

## HISTORY, TRADITION, AND MEMORY AMONG THE BASQUES

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This article explores the historical commemoration, the *Alarde* of the Spanish-Basque town of Hondarribia, re-enacted for almost 400 years. It is a social account of the past portrayed through a history of local militarism and a history of commemorative performance. Since 1996, controversy has divided local inhabitants concerning wider female-inclusion in the male-dominated event, separating the town into factions, traditionalists (asserting traditions remain the same) and feminists (advocating broader female involvement).

Theoretical concerns include examining traditions and their gradual transformations over time, rather than as episodic change; that interpreting the past can be competitive over rights of belonging; that history may be influenced by different agencies of gender, kin ties, memory, politics, and social experience; that people do not purposefully ignore the passage of time but may be protecting communal harmony; that commemorative rites are more than embodied performances; and that history can be a multiple, contested, and lived experience.

*Keywords:* Basques; Commemorative performance; History; Memory; Tradition

### INTRODUCTION: DECONTEXTUALIZING HISTORY

Since 1996 a local debate has been ongoing in the coastal Basque town of Hondarribia, Spain over the broader inclusion of women in its historical commemorative ceremony known as the *Alarde* (Military Review or Show of Arms).<sup>1</sup> The annual march through the town by over 4000 Hondarribian men is a demonstration of masculine power. The only female performers in the event are 20 “water-carrier girls” (*cantineras*), who represent feminine authority and beauty. The parade is divided into 21 companies with some men carrying arms, others playing drums and others playing flutes. The *Alarde* commemorates a victory over the French in 1638 and their siege of Hondarribia, however, it also represents other military periods as evident in the militia attire worn by parade participants (similar to Carlist uniforms of the nineteenth century). The *Alarde* is also partially a religious devotion, celebrating the birth of the Virgin Mary on the 8th of September.

Following the initial attempt of a small group of women to march in the *Alarde* of 1996, their numbers have grown larger every year since. Up to this point in time, women have been unsuccessful in their attempts for wider inclusiveness in the parade march. This conflict has divided town inhabitants between those wishing the historical performance to remain the same, calling themselves “traditionalists” in opposition to those who support change in favour of more female participants in the event, most of whom are “feminists”.

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This article will represent several points of view of the Hondarribian past: the historical account of the importance of the local militia from secondary sources, the history of the *Alarde*'s performance from primary sources and the interpretation of local history by townspeople. The narrative itself provides agency to the Hondarribian past which represents different kinds of "pastness" and authorship (Tonkin, 1992: 4). Also, notions implicit throughout the discussion are formulated through historical "discourse" and the problems associated with the "discursive practice" of narration (Foucault, 1969: 117).<sup>2</sup>

The article does not examine issues of gender and border conflict in extensive detail because I present these subjects more completely in other essays. What this article describes are not only the means of understanding the past in relation to the Hondarribian *Alarde* but broader issues as well such as the examination of tradition in relation to concepts of time and why disputes reinforce local identity. The following essay is centred on comprehending the use of history in association with commemorative practice through the analysis of the history of local militarism and the history of parade performance. One significant aspect concerns why conflicts have been continuous over the meaning given to the *Alarde*. In its long parade history discord over the wider participation of women exemplifies only one conflict of many in the *Alarde*'s re-enactment. Further, it concentrates on the manner by which Basques like Hondarribians interpret their past, especially the historical focus of traditionalists and feminists as opposing viewpoints in understanding the meaning of the *Alarde* and differing concepts of belonging and the broader implications of regional identity.

The *Alarde* both represents aspects of local history and its own performative history from year to year since the seventeenth century. Some of the theoretical concerns implicit in this article are the meanings given to the treatment of texts and history. This is as much a discussion of the Hondarribian perception of the past as how to represent it. Concerning historical narration, White (1987: 26) states that "it is precisely because the narrative mode is so natural to human consciousness, so much an aspect of everyday speech and ordinary discourse, that its use in any field of study aspiring to the status of a science must be suspect."

Hence, the narration of local history throughout represents both recorded history through secondary and primary sources and lived history through the ideas and memories of Hondarribian townspeople. Such historical representations are not readily discernible from one another if their manner of presentation is not made obvious in creating these distinctions.

For social anthropologists like myself it is perhaps most interesting to examine how the past becomes relevant in everyday life through their informants' perspectives.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the narrative distortions of informants rather than the accuracy of their statements are often more fascinating because of what these testimonies tell us about collective concepts such as nationalist ideology and ideas of tradition.

The role of memory in society is especially significant in examining how social actors narrate the past. For many people, as this discussion will illuminate, the past is often invented "to fit the present, or, equally the present to fit the past" and more so, the past is preserved "at the cost of decontextualizing it, and partially blotting it out" (Fentress and Wickham, 1992: 201). After considering these ideas, some academics of Basque culture like Bullen (1997a,b) have criticized Hondarribians' perceived concept of the past as linear. Perhaps after more scrutiny, we become better informed by asking *why* locals think *this* way about local history? Why, for example, do most Hondarribians wish to define themselves as the inheritors of military victory and what are they trying to recreate through the *Alarde* ritual? There are several ways of answering these questions.

Ethnic minorities like Basques and their use of history aid in the creation of identity linked to a glorified past and help to fulfil a desire to prove their uniqueness as a people. History, therefore, becomes a means and a metaphor for ethnic identity whereby the past can be manipulated through familiarity with it and appear not too removed from circumstances of

everyday life. This type of familiarization can take the form of commemoration ceremonies in which a past event(s) is or are evoked and renewed through periodic, popular celebration. The *Alarde* is a good example of commemorative ritual. I understand commemorative ceremonies or re-enactment rituals as meaningful actions that are historically based, idealizing and mythologizing the past in the present with their continued practice.<sup>4</sup> These are meaningful actions that are often shaped by present circumstances and have been transformed over time; often such actions are confirmed, contested, and negotiated through the “ritualization” process, most often by the actors who control and perform in these events;<sup>5</sup> and often such actions can be linked to present social values and present social institutions that control, shape, and influence their performance of the past.

When discussing “representative or commemorative rites” Durkheim (1915: 432) asserts that for the group “the necessary thing is that it partakes of the same thought and the same action.” I disagree with Durkheim’s (1915) argument for two reasons: groups often contest the collective meaning of rituals and a unified understanding of commemorative ritual is over-stated. As Jarman (1997: 11) has maintained: “although ritual events appear as singular celebrations, they often incorporate many diverse interpretations within the apparently unified mass.”

One scholar, Connerton (1989: 53 and 71) in writing about commemorative ritual proclaimed “that, if there is such a thing as social memory” then it is likely to be found in rites of re-enactment. According to him memory is “performative” and becomes embodied through ritual action. Connerton (1989: 44) also states that rites are “formalised acts, and tend to be stylised, stereotyped and repetitive,” and they are pervasive in “non-ritual behaviour and mentality”. By emphasizing the idea of “bodily practices”, he asserts that commemorative rites are embodied through the people who perform them and that communal memory becomes an embodied act (Connerton, 1989: 72–104). Yet it is equally important to ask why such rites are being performed and what meaning they have to the people who perform them. Furthermore, separating form from meaning is an unnecessary exercise since these can be viewed as complementary categories with the view that ritual performance is a complex whole embodying many meanings, which are sometimes contradictory. In his writings, Connerton (1989) has overlooked two other elements: conflicts arising over meaning of ritual and who has ritual control. From my point of view we should question how the re-enactment is performed, by whom, and the meaning of these acts and not limit our thinking to the notion that commemorative ceremonies are “preserved only through their performance” (Connerton, 1989: 102).<sup>6</sup>

This article explains why commemorative celebrations are more than “bodily practices” through varying historical perspectives, through an analysis of traditional practice and through an understanding of conflicting memories and differing meanings of the past.

### **INTERTWINING HISTORIES: HISTORY OF LOCAL MILITARISM AND HISTORY OF THE ALARDE**

There are three historical epochs imbued by the *Alarde* enactment that concern local militarism: the battle for Hondarribia against the French in 1638, the Napoleonic invasion, and the Carlist Wars. In addition, there are the nearly 400 years of its commemorative history, a performative history ongoing since 1639. These are interwoven histories creating tradition and reliving military exploits.

My historical interpretation of the Hondarribian past is derived from secondary sources, scant archival material as well as from notes taken from accounts relayed to me by Hondarribian informants.<sup>7</sup> To separate history from tradition, that is, historical events from

the tradition of commemorative performance, is what this historical account unravels and weighs throughout the following narrative.

