarán and Altuna, *Selected Writings*, 97.

The accused witches also consistently draw parallels with the spirits Akerbeltz and Lamia when describing the Devil at the sabbat or *aquelarre* during their confessions. I assert that their descriptions of the Devil were formed not only through the information spread from the Church but also through traditions about other deities familiar to the Basque people. The combination of He-Goat qualities in appearance and Lamia trickster traits are evident in the accused's statements. For example, the first accused witches from Zugarramurdi claimed to have gone to an *aquelarre* and participated in an initiation ceremony wherein they rejected the Christian faith and were marked by the Devil. At the Auto de Fe, they described the Devil as a black man with a crown of horns, a goat beard, clawed hands, and feet like a duck.¹⁵⁷ The accused, Miguel de Goiburu, claimed that the Devil blessed him, noting, "He lifted his left hand in the air with the palm upwards and the fingers wide-spread; then he suddenly lowered his hand and made some fumbling gestures above the ground. He repeated this four or five times."¹⁵⁸ The witches then received a mark from the Devil, who presented them with a toad that functioned as a protector and advisor to the new witch.¹⁵⁹

The physical attributes of a goat are a familiar part of European demonology but would also have been familiar to Basques as a description of the He-Goat spirit, Akerbeltz, who originated underground, assisted Mari, played the role of the protector, and took the form of a goat.¹⁶⁰ While the initial induction of the witch into the Devil's company reflects a community that performed an inverse of the traditional Christian

¹⁵⁷ *Auto de Fe in Logrono 1610*, 5. The printing from 1610 does not have specific pages, therefore page reference is taken from my single space translation.

¹⁵⁸ Henningsen, *The Witches' Advocate*, 76. Sourced from Joint Sentence ff. 389. Lib 835 Archivo Histórico Nacional Madrid. Also included in *Auto de Fe in Logrono 1610*.

¹⁵⁹ Henningsen, *The Witches' Advocate*, 78.

¹⁶⁰ *Auto de Fe in Logrono 1610*, 5.

Mass, rejected Christianity, and accepted the Devil as their god, it also highlights Basque symbols that would have been familiar to the accused. I contend that the aligning of pre-Christian symbols and the subversive claims of an inversion of Mass may have been a conscious or unconscious approach to empowering the Basques and rejecting the Catholic Church's use of power to require cultural and religious conformity among the Basques. At the least, it could be another example of miscommunication between Inquisitors and Basque accused witches, as we saw with parallels between European witchcraft beliefs and traditional Basque beliefs surrounding the goddess Mari.

The accused would have been familiar with Aker, who appears as a "black male goat" also known as Akerbeltz. The spirit, believed to live underground, functions as a protector. Akerbeltz is known for causing storms and offering a form of comfort through healing. He remains connected to Mari as her representative and additionally has power over other spirits. Basques at the time of the trials believed that owning a black male goat protected the other animals or livestock from dangers such as disease.¹⁶¹ Both Mari and Akerbeltz were part of the symbolic, religious world that enabled the Basque people to relate to and understand the cosmos. Their particular attributes of power and protection would resonate with the Basque people who required divine assistance and sought to maintain their cultural identities.

José Miguel de Barandiarán noted in his ethnographic research of the twentieth century that in the communities of Ataun and Sara, a male goat was still believed to protect the other livestock.¹⁶² Additionally, in the contemporary carnival of Ituren, an

¹⁶¹ Barandiarán and Altuna. *Selected Writings*, 107-109.

¹⁶² Barandiarán and Altuna. *Selected Writings*, 75.

actor dressed like a goat is a formidable figure and scares children.¹⁶³ The above examples not only reveal the modern use of the male goat figure but continue to demonstrate adaptable usage of symbolism for the adherent and therefore function as examples of how the accused may have utilized pre-Christian, Basque symbols and beliefs that were familiar to them.

Evidence of a conflation of beliefs and understandings comes from the above description of the Devil having duck feet.¹⁶⁴ The use of the duck descriptor is unusual and indicates a possible connection to the Basque Lamia. Spirits known as the Lamiak or Lamia played the critical role of bridging the gap between the spirit world and immediate physical needs of the Basque. Basques viewed Lamia as beautiful women with either mermaid characteristics or physical features of duck feet. Lamia were believed to live in natural environments such as caves or streams.¹⁶⁵ Legends describe them combing their beautiful hair and often possessing gold or wealth. They might interact with humans to meet an individual's need such as romantic love or personal wealth. Interestingly, anthropologist Caro Baroja notes the Basque view Lamia as non-Christian spirits.

A legend from Mondarrin tells of a shepherd stealing a lamia's golden comb. A pursuit ensued, and the chase ended with the shepherd finding safety in the light of the sun. The lamia left saying, "You may give thanks to the one who has wrapped you in his light."¹⁶⁶ A tale from the Bazterretxea describes how the lamia would assist in farming by doing chores at night and the farmer would thank the lamia by leaving food. One night

¹⁶³ Mark Kurlansky, *The Basque History of the World* (New York: Walker & Company, 1999), 96.

¹⁶⁴ *Auto de Fe in Logrono 1610*, 5.

¹⁶⁵ Caro Baroja. *The Basques*, 278.

¹⁶⁶ Barandiarán Irizar, *A View from the Witch's Cave*, 104.

the family failed to leave food out for the lamia, resulting in the lamia leaving the farm, never to assist again.¹⁶⁷ Another story tells of a young man falling in love with a beautiful lamia; she promised marriage only if he could figure out her age. The man convinced a neighbor to trick her and found out she was 105 years. The tale did not end well for the man, who died of shock after viewing the lamia's duck feet.¹⁶⁸

This further highlights repeated claims by the accused of being tricked or tricking someone else. Maria Perez Barrenetxea confessed to becoming a witch because she sought the money and pleasure that a friend said she would gain.¹⁶⁹ Similarly, Maria de Echegui had a visitor stop by with the enticement of witchcraft and money.¹⁷⁰ Within Basque folklore, Lamia function as beautiful trickers enticing others by their beauty and wealth.¹⁷¹ Paralleling folklore, the accused's statements reveal a desire for prosperity and personal wealth. Similar to the tales and functions of the Lamia, the accused claimed desire for more, in spite of being tricked by the others to join in the witchcraft. Additionally, these statements, placed within the unequal *contact zone*, may represent feelings by the accused of being tricked into confessions by the Church.

The non-Christian Lamia takes on the role of trickster within the symbolic framework of the Basque socio-religious norms. The Lamia closely interact with Basques, meeting needs and wants, but often at a price. Additionally, familiarity with a non-Christian spirit of trickster qualities would seamlessly fit within the witchcraft

¹⁶⁷ Barandiarán Irizar, *A View from the Witch's Cave*, 110.

¹⁶⁸ Barandiarán Irizar, *A View from the Witch's Cave*, 107.

¹⁶⁹ Idoate, *Un Documento de la Inquisición*, 47.

¹⁷⁰ Idoate, *Un Documento de la Inquisición*, 51.

¹⁷¹ Barandiarán Irizar, *A View from the Witch's Cave*, 102-115.

descriptors of the early modern era. Specifically, lamia paralleled witchcraft and demonic actions and descriptions the Catholic church labeled evil.