The seventeenth century was a period in Castile's history of endemic warfare with neighbouring kingdoms, and the threat of an invasion by France was ever present. The Bidasoa Valley, which incorporated the Hondarribian township, was an important territorial region for Castile in maintaining the boundaries with France along the western side of the Pyrenees.<sup>8</sup>

In 1638 France seized Hondarribia but this military incursion had been provoked by several factors in preceding years. Between 1634 and 1637 the Imperial Army of Spain had conducted many military campaigns to preserve the unity of the Spanish empire in Europe in the German states, Italy, and the Netherlands and against France.<sup>9</sup>

Hondarribia had suffered during the siege of 1638.<sup>10</sup> According to one historical account, the town had endured 16,000 canon balls and 63 bombs causing considerable devastation (Portu, 1969: 353).<sup>11</sup> However, the number of French attackers has been greatly exaggerated by local historians (like Portu, 1969) by claiming the French had 30,000 men and 64 ships at their disposal while the Hondarribians only had 1000 men.<sup>12</sup> Yet reinforcements had arrived quickly after the entreaties made by Castile for more troops.<sup>13</sup> According to Elliott (1986: 539–540) 1500 Irish mercenaries under the command of the Marquis of Mortara, along with hundreds of Aragonese, Bizkaians, Navarrese, and Valencians took up arms to save the beleaguered town of Hondarribia on 7th of September 1638.<sup>14</sup>

When Hondarribians speak of the events surrounding the attack on their old fort, they can be heard telling how the attack was entirely unprovoked. It is significant, therefore, that many battles fought against France were a result of other attacks by Castile and these in turn culminated in further counterattacks in subsequent years. Nevertheless, the exact historical details are not as important as the way people like Hondarribians choose to remember their history and the reasons they give for exaggerating their past. The battle of 1638 represented an extension of the Castilian military arm in preserving its empire but the *Alarde* celebration from the viewpoint of many informants had turned the battle into Basque history, excluding Castile's role altogether. As I will explain below such local idealizations of history have become the building blocks of Basque nationalism by projecting locality in the forefront and making people believe they were part of a grander design in the great tapestry of history rather than a minor footnote. In part this historical glorification can be blamed upon local historians serving nationalist interests and another factor for this elastic history lies in the foundations of Basque nationalism.

The first three centuries of the *Alarde* celebration were largely religious. The municipal archive of Hondarribia has one document dating to 1639 describing the first religious procession to the shrine of Guadalupe in honour of the Virgin Mary.<sup>15</sup> It demonstrates that some secular elements were involved in this devotion. Seventeenth and Eighteenth century archives describe purchases for drums and flutes that were brought for the small procession and their costs.<sup>16</sup> There are relatively little historical records for this period causing some difficulties of interpretation. Archives point to the devotion of the Virgin Mary of Guadalupe, the patron saint of the town. It is likely that the procession to the shrine of Guadalupe had maintained a dual meaning by honouring the Virgin Mary for her intervention in battle and remembering those who had died in the siege.<sup>17</sup>

The transformation of a small religious procession into a more secularized celebration was the result of events in the nineteenth century. This was a tumultuous period in the Basque region with the Napoleonic invasion and the Carlist Wars.

During the Napoleonic years of occupation and the War of Independence (1808–1814), Spain had endured many hardships. It was during this period that the idea of a consolidated Spanish nation was fomented, a time of resistance against France (Carr, 1966: 105). In this

era, guerrilla bands like those in the Spanish-Basque region fought bravely against the foreign French troops and by doing so helped to weaken Napoleon's grip on the Iberian Peninsula. These guerrilla forces were supplied by the British and numbered from a few dozen to several thousand men (Gates, 1986: 34–35). According to Gates (1986: 35) "Wellington owed his salvation to the intelligence role of guerrillas" and the French and Spanish border areas of the Bidasoa Valley were crucial as strategic points in these battles.<sup>18</sup>

Local historians have embellished the exploits of these guerrilla bands in the Spanish-Basque Country so much so that the role of local Basques in their writings have become more significant than English historians have accounted for this period. These are clear examples where the writing of history glorifies the past and are not solely due to the popularization of local myths.<sup>19</sup>

Not long after Napoleon's troops were forced to leave the country the Basque region was thrown into turmoil. This conflict had to do with the unease of the rural populace with the central government in Madrid. These uprisings became known as the Carlist Wars, reliving "foral" obligations in the formation of local militias in every township and the conscription of every man over the age of 20. The result was all out civil war over two periods, 1833–1840 and 1872–1876.<sup>20</sup>

Essentially, there were two factions during the Carlist revolts, Liberals in opposition to Carlists. The "Liberals" (*Liberales*) were supported by the merchant class and had their support base in cities like Bilbao, Pamplona, San Sebastian and Vitoria.<sup>21</sup> Their cause was to push for reforms for a parliamentary system that would abandon the monarchy which they viewed as backward and too archaic to serve their interests. In opposition to them were the "Carlists" (*Carlistas*) who derived their name from the Emperor Carlos V, a name embodying ideals for a return to Spain of its former glory, to restore the monarchy and to give greater power to the Church. Carlists viewed Liberals as godless, self-serving, industrialists. To achieve their aims the Carlists rested their hopes on Don Carlos, brother of Fernando VII, an aspirant to the throne and to Carlists a reminder of the former Emperor but to others an anachronism.

The Carlist conflicts have been described as founded on the principles of restoring the "foral laws" (*los fueros*) to the Basque region.<sup>22</sup> Yet these uprisings had less to do with re-creating a sense of collective nobility described in the foral codes but rather stemmed from a discontent of deep resentments felt by rural farmers against the wealthy merchant classes in the large Basque cities.

When the *Alarde* became more secularized in 1881 and broadened to a wider celebration by Hondarribians, the Carlist Wars had just ended and Basque nationalism was just beginning to take hold across the region. History has been re-interpreted in order to provide locals like Hondarribians with a greater sense of belonging to their locality by reliving a past event. Local history therefore became a means of self-fulfilment by regaining a sense of pride, which was thought to have been lost in Carlism. Commemorative celebrations like the *Alarde* parade were given a new impetus because of what they could provide local inhabitants and were revitalized at a time of tremendous social changes (Jauristi, 1987: 20).

"Military parades" or "drum marches" (*danborradak*) became a necessary means of reinvigorating civic pride after the Carlist losses and of reliving the past to express nationalist views of ethnic uniqueness.<sup>23</sup> At the turn of the twentieth century, such ideals were encouraged in trying to prove that Basques had an exceptional history filled with military conquests. Even though historical records suggest something else, namely that conflicts of the seventeenth century were part of wider projects of the Monarchy's outreach in Spain or were broader hostilities affecting all of Spain, or were instigated under the aegis of Spanish imperialism.

Simplifying, essentializing and distilling history by local Basques had more to do with fulfilling ideas of a Basque nationalist identity and of consolidating Basque ethnicity. I argue that by celebrating local history, Basque townspeople like Hondarribians were able to reinvent their identities and to forget what had been lost by Carlism, especially the dearth of foral privileges. Over time, religiosity became less important for creating popular mythology than did militarism. Religious processions like the one in Hondarribia eventually became more elaborate and secular spectacles. They were transformed into an official drum march, a call to arms, a review of local troops, and a parade of militiamen dressed in uniforms. Many other localities in the province of Gipuzkoa focussed their municipal celebrations on military victories in order to exalt the past.

There are several reasons that explain why the Hondarribian *Alarde* became more secularized. Firstly, militias became superfluous after the loss of the Carlist Wars by 1876. Secondly, the loss of the Carlist movement caused resentments for many locals throughout the region, leaving people unsettled and resenting the government in Castile. Thirdly, because of industrialization local populations became increasingly fractured and disenfranchised (Jauristi, 1987).<sup>24</sup> Lastly, Basque nationalism arose out of general discontent and xenophobia against Spanish-speaking workers who had migrated from elsewhere in Spain to the Basque region for work mostly in steel factories.

The loss of the Carlist cause and the rise of Basque nationalism in the late nineteenth century combined to become rallying points for Gipuzkoan and Bizkaian Basques to regain feelings of civic pride. Local history became a vehicle for restoring local honour. Basques wished to resurrect the foral privileges that the Carlist movement had failed to maintain and thereby remember their special status as a people (Greenwood, 1976; Douglass, 1998).

Sabino de Arana, the founder of Basque nationalism, was able to re-establish pride by creating the idea of the Basque nation. Arana viewed Basques as a separate race that was being undermined by “non-Basques” (*maketos*), Spanish migrants. Along with this, the rise of the mercantile class, especially in the province of Bizkaia and to a lesser extent in Gipuzkoa, had exacerbated class divisions in the region and widened the gap between rural and urban dwellers. Regional pride therefore was not only reinforced by the rhetoric of elites like Arana but became firmly embedded in local myths of historical greatness. Spanish scholars have paid little attention to the historical links between Carlist losses and the rise of nationalism in localities like Hondarribia and have instead focussed their attention on general trends like the invention of Basque tradition (Jauristi, 1987: 181).

Basques like Hondarribians who looked to their past for inspiration were willing to accept the ideals spread by Basque nationalism for the premise of nationalist ideology and was explained in terms of their distinctiveness as a race. Historical commemorations like the *Alarde* created a broader awareness of the regional past in the spread of Basque nationalism from Bizkaia. These military parades also reinvigorated and reinforced ideas of local pride, giving renewed meaning to celebrations of local history.

In 1881 carnival figures were introduced into the Hondarribian *Alarde* as well such as the parade general, drum major, woodsmen, and water-carrier girl.<sup>25</sup> It was not surprising that secular changes were implemented in this period since popular celebrations with Basque nationalist intent had been staged a year earlier in the province of Bizkaia. One of the leading Basque nationalists at this time was Arturo Campion who wrote about the opposition between the Basques and Spanish but nevertheless “saw the Basque country as an integral part of the Spanish monarchy” (Heiberg, 1989: 48). In the province of Bizkaia, Campion was one of the leading cultural figures who helped to organize popular gatherings. “. . . In 1880 Campion helped to organize a Basque cultural week complete with grand displays of bonfires, bell ringing, *txistularis* (players of the *txistu*, a Basque flute) together with a special mass with the sermon in Euskera. The parades that started the week were headed by massive

Spanish flags, a gesture which today would provoke riots" (Heiberg, 1989: 48). The following year similar celebrations would be staged in Gipuzkoa in 1881.