St John's Eve and Confessions of the Accused

Several of the accused witches claimed significant events occurred during St. John's Eve or Midsummer's Eve. The inquisitors of the first group of condemned witches from the village of Zugarramurdi claimed that the witches confessed to church vandalism on St. John's Eve. The ritual involved the witches breaking into the church and tearing down the statues and cross and placing the relics facedown.¹⁷² In 1612 Salazar wrote to the Inquisitor General about a visit to the town of Santesteban. Salazar stated that a sizable number of boys and girls confessed to attending a large *aquejarre* during the evening of St. John's Eve. Salazar later found that the claims of the children had been false because two of his secretaries had been present at the claimed *aquejarre* and did not observe any such gathering.¹⁷³

Several significant aspects of the festival can be observed within confessions of the accused. The accused witches claimed that at the *aquejarre* they danced in and around a fire. The Devil claimed that this would familiarize the witches of the fires of hell so that they would not be fearful of Hell.¹⁷⁴ Inquisitor Pierre de Lancre also wrote that at the *aquejarre*, "the Devil persuades them that the fear of Hell, which they so dread, is foolish and he makes them understand that eternal sufferings will not torment them any more than certain artificial fires that he cunningly makes them light."¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² Henningsen, *The Witches' Advocate*, 83. Sourced from Joint Sentence ff. 399. Lib 835 Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid.

¹⁷³ Henningsen, *The Salazar Documents*, 300.

¹⁷⁴ Henningsen, *The Witches' Advocate*, 79. Sourced from Joint Sentence ff. 390-391. Lib 835 Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid.

¹⁷⁵ Lancre, *On the Inconstancy of Witches*, 148.

Inquisitor Salazar writes that the witches “trip in and out of the fires, making merry to the noise of timbrel, drum and fiddle sounded by the musicians who are present at every *aquejarre*.”¹⁷⁶ The similarities of the bonfire and festivities and the claim that the Devil ward off fear of the unknown Hell are comparable to the bonfires and holiday festivities Basques generally hold on St. John’s Eve. The rituals of St. John’s Eve deal with fear of the unknown. The dancing and plant offerings are to ward off insecurities of the future. Similarly, the purported joining with the Devil created a community while dealing with the fear of the unknown Hell.

In their confessions, accused Basques generally testified to participating in an *aquejarre*, or witch’s sabbat, at places and at times that coincided with significant Christian holidays or festivals such as St. John’s Eve, Christmas, and Easter.¹⁷⁷ The mention of St. John’s Eve by either the witches, inquisitors, or children at first appears inconsequential in light of the greater witch craze and European festival culture. However, St. John’s Eve or Midsummer’s Eve holds a significant place in the societal traditions of the Basque people. Additionally, St. John’s Eve rites stem from early Basque pre-Christian traditions that I contend had an underlying influence on the statements of the witches.

Caro Baroja suggests that St. John’s Eve rites are similar to earlier pre-Christian rituals found throughout Europe. The traditions focused on lighting bonfires and putting other laurel leaves or plants on the fire. The participants would then circle and jump over the fire while reciting sayings. The fires were believed to promote marriage and offer

¹⁷⁶ Henningsen, *The Salazar Documents*, 118.

¹⁷⁷ Henningsen, *The Witches’ Advocate*, 71.

protection from sickness, cures for illnesses, and protection from witches and thieves, all while giving individuals solutions to a plethora of other problems.¹⁷⁸ Regarding the bonfires,

It is said that the sun comes up dancing on Saint John's morning; that baths taken on this morning and the morning dew on this day keep you from getting sick during the year; that branches of hawthorn, ash, hypericon, flowering fern, etc., placed in the doors and windows, and flowers and herbs laid down as a carpet at the threshold of the main door to the house on that day protect the home against lightening; that flowers gathered for Saint John, used to make an infusion, serve to cure certain illnesses, etc.¹⁷⁹

The relationship between the sun and bonfires reflects a linguistic connection to the Basque words of sun, light, and fire.¹⁸⁰ The Basque words for sun—*eguzki*, *iguzki*, *eguzku*, and *ekhi*—refer to the ancient Basque belief in the sacredness of the star. In Berastegi, the sun is known as the “eye of God,” or *Jainkoaren-Bergi*. In Vergara, when the sun is setting, it is stated that “Grandmother Sun is going home to her mother.”¹⁸¹ In Gipuzkoa and Navarre, mother earth is the personification of Mari.¹⁸² Therefore, such modern examples of reverence to the sun demonstrate animist views and the ancient belief of the sun's sacred placement. Such a linguistic tie reflects the interconnectedness of pre-Christian Basque beliefs and the continued cultural traditions carried through to the seventeenth century. This pre-Christian symbolism used in everyday language and action once again demonstrates the framework of symbolic interactionism, in that

¹⁷⁸ Caro Baroja, *The Basques*, 293-295.