Around this period in the 1890s, Basque nationalism had taken a firm hold across the Basque country. The coincidence of these changes transformed ideas about what celebrations were about and how they should be represented. In this way, the military marches as part of "municipal festivities" (*Euskal Jaiak*) became more important than religious festivities such as the processions during Easter week or other processions recognizing different saints.

In the nineteenth century the patron festivities of Hondarribia were called the "Main Drum March" (*Tambor Mayor*).<sup>26</sup> By 1920 they were known as "The Great Drum March of Hondarribia" (*La Gran Tamborrada de Hondarribia*). Years later they would be described as a "Military Review" (*Alarde*). According to limited information available from Hondarribia's municipal archives as well as local informants, during the 1920s and 1930s there was a disagreement between "those living in the Marina area (*portuarrak*)" and "those living in the old quarters (*kaletarrak*)" with regard to the organization of the town's festivities. Rivalry between these two districts has a long history. Disputes between those living near the port, fishermen, against those living in the old town area, merchants, have been recorded since the sixteenth century. However, less is known about early twentieth century disagreements between fishing families and mercantile families over the organization of the *Alarde*. According to informants such conflicts were about control over the parade and the influence those living in one district had over the other.

During the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) the parade was suspended. After this period, different "neighbourhood districts" (*auzoak*) became represented by distinctive parade companies. In this manner, all spatial boundaries within the town were equated with the parade. Before this time, men simply marched in the parade and did not identify themselves with a particular company representing a particular area of the town. Also, it meant that ritual voting for important parade roles (parade general, drum major, captains, and water-carrier girls) extended to all eligible men from every district and that no districts were to be excluded.

Men's roles in the parade correspond to life stages. As a boy gets older, he will take on different duties in his parade company. In the 1940s a dispute arose over younger men in the companies and whether they had to follow the prescribed roles of male hierarchy implicit in the parade's organization. At this time, the rule for all companies was that a male could vote after he had reached a certain age and acquired certain responsibility in the community. "Responsibility" was equated with marriage, having children and a proper job. In 1948, a group of young men decided to break away from parade traditions by advocating the right to vote and establishing another parade company. By doing so, they could bypass the established male-hierarchy which represented a generational struggle for authority. These youths were perceived as trying to acquire power too soon without proving themselves. To many townspeople at the time, the break with the elderly men was equated with a break with tradition. Some of the fishermen told me that by the 1950s some of these same young men also requested that all crew members on boats be treated equally, with equal pay.<sup>27</sup> Such challenges to the *Alarde* organization represented how current social problems transformed the event in that everyday life influenced traditional practices.

In the early 1960s another debate erupted. This time it was concerned with the costume of the "Drum Major" (*Tambor Mayor*). As a sign of protest against local authorities and the Franco regime, the Drum Major decided to add green, red, and white ribbons to his baton, the colours of the "Basque flag" (*Ikurriña*). Displaying these colours was controversial because the flag could not be flown in the Spanish-Basque region at this time. Wearing the Basque colours was therefore a political statement against the Spanish dictatorship of Franco.

Many townspeople were uneasy about disrupting the parade if authorities stepped in and arrested the Drum Major. Even with these doubts, the Drum Major was never detained and the addition of these colours to his baton became part of his uniform.

The final years of the 1960s saw another disturbance concerning how the parade should be commemorated and who would be allowed to control it. During this period the Spanish Ministry of Tourism and Information converted the Carlos V fortress into a *parador* hotel. General Franco himself had inaugurated the new hotel. In honour of the occasion, the town council declared that the *Alarde* should be more accessible to outsiders such as tourists. To accommodate this novel idea, the parade was to be performed twice, once in the morning and once in the afternoon and that tourists should be provided better access to viewing the event (Greenwood, 1989: 177–178). This was a highly contested dispute at the time and raises several questions about commodifying culture and local traditions.<sup>28</sup>

In the 1970s, the Basque region, like the rest of Spain, was experiencing enormous changes in the decline of the Franco years. As a consequence of separatist terrorism by “Basque Homeland and Freedom” (*Euskadi Ta Askatasuna*, ETA), the Spanish police were especially vigilant in the Basque region and police oppression was likewise extreme. At the time, the need to create a separate Basque state seemed to be particularly urgent by a majority of Basques because of Franco’s oppression of the region, especially the curtailment of freedoms such as the use of the “Basque language” (*euskera*). During this period the re-enactors of the *Alarde* became enmeshed in the political struggle for Basque independence. The events of 1976, the year following the death of Franco, are testament to the volatility of this period. In the *Alarde* of ’76 a bystander was shot and killed by the Spanish National Guard in political demonstrations following the parade.<sup>29</sup> What is remarkable is the lack of investigation afterwards and the claim by Spanish police that political protesters were put down by all available means. This killing caused widespread dissidence. For several years afterwards a wreath was laid on the site where the young man was killed, named after him as “Zabala’s corner” (*Zabalaren Txokoa*) identified by graffiti outside a well-known tavern in Hondarribia. To this day this tragedy conjures up many of the worst memories for Hondarribians of the Franco years.<sup>30</sup>

Every passing decade seemingly brought new controversy to the *Alarde* and the 1980s were no different. Of particular importance to many locals in the Basque region during these years was the boycott of the Spanish national flag during municipal festivities. At this time, the media referred to this boycott as “The Flag Wars” (*La Guerra de Las Banderas*). Instead of flying Spanish flags, Hondarribians chose to adorn their balconies either with the Basque flag and/or the town flag. Ironically, the town flag of Hondarribia is one of the most powerful reminders of the Spanish Empire as the banner identifying the reign of Carlos V.<sup>31</sup>

I was told by one local historian that most people were unaware of the symbolic meaning of the flag’s similarity to Carlos V’s banner. In wanting to replace the Spanish national flag with the town flag, many townspeople were unknowingly replacing one Spanish symbol with another. Perhaps even more particular is the idea of Basque identity replacing Spanish identity during the 1970s because in previous decades people were unwilling to give up their Spanishness, regardless of racism fomented at the turn of the twentieth century. Before this boycott, most townspeople proudly displayed the Spanish national flag in the celebration years after the Spanish Civil War. In fact, many Hondarribians supported the regime and even fought in the naval force of the fascists during the Civil War. Most townspeople are reluctant to discuss this Francoist support, being embarrassed by anti-Basque feelings.<sup>32</sup>

This identity with Basqueness in the boycott of the Spanish national flag points to the many ironies involved in eliminating a bilingual, Spanish culture. For example, during the 1980s Hondarribians were allowed to wear pins and stickers as a display of their party

affinities. For many, the party of choice was the “United People’s Party” (*Herri Batasuna*, HB). Wearing such adornments became a symbol of one’s Basqueness in advocating armed struggle in the cause of independence.

Since 1996 when a local group of feminists tried to march in the *Alarde*, what has been most perplexing to me is why Hondarribians have refused to acknowledge past conflicts in relation to this commemoration rite. Most townspeople speak of the *Alarde* as unchanging, as handed down through the generations in the same manner as nearly 400 years ago when it began. None of these earlier disputes have become current topics in relation to the ongoing conflict with the local feminist movement. This undoubtedly raises several questions: were Hondarribians purposefully ignoring the past? Why were past disagreements not part of the contemporary debate over female participation? Why were Hondarribians intent on downplaying past controversies?

### TRADITIONS AND THE QUESTION OF TIME

When commemorative rites like the *Alarde* are mentioned they are viewed as both traditions and as historical events.<sup>33</sup> Often, I heard townspeople speak about history and tradition as equivalent concepts in as much as they are characteristic of local identity. Hondarribians often proclaim their municipal loyalty through the *Alarde*’s performance and at the same time will allude to the historicity of the event based on the battle of 1638 against French invaders. The historical events that are the basis of the *Alarde* tradition are distinct from the *Alarde* itself as a tradition. It is a tradition that over time has transformed its meaning as well as how it is performed. One man said to me, “The French invaded us in 1638 and this is why we do this tradition, to remember we defeated the French. As a tradition it should remain the same because above all it is a tradition.” In other words, the *Alarde* confirms Hondarribian identity because it is meant to relive the glory of their local history through its re-enactment. Both the *Alarde*’s performance and the historical events surrounding local militia are often shaped into the same discourse that embodies local notions of belonging.

The confusion for Hondarribians, as for many people when talking about history and traditions, is that they are one and the same because they both represent their past. History and tradition become intertwined in the creation of local identity and are fonts of the same sense of municipal loyalty. To some extent commemorative ceremonies make the past come alive because history is re-lived through them and tradition is carried forward through performance. Through re-enactment local history is remembered by townspeople and is relived every year through the continuation of their *Alarde*. Traditions like the *Alarde* are also manifestations of identity through action, marching through the town and being seen to maintain it.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, there is continuity with the past that is essential in remembering and performing. This is why to many Hondarribians local history and local tradition are inseparable.

When they speak of the *Alarde*, most Hondarribians view it as immutable tradition, something that has been handed down through the generations to them without alteration. In part, this can be explained by the fact that rituals are characteristically formalized and repetitious in constructing a particular image of time (Bloch, 1986: 184). Commemorative rites are celebrated on specific dates in the calendar year, in the case of the *Alarde*, 8th of September. The performance of commemorative ceremonies that are also considered to be traditions “give people a sense of continuity with what are believed to be precedents.” However, “it is equally clear that traditions change in structure, details, and interpretations and such changes are not always fully recognized by those who live them” (Bell, 1992: 118). Yet it is quite apparent that traditions like the *Alarde* have been transformed, often because of disputes arising from the meaning of the performance and who controls it.