¹⁷⁹ Barandiarán and Altuna, *Selected Writings*, 110.

¹⁸⁰ Caro Baroja, *The Basques*, 275.

¹⁸¹ Barandiarán and Altuna, *Selected Writings*, 109.

¹⁸² Barandiarán and Altuna, *Selected Writings*, 109.

meaning and value move in a cycle that in turn brings meaning to the symbol, individual, and community.

On St. John's Eve, Basques believed that a child with a hernia could be healed if it passed through the branches of an oak tree where one branch had been broken. After the child was passed through the branches, the broken branch would then be mended and bound.¹⁸³ Additionally, on Midsummer's Eve, the future could be seen if an egg were cracked over water.¹⁸⁴ Other medicinal plants would be gathered and placed in the bonfire in an effort to ward off curses. Another method of protecting crops occurred when a burning sheave of straw was carried over the field in hopes of warding off antagonists of the future crop. In Larrabetzu, a song was sung while carrying the sheaf:

*On our property no thieves
if there are any, let them be burned
let the wild beasts, the toads, the snakes be burned, burned
and the harmful pests be burned, burned.*¹⁸⁵

The use of plants and trees demonstrates a connection that Basque society continued to make with the natural environment within which they lived. In the community of Sara, the locals mixed the ancient traditions of the bonfire with Christianity. In front of the house, participants would walk around a fire while praying the rosary.¹⁸⁶ The traditions of Sara and other Basque communities demonstrate melding of their past non-Christian traditions of solstice festivals with Christianity's veneration of St. John.

¹⁸³ Caro Baroja, *The Basques*, 232.

¹⁸⁴ Caro Baroja, *The Basques*, 222.

¹⁸⁵ Barandiarán and Altuna, *Selected Writings*, 76.

¹⁸⁶ Barandiarán and Altuna, *Selected Writings*, 76.

Along with St. John's Eve rituals of warding off sickness, curses, and evils that affect the crops, historian Julio Caro Baroja noted that the Midsummer's Eve festivals also offered a display of local village military strength. The holiday of St. John's Eve in many Basque villages featured dances, masquerades and military shows mixed in with the holiday. The communities varied in their traditions, displaying Moorish and Christian kings or masked men called *mozorros*, reenacting the military conquests of a protagonist and dancing militarily with swords. Baroja notes that "the holiday of Saint John was considered a safeguard against all types of natural and preternatural evils but also a military holiday..."¹⁸⁷

The rituals of St. John's Eve and the burned sheave carried over the pasture were enacted in the hopes of warding off future pestilence. The accused witches claimed to fly and scatter powder over fields saying, "May all be lost!" or, "May half be lost!" Over their land, they would say, "May mine be saved!"¹⁸⁸ Both the Midsummer's Eve ritual and the claim of the witches administering the destruction or ensuring the fertility of crops reveals a similar concern for the security of future food production.

The dances, masquerades, and military displays of St. John's Eve held distinct productions and positions for the actors involved, and so, too, did the accused confess to specific positions and structure for the witches and the *aquelarre*. For example, Graciana de Barrenechea claimed to be the queen of the *aquelarre*, Miguel de Goiburu was the king, and Juanes de Goiburu functioned as the bass drummer.¹⁸⁹ These titles and

¹⁸⁷ Caro Baroja, *The Basques*, 295.

¹⁸⁸ Henningsen, *The Salazar Documents*, 126.