Why then are the majority of townspeople intent on believing that the tradition of the *Alarde* is immutable? Bloch (1986: 185), for example, has contended that “the creation of timelessness by ritual is therefore not simply the result of fixity of the communication used but also the result of the denial of the validity of this world.” Can it be assumed that Hondarribians are denying the transformations inherent in the *Alarde*’s performance or is something else going on? Are Hondarribians denying the passage of time? I will return to these questions in more detail below.

In addition to Hondarribian perceptions about their unchanging past, there are researchers who have created the “crude dichotomy” between “immutable tradition” and “processual history” (Toren, 1988: 696).<sup>35</sup> In other words, “the argument for the primacy of narratives has become the old argument for cultural relativism and in its most radical form an argument for cognitive relativism” (Bloch, 1998: 101).

What history and tradition show us are that different aspects of time are made manifest, the past as history and thereby unrepeatable and the past that is brought forward through tradition and relived in the present. Traditions, traditional rituals, and commemorative ceremonies are characteristically the same by distorting notions of time. It is quite apparent that all traditions are part of historical processes and that separating out history from tradition, or rather tradition from history is itself misrepresenting the mutability of the past and the mutability of the past in the present. The idea of “invented tradition” inspired by Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) was innovative, stimulating many scholars to re-examine questions concerning colonialism, cultural identity, ethnicity, power and gender, and nationalism but has nevertheless, spawned much negative commentary in commensurable measures.<sup>36</sup>

Inspired by the thesis of Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), Boissevain (1992) has argued that in Europe since the 1970s there has been a general trend for reviving ritual activities.<sup>37</sup> He attributes this transformation to several factors in that industrialization and urbanization have contributed to local concerns for renewed interests in local values and local rituals, as well as the accommodation of tourism through public rituals; the increase in ludic ceremonies because of a decline in Church restrictions; the decrease in migration, especially in Southern Europe; and the expansion of regional autonomy associated with local awareness and regional identity (Boissevain, 1999). MacClancy and Parkin (1997) make a convincing challenge to Boissevain’s (1992) position that deritualization of European culture is nothing new and was first proposed by Durkheim (1893). They suggest that the ritual of San Bessu in the Italian Alps has “displayed a remarkable degree of continuity” since Hertz’s study of it in 1912 and has upheld its sacrificial significance despite the secularizing factors described by Boissevain (MacClancy and Parkin, 1997: 61). In all likelihood, they argue, this is not the only ritual that demonstrates a sense of continuity. MacClancy and Parkin (1999) proclaim that “revitalization” is not as universal as Boissevain (1992) implies. Specifically, they speak of factors that prove their assertions: there was rural emigration in the valleys surrounding San Bessu in the 1950s and 1960s but this did not affect the spirit of the ritual as Boissevain would have imagined; community identity is expressed internally, in opposition to the control of the ritual by a neighbouring valley, and not in relation to the outside world because of external factors like tourism; and while there are ludic elements in the ritual its sacred vitality has remained (MacClancy and Parkin, 1997: 74–75). They also point out a few examples of rituals that have undergone a “series of revitalizations” rather than a single occurrence (MacClancy and Parkin, 1997: 76).<sup>38</sup>

There are several reservations to be raised in both Boissevain’s (1992) original thesis and MacClancy and Parkin’s (1997) critique that to my knowledge have not been discussed in great detail. For one, these authors appear to be talking at cross-purposes with each other. All of them appear to be defining notions of continuity and change in European rituals with neither a clear idea about this dichotomy nor why it should exist at all, a formulation that

is nothing new according to Sahlins (1985: 144).<sup>39</sup> Both positions could be better clarified if they paid more attention to concepts of time. For example, synchronic events are not necessarily separate from the diachronic process of history, and, as mentioned above, all traditional rituals are themselves subject to transformation even if they appear to be timeless.<sup>40</sup> It should be enough to consider that “diachrony and synchrony are not two kinds of time but necessary consequences of there being only one kind of time” (Gell, 1992: 52).

MacClancy and Parkin (1997) state that the ritual of San Bessu is continuous and timeless; while Boissevain (1992) describes a synchronic period of revitalization without considering a wider accounting of historical transformations in which many European rituals have been abandoned or renewed for reasons other than the ones he describes. The singular revival discussed by Boissevain does not account for the complexity of ritual transformations of other fallow periods when rituals were in disuse. It could be demonstrated that the revitalizing period discussed by Boissevain (1992) only marks one episode as opposed to many revitalizations in European history for ritual practices. Equally, the continuity and static quality of the San Bessu ritual discussed by MacClancy and Parkin (1997) cannot be as fixed or as timeless as they suggest. Perhaps their informants stated that San Bessu was relatively unchanged but their comparison with Hertz’s account and present day practice demonstrate its transformation. Their claim of fixity of San Bessu is all the more ironic because they specifically discuss several alterations to its practice.<sup>41</sup> MacClancy and Parkin (1997: 70) assert that the “structure of the rite” and “many of the details” are the same but they have not persuasively explained why people act differently in its practice today.

Also, MacClancy and Parkin (1997) do not place any great emphasis on the fact that the term “revitalization” used by Boissevain (1992) is as problematic a word as Hobsbawm and Ranger’s (1983) term “invented”, because both connotations essentialize complex processes. Revitalize means something is given new life and vitality, but Boissevain’s (1992) definition makes the term more encompassing with “invented”, “retraditionalized”, and “folklorized”. Would it not be better to discuss ritual change in terms of transformation(s)? In my opinion, transformation more accurately reflects the notion that all rituals are subject to transformations over time even if they are in disuse or become renewed. Many rituals have histories of decline in participation, abandonment, or renewal, all of which prove that rituals are part of processes that transform them over time.

Moreover, none of these authors elaborates on a central issue: namely, why do some rituals evolve with both sacral and secular elements over time? In the case of the *Alarde*, it was founded as a religious procession but became secularized at a much different period in history than Boissevain (1992) describes for the secularization of Europe. The *Alarde* has also retained its sacral vitality by honouring the Virgin Mary with a mass at the shrine of Guadalupe. Boissevain (1992) does not point out other periods of secularization in European history. The *Alarde* in some form has been continuously practiced since the seventeenth century despite transformations with its vitality preserved by Hondarribians.

It should be obvious at this point that thinking of rituals as having a timeless quality, as being continuous without considering even minor transformations, and as being renewed at a specific period of time without considering diachronic metamorphoses—are all false assumptions. Gell (1992: 326) advances, “rituals dramatize time, and even manipulate it” which “does not mean that calendrical festivals either create time or modify it, except rhetorically and symbolically”. Moreover, when rituals represent time they do not provide a universal model but “a series of special-purpose commentaries on a world” without a singular definition and thereby must “be understood practically, not metaphysically” (Gell, 1992: 326).

In the *Alarde* performance there are several categories of time being put forward. There is generational time, the performance being re-created by successive generations. There is personal time in the sense of the personal history of a man marching in the parade over

his entire lifetime—as much as 60 years. As a commemorative rite, the *Alarde* also celebrates the history of a particular moment in time, the anniversary of the 1638 battle against French attackers. And it represents the different times of local militarism. As a calendrical festivity it occurs every year on the 8th of September, the religious holiday of the “Birth of the Virgin Mary”. Likewise as mentioned above it is an all day performance with morning and afternoon marches. Other constructions of time evident in the *Alarde* are the synchronic categories of male hierarchy in the parade with diachronic histories of experience defined by age.

These moments in time are carried forward in the present. Some points in time such as the commemorative date are fixed, even if everyday circumstances may change the performance. Yet, the historical events that it commemorates can never be repeated. They are firmly embedded in the past and the historical figures are long dead. For almost 400 years Hondarribians have been mindful to remember their past by re-living the battle of 1638 through a military march that began as a religious procession.

I demonstrated how the *Alarde* tradition had transformed over time because of varying conflicts and social factors. Traditions and rituals transform over time, however slightly, if they are continued to the present day. Even if the will to perform remains, a ritual performed over many years will revise its meaning or its appearance. I have shown that disputes can act as agents in the process of transformation. This is not to say that all rituals are highly contested as the *Alarde* has been in its long history or that commemorative rites incorporate several historical periods as the *Alarde* has evolved in this pattern. In my consideration, periodic discord of the sort I have described concerning the adversarial positions over control, meaning, and structure of ritual have created renewed interest in its upkeep over time.

For commemorative events there are two types of history in question: the historical events they celebrate, and the history of the rite that advances these past memories onward. Both the historical events and the historical celebration are fused in the same tradition and are spoken about as such. As much as the past informs the present, the present informs the past in commemorative ceremonies. The result is that the past is remembered and at the same time the processes of the present are constantly at play with the ritual in action brought forward.

While there is no manipulation of time to the degree that Gell (1975, 1992) has alluded to in his writings on ritual, there is a denial of processual time by the fact that Hondarribians underplay previous contentions of previous *Alardes*. This does not mean that the ritual itself is either timeless or that the ritual creates a sense of timelessness. Most Hondarribians claim that the *Alarde* as a tradition has remained the same and should remain the same in the future. This is a question of protecting the boundaries of the ritual from transformation. It is a denial based upon hostility avoidance.

I directly asked informants to tell me more about past conflicts in relation to the *Alarde* and many admitted that changes had occurred to its performance. The ritual has been protected because of notions of communal harmony (to be explained in the last section). If Hondarribians admitted to past disagreement over the meaning of the *Alarde* then they would be projecting a disunified face to the public rather than as a united front, therefore anything but a unified stance in the minds of informants would be antithetical to social wellbeing. Such communal ideals disregard inherent contradictions in this model of and for community. It is therefore paradoxical that egregious contests over the ritual’s meaning are effective in renewing *de novo* interest in them. Such disputes are redefined by creating internal boundaries and by labelling townspeople in two categories, either “insiders” who protect the ritual or “outsiders” who advocate ritual change. Belonging, in this sense, is refashioned to accommodate the concerns of the day and what meaning locals give to the ritual process.

In contemporary time, there are many social ideals, social institutions, social relationships that have a direct link to the organization of the *Alarde* such as gender, kin ties, household,

neighbourhood, friendship-groups, and gastronomic-societies. These associations support the notion that historical rituals are partially re-created through everyday life. In my opinion, those who study historical rituals too often leave out contemporary factors that have a profound effect upon the social process of ritual.<sup>42</sup>

Commemorative rites may interweave the present with the past in such a way as to make them indistinguishable. Rather than limit ritual to its performative aspect, we should be thinking of these ritual actions as parts of wholes instead of separating them out as apart from wholes in order to formulate a complete picture about ritual and society. A representation of this sort examines ritual in the context of its place in society.

### POPULAR MEMORY AND BASQUE IDENTITY

In the *Alarde* debate of Honarribia concerning the wider participation of women both the traditionalists and feminists have distinct interpretations of local history. Some of the “feminists” (*emakumealdekoak*) I spoke to and knew researched the town’s archives in order to understand the townswomen’s role in the battle of 1638. Unlike the traditionalist supporters, the feminist group advocated that traditions transform over time. Of the countless conversations I had with “traditionalists” (*betikoak*) their concepts of the past mixed aspects of local history with the history of the *Alarde*’s performance.<sup>43</sup> Most traditionalists believe traditions do not transform because of a prevailing belief that traditions remain the same throughout the ages. Yet, as I explained above notions of communal harmony and the protection of communal identity skewed these views. Also, many traditionalists relate to the *Alarde* parade and its historical representations as linked to nationalism.

The manner in which feminists interpret local history and the *Alarde* relate to theoretical issues discussed above concerning narration and how to represent the past. This feminist version of local history is to a degree political with the support of the regional feminist movement and it is a type of narrative discourse emphasizing gender roles, especially the role of women in society. By contrast, the traditionalists had the political support of the Hondarribian mayor. Even though some traditionalists also researched the town’s archives, the majority of their supporters (most of those in my acquaintance circle) did not read history. With the exception of younger generations, those under the age of 40, the majority of their number had not been educated beyond the primary level. This lack of educational opportunity had in part influenced the way townspeople supporting traditionalism construct their historical narratives. Even so, as the last section of this article will demonstrate, the majority of townspeople are concerned with concepts of belonging, harmony and unity which shapes their notion of the past. In regards to feminists, it was evident from their educational background that the discourse they employed when speaking about the *Alarde* had scholarly inspiration.

While feminist advocates did not regularly evoke memory in defending their position of belonging, it was popular memory that exemplified the traditionalist viewpoint. From discussions I had with traditionalists about the past, they expressed their sentiments toward tradition as one of the defining characteristics of their movement. Traditionalist supporters viewed the *Alarde* as an authoritative, monolithic and unchanging event. It was therefore important to ask how and why they viewed traditions in this manner. I found that popular memory and oral testimonies uphold concepts of tradition and significantly explain some of the theoretical concepts behind memory and verbal narrative.

What is relevant about popular memory is not the factual content of narrative but the way in which “memories are constructed or reconstructed as part of a *contemporary* consciousness” (Popular Memory Group, 1982: 219). To this extent the “proper object of

history is not the past but the past–present relationship” where oral history “is profoundly influenced by discourses and experiences in the present” (Popular Memory Group, 1982: 240 and 243). Also, oral testimonies are not simple records but are complex narratives involving several social facets between “private memories and public representations, between past experiences and present situations” (Popular Memory Group, 1982: 241). Oral narratives “tell us, directly and indirectly, about the everyday side of culture” (Passerini, 1987: 1). When people speak about their memories such testimonies are not simply repositories of the past but “are partly constituted by social relations and thus also constitutive of society” (Tonkin, 1992: 97). This relationship of the past to the present is not limited to memories but the same may be said for traditions and historical rituals like the *Alarde*, as I mentioned in regard to the association the commemoration has with social institutions and social relationships in everyday life.

As Portelli (1991: 50) states “the first thing that makes oral history different, therefore, is that it tells us less about *events* than about their *meaning*” which does not imply that all oral testimonies are inaccurate. Moreover, memories and oral testimonies can be as significant for their departure from facts as imagination emerges in the creation of a certain truth about their social content. Wrong statements therefore can be as “psychologically true” as reliable sources (Portelli, 1991: 51). According to Portelli (1991: 52), “memory is not a passive depository of facts, but an active process of creation of meanings. Thus, the specific utility of oral sources for the historian lies, not so much in their ability to preserve the past, as in the very changes wrought by memory.” Imagining the past by collective groups is very often influenced by a collective idea concerning what memory should hold onto. These collective manipulations of memory and oral testimony are often unified through politics whereby statements about the past become political statements. This is evident when traditionalist Hondarribians frequently speak about the past by conflating concepts of locality and regionalism, especially when oral testimonies of local history become part of Basque history and local belonging becomes a product of Basque belonging. This was evident by the manner history was narrated about local militarism from the biased viewpoints of local Basque historians. As Le Goff (1992: xi) states, “nationalism and prejudices of all kinds have an impact on the way history is written.” This union of history with politics, particularly nationalist politics, is an obvious consequence of the manipulation of the past by everyday experience. However, when memory is evoked or when people speak about the past their testimonies are almost never complete. People may be silent about certain episodes in the past and leave them out of their testimonies or refuse to acknowledge them. Silences also tell us how the past is regarded.<sup>44</sup>

When traditionalist Hondarribians spoke about the *Alarde* most refused to acknowledge past disputes such as the conflict concerning younger generations of men against male hierarchy in the late 1940s and early 1950s or the controversy with the city council in the 1960s. Most traditionalists were also adamant in keeping silent about the ongoing debate over the broader participation of women in the parade.

Normally, when traditionalists spoke of the *Alarde*, they talked about the 1638 battle and were less mindful of other military exploits by townspeople in subsequent centuries contributing to the notion of local militarism. Interpreting and reliving aspects of the past instils in local peoples as Hondarribians a greater sense of their historical importance. Imagining the past through commemoration also reinforces beliefs about regional belonging, perhaps leading to nationalist sentiments through process of historical glorification. Sometimes nationalist ideals are tied to local histories whereby Hondarribian history becomes Basque history and regional militarism becomes part of the exploits that foster the idea of the Basque nation. Military victories as the one in 1638 against the French were re-interpreted as Basque victories because they served a common purpose of reviving local

pride across the Basque region ensuing the military losses of the Carlist cause. Yet this unified sense of Basqueness was not instigated until the rise of nationalism in the late nineteenth century, a fact obscured by Basque nationalists, in addition to the reality that borderland inhabitants like those in Gipuzkoa acted on the behalf of Castile.

This nationalist reading of history has its precedent in the writings of Sabino Arana, founder of Basque nationalism, principally his (1892) book, *Bizkaia for Its Independence* (*Bizkaya por su Independencia*). In this work Arana embellishes the military battles fought between the Bizkaian Basques and the militants of Castile and León during the Middle Ages. Arana asserts that these were struggles between Basques and non-Basques and frames this history in nationalist rhetoric. In his writings he promotes the idea of Basque nationalism as a struggle of Basques striving for liberation from Spain (Kurlansky 1999: 165–166). Basque nationalists often promoted legends about their own past as Jauristi (1987) explains in his excellent book, *The Lineage of Aitor: the invention of Basque tradition* (*El linaje de Aitor: la invención de tradición*). He explains some reasons why nationalists often founded and promoted local festivities in the late nineteenth century but does not concentrate on commemoration as central to his overall argument, limiting it to anecdotal information.<sup>45</sup>

As explained by Bell (1992: 118), ideas like tradition and their relation to ritual are often “structured around the familiar problem of continuity and change”. These convictions about traditions are not baseless since many aspects of the past can be carried forward to the present. In the discussion above, it was proved why and how traditions are commonly transformed “in structure, details, and interpretation” (Bell, 1992: 118) even though those who maintain traditions are not always aware of the gradual changes over time.

The *Alarde* has been continually reshaped throughout time and its meaning re-interpreted from its inception, transforming from a small sacral occasion to a grandiose secular performance that the majority of Hondarribians claim to be part of a Basque identity.

The following sections explain why feminists and traditionalists view history as they do and why communal harmony is preserved through the defence of traditions.

## THE FEMINIST VIEW OF ALARDE HISTORY

Of the many discussions I had with local feminists about their views on the local controversy over women’s greater inclusion in the parade, many of these were centred upon notions of history and tradition.<sup>46</sup> Some among them had spent several months researching the municipality’s archives about the role of women in the battle of 1638.<sup>47</sup>

Amaia, the leader of the local feminist movement (a pseudonym to protect her anonymity, as are all names of Hondarribian feminists mentioned throughout the article), conducted this type of archival research. She said to me one day, “you know most people in this town do not read history or know about the events surrounding the battle of 1638, let alone read books in general. . . Most townspeople think the *Alarde* is a tradition that has not changed but even they must acknowledge in their memories that in the last 30-years the *Alarde* has become more solemn. The parade marchers do not drink as much as they did in the past. It’s obvious that the tone of the celebration is entirely different than it was not too long ago.” She also said that women in the town had a central role during the siege of 1638. Some townswomen in fact saved the effigy of the Virgin Mary from the shrine of Guadalupe and other women helped repel French troops. Amaia stated, “it is easy to forget women’s roles in 1638 because they do not read the archival documents but they are there for anyone to read. Women fought as much as men did in saving this town and more importantly, they saved the Virgin.