¹⁸⁹ Henningsen, *The Witches' Advocate*, 91 Sourced from Joint Sentence f. 387 and Meritos of Jaunes de Sansin f. 173. Lib 832, Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid.

positions of the witches reflect the usual social functions and traditions of Basque festivals and additionally show that the witches made claims about societal norms that were familiar to them.

The rituals of St. John's Eve, outside of the focus on venerating the Catholic saint, center on the security of the individual and the community. The rituals ward off sickness, disease, and pestilence and promote military strength and community order. I assert the rituals demonstrate a societal focus of the ancient Basques' need for safety and security. Moreover, the St. John's Eve festivals reveal a melding of pre-Christian and Christian beliefs. The combination of beliefs demonstrates a culture that adapted to change while still participating in ancient traditions. Therefore, within the *contact zone* of the Inquisitor's investigation of witchcraft and the questioning of Basque men and women we must remember that social norms such as festivals and dances appear blended with Catholicism for the Basque residences, but to an outsider, this melding may seem sacrilegious.

I contend that the frequent reference to the St. John's Eve holiday with the accused's testimonies was because of its layered history of pre-Christian origins and also because the Catholic Church's goal to force conformity with its doctrines and ideology was actively rejected by the accused. The previous examples show correlations between the traditions of St. John's Eve and the *aquelarre* and demonstrate the cultural influence of traditions. The Christian and non-Christian traditions reflected in the accused witches' claims reveal strong cultural traditions that are expressed even within the *contact zone* of a power struggle between the accused and the inquisitor. This also serves as a reminder that symbols within social systems are interconnected to the symbols, myth, and actions

of *both* individuals and the community as a whole. Symbols and symbolic meaning impact interactions and social systems, and vice versa. The re-interpretation of Catholic celebrations and Basque traditions in a *contact zone* demonstrates the symbolic interactionist cycle of, “meaning – symbol – action – interaction – social system,” in which all stages of the cycle of interaction impact and influence each of the other stages.

CONCLUSION

Taunting a priest, accused witch Maria de Zozaya said, “see that you catch plenty of hares, Father, so the neighbors can have jugged hare.” She then stated that after the priest left, she turned herself into a hare and ran ahead of the priest and his dogs all day long, leaving them entirely spent.¹⁹⁰ Maria’s confession reveals underlying tension between herself and the priest because her statement appears to be a taunting that highlights the priest’s failure as a hunter and her success, as a hare, at being a distraction for the dogs. Additionally, the taunt by Maria makes clear ties to Basque folklore of Mateo Txistu, the hunter.¹⁹¹ The hunter, punished for his fixation with hunting, finds himself and his dogs roaming, chasing game but never managing to succeed in the capture of prey. He and his dogs roam aimlessly, always on the hunt. In an alternate version, King Solomon is tricked by the Devil in disguise as a hare and finds himself and his dogs never reaching their prey. “Since that day, Solomon and his dogs have been seen in the skies howling and whistling. They say you can see them on clear nights.”¹⁹² I contend Maria’s use of local folklore illustrates her participation and belief within a social community that functions with both pre-Christian and Christian norms. Her comments are prime examples of communication not being equally understood by both

¹⁹⁰ Henningsen, *The Witches' Advocate*, 159. Sourced and quoted from Sentence of Maria de Zozaya, Lib835 ff. 401-420, Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid.

¹⁹¹ Barandiarán, *Diccionario de Mitología Vasca* (San Sebastian: Editorial Txertoa, 1984), 141.

¹⁹² Barandiarán Irizar, *A View from the Witch's Cave*, 127.

parties due to the power struggles of a contact zone. Or, to use the symbolic interactionist framework, we see a familiar pattern of action and interaction informed by different symbols and myths. In this case, a Basque woman asserted herself against a powerful Spanish priest and inquisitor through her use of cultural symbols and myths. Maria's intent may have been to make light of the Inquisitors and address the futility of the Inquisition. This example demonstrates how Basques interacting with the Catholic Church and its officials may have acted with more intent of opposition and subversive behavior than historians have given them credit for.¹⁹³

The Basque people functioned in a culture that held fast to pre-Christian belief and mythology despite concerted efforts to eradicate such belief. The accused referred to these symbols and various cultural norms during their confessions. Statements by the accused demonstrate that folklore and mythology remained part of their cultural perspective; Basque individuals readily used these symbols to explain themselves and their community. Whether consciously or unconsciously, they inverted traditional European witchcraft symbolism. If conscious, their efforts could be viewed as subversive, and in this light, the framework of Mary Louise Pratt's *contact zone* as a point of focus and the method of symbolic interactionism helps to explain that what constitutes reality for one group is not necessarily the reality for all. The use of symbolic representations of meaning creates the reality for the members within a social group, but the use of similar symbols and ideas by two different groups like the Basques and the Inquisitors does not

¹⁹³ Another legend on fairies describes a local witch placing the hand of a child into the soup because of its protection qualities. Ancient Basque legend notes that the hand of a child severed in sleep and wrapped with the child's hair could be used as an amulet to protect one from evil. Mariana Monteiro, *Legends and Popular Tales of the Basque People* (New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1971), 88. Similarly, confessions described the Devil using a child's arm to stir the food and also as a torch to light the way. Lancre, *On the Inconstancy of Witches*, 119.

necessarily mean they shared the same understanding of those symbols. Similarly, the young mother with whom this thesis began wore her house tile and melded both pre-Christian and Christian beliefs for protection purposes similar to the way in which the accused's statements reveal an amalgamation of both pre-Christian and Christian belief. I contend the combination of legends, myths, linguistics, and contemporary practices demonstrate a culture that utilized not only Christian beliefs and practices but also used ancient pre-Christian beliefs to understand the surrounding environment and cosmos.

In sum, the previous examples reveal the accused utilizing pre-Christian symbols, myth, and folklore for multiple reasons, including familiarity of symbol and language, as a form of subversive behavior or to clarify personal physical or communal needs. These comparisons reflect what Julio Caro Baroja described regarding the transition of rites. He suggests that the meaning of an individual rite can change meaning during continued use by a people group and that such an adaption occurs due to the influence of psychological and sociological change.¹⁹⁴ Therefore, within the *contact* zone of the Inquisition, the pre-Christian symbols may have varied in usage to function as symbols of cultural strength and symbols of opposition to the forces of change. At the same time, the Inquisitors understood the information in the Basques' testimony differently, and the accused witches paid the price.

¹⁹⁴ Caro Baroja, *The Basques*, 284.

This research builds upon the other historical works about the Basque people, acknowledges their deep-rooted ties to pre-Christian beliefs, and recognizes that their reality was tied to a distinctive past at a time when most other European societies had more fully converted to the traditions of Western Catholicism. The Basques' documented history demonstrates a people group that retained a strong cohesive culture despite the more dominant political powers that surrounded them. Basque archeological evidence reveals a society that melded pre-Christian and Christian symbolism.

Lastly, the confessions of the accused demonstrate a culture that continued to have ties to past beliefs even within the context of Christianity. Ultimately, this work offers a more encompassing look into the Basque witch trials and adds pre-Christian belief, mythology, and folklore to the historical perspectives of religious, political, and legal religious causes of the trials. It additionally exposes the accused witches as advocates for self and community in opposition to the Church. Continued research focused on the cultural symbolism of the community would further expand this historical narrative of the Basque culture. This research not only highlights the historical Basque culture but helps to remind us that communication within a *contact zone* is varied, and multifaceted, and contested. The Basque trials reveal an ethnic society that functioned within a reality that incorporated Christian and non-Christian cultural symbols in contact with a dominant culture that did not understand these Basque blends. The accused utilized the symbols to assert themselves within the *contact zone* of the Inquisition trial. Ultimately the accused empowered themselves in a powerless situation by holding to their distinct cultural identity while facing the cultural oppression of the witch-craze of 1608-1614.

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