Clearly, it was women who saved the town if you think like townspeople did at that time and that the Virgin intervened by sending Her miracle and saved the town from being destroyed.”

Some local historians recorded women’s participation against the French in 1638. Women and children of Hondarribia are mentioned throwing dirt, rocks and boiling water on the enemy (Portu, 1969: 346–347; Aramburu, 1976: 32). Likewise a group of 100 women dressed as men and carrying arms presented themselves to the military commander of the town, commenting on the occasion “they should conserve their bravery until the proper moment had arrived” (Aramburu, 1976: 23–26). It is evident that women were involved in defending the town against French forces and that they requested a more active role with the militia.

Archival documents in Hondarribia also suggest that two women, María Juana de Mugarrieta and Catalina Lavandibar, were responsible for rescuing the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe and smuggling it to safety within the town walls. This was a momentous event because of the townspeople’s belief in the saint’s divine intervention (Portu, 1969: 747–748; Aramburu, 1976: 22; Aguirre *et al.*, 1995: 57) in his depiction of the event just mentions the role of María Juana de Mugarrieta while Aguirre *et al.* (1995: 57) and Aramburu (1976: 22) in their descriptions have portrayed the roles of both women. Aguirre *et al.* (1995: 57) also give the names of the women as Basque-spellings [María Joan de Mugarrieta and Catalina de Labandibar].

Another feminist activist, Aitzpea, one day discussed with me the meaning of some old photographs from the archive. These particular pictures which dated to the early part of the century showed “water-carrier girls” (*cantineras*) carrying arms. It is clear from these archival photos that the image of the *cantinera* figure had been transformed over the years. In the *Alarde* parades of the present day, *cantineras* carry Spanish fans and are very feminine figures and less militaristic than they were in the past. She said, “it’s amazing to me looking at these [photographs] that women should not have the right to carry arms like men. In the past women carried guns, now, because the *cantinera* does not, people think it’s normal. It’s clear that the tradition has changed, that traditions change. The parade is not the same when our great grandfathers performed in it as it is today.”

Leire, another feminist said to me, “you know the *Alarde* celebrates a seventeenth century battle but the costumes of the male soldiers are from the Carlist Wars in the nineteenth century. The parade does not commemorate one event but incorporates other aspects of local history. For so many townspeople to say that the *Alarde* is a tradition that does not change is misunderstanding traditions and local history.” I asked Leire why she thought townspeople were unwilling to talk about past conflicts concerning the *Alarde* or even the current debate. She stated, “people do not want to admit to conflict. In private, they might express what they really feel but to strangers or even in public, making their opinions known might even cause problems for them. To pretend the dispute does not exist unites them. They can pretend that townspeople have always been unified and that there have never been problems in the past with the *Alarde*.”

The feminist perspective on local history demonstrates that aspects of the past can be ignored in favour of other pasts. In effect the past may be gendered as much as any other narrated experience “within the frames of subjectivity and intersubjectivity” (Leydesdorff *et al.*, 1996: 14). Feminists researching the town’s archives have demonstrated that women had a significant role in the battle of 1638 and that *cantineras* used to carry arms, something that most townspeople today oppose that women can act like soldiers. My conversations with feminists in addition to my own research have shown how the *Alarde* has changed over time as a tradition. Informal discussions with those who supported the traditionalist position revealed the sentimentality people have toward the *Alarde*.

### THE TRADITIONALIST VIEW OF ALARDE HISTORY

Many of my informants refused to speak to me about the current *Alarde* controversy and viewed it as a personal matter, too sensitive for any outsider to fully appreciate or comprehend. In addition, most of my informants refused to discuss what past controversies concerning the *Alarde* performance meant to them. They would say, “that does not matter” or “it was different then” instead of explaining the meaning of past conflicts such as the time young men challenged male authority over the parade’s organization in the 1950s and the conflict with the town council in the 1960s. Initially, I believed that people’s refusal to speak about past conflict impeded me from obtaining a complete understanding of the past but after careful consideration of the many informal discussions I had had with townspeople I realized these silences were expressions of communal harmony and means of protecting the ritual’s integrity.

Refusals to speak about the controversy also reflected people’s fears. Perhaps some townspeople thought I might find out their opinion and write about it. Despite such obstacles I was fortunate to find some people who would confide in me their thoughts on the *Alarde*.

One young man, a student in his early-20s studying at the University of the Basque Country in San Sebastian said to me one day, “they [the feminists] are all outsiders. They are not from the town and do not belong here. They’ll ruin the *Alarde* for everyone and then what? Why should we let people from the outside [the town] tell us [townspeople] what to do? What right do they have? The *Alarde* is a tradition and they [the feminists] do not have a right to ruin it. It is a tradition and traditions are meant to be respected”. On another occasion he mentioned to me, “you know those people [feminist supporters] are the same ones who support ETA. They are the ones who are always protesting. They do not care what the majority of townspeople think at all.”

Such comments typify the negative sentiments traditionalists expressed against the feminist supporters and their cause. Also, many like this young man were determined to protect the *Alarde* and the tradition it represented. To some Hondarribians the connection of feminist supporters with the “United People’s Party” (*Herri Batasuna*, HB), the political party supporting armed violence, had destructive connotations to communal well-being.

On another occasion I had a conversation about the *Alarde* with the “female head of household” (*etxeoandrea*) of my host family at the time, a housewife in her mid-50s. She said, “those lesbians will ruin the town. Most of them are outsiders you know. They will bus people from other towns and disrupt our parade. They want to ruin everything. Nobody I know likes them. I do not think it is a good idea that you socialize with them [about me socializing with the feminists]. People are beginning to talk. You have to understand they [the feminists] are bringing this town to ruin.” During the course of another day I asked her what tradition meant to her in relation to the *Alarde*. “To me traditions are things that do not change and they are things that will never change. The *Alarde* is something that has never changed and it will never change. It has remained the same ever since I can remember it, even as a child. I remember it and every year it moves me the same. You feel the *Alarde*. We fought the battle against the French and the town won. That’s why outsiders cannot understand it, it’s about Hondarribia.”

Many traditionalists spoke of the feminist movement’s supporters in pejorative terms and as I explain more fully my acquaintances with feminists were unfavourably looked upon by most. As various informal conversations revealed, townspeople often equated their memories with concepts of tradition. Thus the social celebration of the *Alarde* became part of one’s personal memories that exemplified ideas of local belonging and commemorative identity.

During fieldwork I often went to the “Fishermen’s Retirement House” (*Itsas Etxea*) to speak to elderly fishermen about the past and to socialize. On one visiting occasion I was

introduced to a member of the parade company, the “Woodsmen or Axemen” (*Aizkolariaren Eskuadra*). He was a man in his 40s who worked for the local bank and one of the men who socialized with the retired fishermen outside his peer group. Also, he voted for the HB party and believed in the traditionalist position, thinking his party had no business getting involved in a local issue against the majority of townspeople. We discussed what the *Alarde* meant to him and he told me a story about one time when he had hurt his back a few days prior to one year’s celebration. He said he had slipped a vertebral disk and a doctor advised him to rest. He stated that he did not care how much his back hurt him he would march in the parade regardless of the pain. He marched on that *Alarde* a few years ago despite the back injury. He claimed it was hard to describe his feelings on that day, the emotions overwhelmed him and when the music began playing and he began to march through the town’s streets his back pain seemed miraculously to disappear. He declared, “the *Alarde* is something that outsiders cannot understand readily. I remember marching in it ever since I was a little boy. There is a real feeling of exhilaration when you hear the drum music and everyone is happy and expectant. . . You have to remember that my father marched in the Woodsmen Company and his father before him and his father and I do not know how many of my ancestors before. It is like that you know. It is something we carry in us and pass on to our children. And when I march in it [the *Alarde*] I really feel as if my grandfather is watching and all my ancestors too. I really believe that. You may think that is strange but I really think that. You can feel yourself doing something very important for the town.” I asked him whether or not he believed the *Alarde* was particularly a Basque tradition. “Is this a Basque tradition? Why yes, yes it is. It is a Basque tradition because most people in this town believe themselves to be Basques and this is a tradition you do not find anywhere else. [The drum march in] Irún is the same. We fought the French and defended our town, we defended our Basque rights, the foral laws. This is the way the Basques are you see. We defend ourselves against outsiders. It is the same with ETA against the Spanish. We Basques have to defend ourselves for what is ours. It is the only way we will have independence. This is the fighting spirit of the Basques and the *Alarde* demonstrates our military tradition. We Basques are fighters, don’t forget that.”

This man’s oral narrative ties kinship with memory and tradition in relation to the *Alarde*. His views about the performance and kinship almost appear to be a belief of tradition as part of biological inheritance as something carried inward and passed on to children. His concepts also reflect how notions of local militarism are linked to Basque nationalism. Such views typify how townspeople interpret their military history. And like many, he believed the *Alarde* would be ruined if it became politicized, which signifies the control of the event through political ideals. Different political parties took sides on the issue whether for or against the more inclusive role of women to march as soldiers.

I was also able to interview two ex-“water-carrier girls” (*cantineras*) who supported the traditionalist position. One woman in her late 20s had been chosen as *cantinera* some seven years prior. We discussed the events of the day when the feminist group first tried to march in the event in 1996 and the reactions of townspeople. She told me how shocked everyone was regarding what she called the feminists’ forced entry into the *Alarde*. She stated, “the *Alarde* is something people know all their lives. It is something you grow up with and look forward to. People wait the whole year for the celebration. Those bitches [the feminists] want to ruin our lives. They [the feminists] think they can change the tradition but they can’t. It’s the same as my grandparents knew it and it will be the same when my grandchildren know it.” I asked her how important for it was to be selected as *cantinera*. “Really, it was the proudest day of my life. The feeling one has when your family and friends cheer when you walk by and how proud you feel to be representing the [parade] company. It’s wonderful. People look upon you differently when you are selected. You really feel important.” Then I asked her what she thought of the feminist point of view that women should be allowed to participate in

the event throughout their lives and not on just one occasion for the privileged 20 women a year who are selected as “water-carrier girls”. “That’s [feminist position] nonsense. That is what I mean when I say tradition. There are certain parade roles that must be respected. If women are allowed to march as soldiers then there would not be respect for men. Women are respected in the parade. This is the privilege of the *Alarde*. You are chosen among all of your [female] peers and that is very special. If that is taken away then being chosen as *cantinera* would not have the same meaning. Those women [the feminist supporters] want to ruin the parade for everyone. Nobody I know likes them. But I swear there are a lot of women who feel as I do and we won’t let them [feminists]. We won’t let them ruin our town”. In a subsequent conversation I asked her how she was chosen as “water-carrier girl” and asked if her father was an important person in the company in aiding the selection process. She conceded that this was so, her father had been instrumental in her selection.

This woman’s testimony communicates the protective stance people have of the performance and how much local concepts of gender influence attitudes about tradition. Many townspeople defend local forms of hegemonic masculinity by accepting the hierarchicized dichotomy of male/female roles as natural expressions embodied in the *Alarde*.<sup>48</sup> Such concepts about the values attributed to the sexes are not limited to ritual performance but extend to everyday life.

Another woman I interviewed had been a *cantinera* in the early 1970s. At the time of fieldwork she was in her early 50s and she told me both her daughters had also been chosen as *cantineras* in recent years. She explained to me what it was like to be chosen as *cantinera*. (In the past a woman might carry on the role of *cantinera* which began to change 40 years ago.) She said, “it’s the biggest privilege in a young girl’s life to be chosen as *cantinera*... To me it was especially important because my aunts had been chosen...and so had my mother in different years. Those lesbian women [feminists] do not represent us. They have no respect for the town and the wishes of the people. We don’t want them and as a former *cantinera*, it makes me very upset that they would wreck the atmosphere and the wonderful emotions one has when marching through the town. It’s just devastating and I feel sorry for the young girls who are *cantineras* and have to face these awful women who want to change our tradition. They [feminists] don’t belong here. I tell you they [feminists] have no right.”

Again notions of kin, memory and tradition are interlinked in the discourse of this woman. Her views of kin relations and her memories are gendered toward her female kin whereas the member of the Woodsmen Company spoke of his associations with male kin and male ancestors. This woman is supporting the traditionalist perspective because of her memories of past *Alardes* and also in her viewpoint how the sexes should behave in local society. Feminist activists in her outlook are disrupting the balance and harmony of society.

On another occasion I discussed the *Alarde* controversy with a town councillor, a man in his 50s from the “Basque National Party” (*Partido Nacional Vasco*, PNV), the party of regional government but locally in favour of the traditionalist stance. He commented, “this is a phenomenon which is meta-judicial and meta-political. It’s a social phenomenon. People make opinions of our parade but they do not analyse anything in any depth. Most of the population of Hondarribia is trying to defend through sentimental understanding, a feeling, and a historical tradition that belongs to them. This is a tradition in its own right and the majority of townspeople say so. That should be sufficient reason for anyone, period. We are Basques and we defend our traditions, that is what we do. Under Franco we had to defend our language and he tried to eradicate Basque culture but the *Alarde* remained and we will keep defending it, believe me. The majority does not want anyone changing the tradition.”

The rhetoric of the town councillor also reflects many people’s opinions about the *Alarde* in that it is a tradition which is beyond legal scrutiny and politics. His idea of tradition like

many townspeople is that traditions do not change over time but that they remain the same. In part his testimony also reveals a sense of Basque identity and pride whereby he links the parade with ethno-nationalist sentiment.

A retired fisherman in his early 60s spoke to me about the *Alarde* in a similar fashion regarding traditions by saying, “traditions are things that cannot be broken and must not be broken. I have known the *Alarde* ever since I was a little boy. It has always been the same. It has been the same for my parents and for their parents and before them and so on. I’ll tell you, you do not change traditions. They continue and will always continue.” He said that he still marches in the parade at his age and that he used to be captain of one of the companies. “I know when we march this year in the parade that the townspeople will demonstrate that with the *Alarde*, that it is the only *Alarde* there is, the one that has been the same always. We are not out of touch, we are normal and open people but the *Alarde* is a tradition and it must be respected. This is what people from the outside do not understand. I do not believe that by disallowing women to march as soldiers that in any way we are denying women’s rights. This is tradition, it has nothing to do with that.”

The defence of tradition and denying that women’s rights are being violated are common beliefs among most townspeople, including most townswomen. The fisherman speaks about the *Alarde* as a tradition which is immutable and like most townspeople he believes that it has not changed nor should it be changed.

## PROTECTING COMMUNAL TRADITIONS

Above I have alluded to reasons why Hondarribians do not speak of past controversies surrounding the *Alarde* in addition to the view that it is a fixed and static traditional performance. These have to do with ideas of communal boundaries, communal harmony, and protecting the performative rite. Accordingly, as mentioned above, I differ with Bloch’s (1986: 185) assertion alluded to above about denying the “validity of this world” and because of the “fixity of the communication” projected by ritual practice among the Merina of Madagascar. I do not think that individuals involved in rituals can deny the passage of time simply because participants vary over time. My argument is that Hondarribians have specific reasons for denying conflict has an effect on their *Alarde*. Furthermore, I disagree with Colson (1995: 67) in her contention that rituals “inevitably stress the values of co-operation, common interests, and harmony that transcend, rather than underwrite, the divergences that in fact organize human communities.” Contra Colson (1995) and the thinking of Durkheim (1915), I believe that “rituals may provide an arena for conflicting groups rather than act as community unifiers” (MacClancy and Parkin, 1997: 62).

Conflicts and disputes maintain ongoing interest in the practice of the ritual. In fact, they may revive its local significance by reinforcing aspects of identity and belonging. Communal boundaries are ideological and centre on protecting the ritual during periodic conflicts. For Hondarribians, these boundaries tend to shift between those who are its protectors or “insiders” (*hemengoak*) against those who are not or “outsiders” (*kanpotarrak*). As Crain (1992: 104) has put forward, “boundaries between these categories are constantly shifting”—though for different reasons she describes.<sup>49</sup>

All disputes outlined above are examples how Hondarribians have designated insiders and outsiders in relation to past debates concerning the *Alarde*, especially during the twentieth century. Usually locals consider insiders as those who defend the status quo of the *Alarde*’s organization and performance while outsiders are those who wish to change the ritual in some way. For example, the conflict between younger male-generations against elder males made these distinctions with the elder males as the established authority or insiders

and the younger men as antagonists or outsiders. Elder men had traditional and hierarchical power as younger men questioned this authority structure. The most recent controversy involving the local feminist movement has again challenged male authority in relation to the *Alarde*. The majority of townswomen support this male-power structure because of the prevailing view that hegemonic masculinity is acceptable. Most often, those allied with the “inside position”, the standpoint for protecting against ritual change, create boundaries around the performance by claiming it is a tradition that must not be altered. This is a status quo and reactionary stance against those advocating new input or those willing to compete for and gain control over the performance, the “outside position”. In the 1960s the town council were regarded as outsiders because of its promotion to accommodate tourists against the majority wishes of townspeople. Currently, the media is viewed as an outside institution which contradicts town interests by favouring the feminist standpoint in reporting on the *Alarde*.

Local identity in Hondarribia is dually reinforced through ritual practice by re-establishing belonging through conflict. In defending ritual meaning and control, Hondarribians are engaged in re-defining their common sense of unity against a perceived adversary. During moments of tension created by such controversies, locals are able to assert their own values by standing for or against one position or another. Often the outcome of a conflict transforms the form and/or meaning of ritual performances like the *Alarde*.

Why, then, are past conflicts about the *Alarde* not readily expressed by townspeople in the current discourse of ritual conflict? Are they really denying the passage of time (Bloch, 1986)? My answer to these questions is that disputes are mediated in particular ways that have much more to do with Basque notions of “harmony” (*gogaidetasuna*) than with the actual processes of memory, or for that matter in relation to forgetting.<sup>50</sup> The ideals of harmony are projected by Hondarribians who wish to maintain a semblance of continuity with the past in the present; and to do this they eliminate incongruent aspects of the *Alarde*'s history that brings into question its traditional continuity. In this sense, tradition is representative of the people themselves and of communal belonging. To admit to past problems is comparative to confessing to communal disunity, to social divisions, and every kind of social discord, all of which disrupted communal belonging. Such is the ideal. In practice, antagonisms and competing interests are always in the forefront. To some degree avoiding conflicts and evading discussions of past disputes are ways of maintaining “some semblance of peaceful co-existence” but these are socially coerced and are not always so easily eluded (Colson, 1995: 70).

This notion of keeping the ideal of communal belonging intact is not played out in ritual alone but is upheld in the household and between neighbours.<sup>51</sup> To some extent, the notion of the “Basque house” (*etxea*) may be utilized as a metaphor for local society. The “insiders” (*hemengoak*) are those who maintain its harmony and order; while “outsiders” (*kanpotarrak*) are those who disrupt this fellowship and therefore live beyond the bounds of the common good by acting in an unfamiliar manner. To Hondarribians a united front against outsiders to protect the community at large is a means of preserving their traditions, their way of life, and their sense of belonging and identity.<sup>52</sup>

The “nationalists”—household members—are protected by others of the same “house”—the nation—and are thinking as one for being part of the same group. Deliberate avoidance of conflict is not confined to the local arena but is extended to nationalist politics as well. Most Basques I knew were publicly unwilling to discuss the political situation. To some extent this has to do with the culture of fear prevalent in the region, as in speaking against ETA actions or in letting others know one's political position. The secrecy of politics and political discourse was a form of silence because true “patriotism” (*abertzaletasuna*) cannot be expressed in words but in “actions” (*ekintzak*). This is not to insinuate that politics are not

discussed in public. Most people will do so only among close acquaintances and familiars. Basques, not surprisingly, do not wish to portray negative images of themselves and many nationalists prefer to speak of themselves as united against outsiders.

All of these aspects of forgetting the past are poignant in so far as they elicit how much ethnic groups create identity and how nation-states strive to re-create their pasts. Hondarribians are no different in this respect. The townspeople are idealizing themselves through the ritual as much as they idealize their past and thereby disregard previous dissonance.

## CONCLUSIONS

This article has demonstrated ways of imagining the past as a multiple, contestable, and negotiated process which may be influenced by several factors simultaneously such as present social circumstances, discourse, politics, and competing ideologies. There are many agencies which impinge upon the interpretation of the past which may be dependent upon varying sources whether from primary or secondary material or from oral testimonies as well as the author's choice of narrative.

I have chosen as my subject a historical commemoration in the Spanish-Basque region known as the Hondarribian *Alarde*. It is a re-enactment rite that has been continually celebrated for almost 400 years and is dominated by male performers with only minor roles given to women. Since 1996, a controversy has been ongoing in the Basque town of Hondarribia about whether or not to make the historical parade more inclusive for female performers and allow them to march as male soldiers. This has divided the local population into two groups: "traditionalists" advocating the event remain the same and "feminists" supporting broader participation for women.

While the subject of this article is primarily local and regional, its theoretical considerations extend beyond the Basque region. One prominent question is the relationship between traditions and time. I have argued that traditions are better understood through processes of transformation and a more in depth analysis of time. I demonstrated that instead of examining synchronic events in time such as agents of invention or revitalization affecting performance rituals and their associations with traditional practice, we should concentrate on a diachronic approach which is more encompassing. In so doing, we can more readily ascertain why periods of change in ritual and traditional practices are only singular occurrences among many. In addition, I argued why traditions are not timeless even if informants believe them to be so. I asserted that locals cannot deny the passage of time because their reasons for refusing to acknowledge time's passing point to other motives. I found that most Hondarribians were not denying the passage of time so much as protecting a concept of communal harmony and upholding local identity. If Hondarribians conceded that there have been any conflicts surrounding the *Alarde* then they would be admitting to communal disunity and detracting from the exalted meaning they give to the ritual and thereby undermine the glory of their local past.

The advantage of this case study establishes how ritual performances can be studied over long periods of time rather than encapsulating and limiting ceremony to its momentary actuation. The *Alarde* has undergone a series of meaningful transformations due to periodic disputes over the significance of the event. My primary evidence for this are the many transformations of ritual practice during the twentieth century, due to scant archival material available for previous centuries. Nonetheless, I verified that Basque nationalist politics has been a key factor of change, so too have been concepts of gender, neighbourhood authority, and notions about protecting communal harmony.

In so far as history is a contested and multiple process of interpretation this article has shown how people live their past, especially the collective conceptualization of the past. The focus of this living history has been examining the past surrounding the Hondarribian *Alarde* with an emphasis on local militarism and the history of ritual performance. This historical pastness is often confused with ritual tradition by people who relive or remember these preceding experiences. Local histories and traditions are interwoven because of the importance given to reliving the past for those in the present and what agencies are involved in this process. Yet, the reason for making the past immutable has often to do with personal associations, kinship, living memories, and politics.

Traditionalists, those supporting the notion that the *Alarde* remain the same, explain the past in relation to kin ties, politics, and personal experience as the foundations for protecting traditional practice. Local feminists, those asserting the *Alarde* change to accommodate equal participation for women in the commemorative parade, understand that traditions do change. These feminists explained that in Hondarribian history women had a significant role in defending the town in the siege of 1638, rescuing the effigy of the Virgin Mary, and that female parade roles in the past allowed female performers to act more like male soldiers. Such differing viewpoints of history express how the past may be manipulated by present social circumstances.

Further, these are differences exemplifying a social construction of popular memory that does not have to be singular in focus but allow for other factors such as the competition between groups over the right to maintain and express history. Competing social actors, such as Hondarribian traditionalists and feminists, may rival each other to determine how traditions and history will be interpreted or how commemorative rites should be performed. In addition to this, I have shown how disputes reinforce renewed interest in ritual performance and why concepts such as insider and outsider are re-defined in order to preserve social harmony.

The case study of the *Alarde* likewise established that commemorative rites are not simply embodied practices. Rather, commemorative ceremonies embody complex and fecund processes of identity and involvement which are agency to concepts of belonging, gender, history, memory, politics, and tradition. Historical performances are also subject to social concerns of the present whether these are embodied by economic, global, media, political or other social factors.

To many Basques of my acquaintance who are non-Hondarribian residents the *Alarde* controversy over the wider participation of women was a political issue. Indeed, all Basque political parties took sides on the issue with the left in favour of the women and the conservative element in favour of tradition.<sup>53</sup> Regional government bodies became involved in the issue as well. Both the Basque Supreme Court and Basque Parliament handed down decisions in favour of the Hondarribian feminists for broader female participation in the *Alarde*. Yet, to this day, women are not allowed this privilege and have been blocked from marching like male soldiers either by the local police or by human chains of local women linking arms. This article has argued for a more expansive explanation of the local controversy rather than limiting the account to nationalist politics.

While I have barely mentioned why gender is central to this understanding, because this subject is explored in greater detail in other writing, I will state that local women uphold notions of hegemonic masculinity because of naturalized attributes ascribed to men and women in local society. These established or traditional concepts of gender have been challenged by local feminists who argue that women are being subordinated by men and that traditional gender roles are believed to limit local women in career choices, everyday life and sexual practices. In this regard, the subject of gender partially clarifies why social divisions

existed in this recent Hondarribian dispute, however, traditional protectiveness offers another complementary appreciation of local identity.

For people such as Basques the past may be imagined through a whole array of competing concerns, interests, and values, which from an anthropological perspective, is not merely about reporting historical events but is a past expressed as a living embodiment and is perpetuated through people who uphold it. These are important matters for our society in its present era with the over-reliance on media rhetoric for social understanding. Because the social complexities explained in this article are reasons why people like Basques adamantly protect their ethnic identities, their histories, and their traditional practices despite ideological and material intrusions exacerbating inevitable change.

### Notes

1. Hondarribia has a population of about 14,000, the majority of whom are bilingual, "Basque speakers" (*euskaldunak*) with over 8500 speaking the "Basque language" (*euskera*). It is a coastal town located in the Province of Gipuzkoa and borders France, a short crossing of the Bidasoa River to the North. The "Basque Country" or *Euskal Herria* is officially the autonomous region composed of the three Spanish provinces of Araba, Bizkaia, and Gipuzkoa. Nationalists often refer to their "Homeland" as *Euskadi*, a political term that includes a greater territorial focus including the province of Navarra in Spain and three provinces in France (Lapurdi, Baxe Nafarroa, and Xiberoa).
2. According to Foucault (1969: 117) discourse is "a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation. . . it is made up of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined."
3. As Vansina states (1961: 76), "one of the historian's tasks is to find out to what extent a testimony is affected by. . . social, cultural, and personal factors. . . because the way distortions come about can throw a great deal of light on. . . the informants who introduce them, and may in some cases provide some information about the past."
4. Bell (1997: 104 and 108) states that commemorative rites are a sub-category of calendrical rites that "includes activities that explicitly recall important historical events, whether or not the date is accurate" and that "many such rituals easily shift their emphasis back and forth. . ." My own view is that commemorative ceremonies are far more complex than Bell (1997) alludes to in her analysis.
5. See Hughes-Freeland and Crain (1998) for similar ideas on ritual.
6. Another critic of Connerton (1989) is Jarman (1997) who has demonstrated there is more to ritual than its performance, especially in the material aspects of parading in Northern Ireland.
7. For the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries there are few archives documenting the *Alarde* event. Mostly they describe purchasing drums and flutes for the procession to the Hondarribian shrine of the Virgin Mary of Guadalupe. Such documents may be found for the following years of 1644, 1649, 1656, 1663, 1671, 1672, 1729, and 1730.
8. It should be noted that the use of militias by Castile at this time helped to defend vulnerable borderland areas to French attacks. The militias of Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa (as well as Navarra and Catalonia) were especially important in maintaining the border area of Spain and France. Every man over the age of 20 was expected to serve in the regional militia. In exchange for this military service, Castile granted provinces like Gipuzkoa special privileges known as "foral laws" (*los fueros*). These laws essentially established the notion of "collective nobility" among those populations who defended the borderlands. As Greenwood (1976: 153) states:

Collective nobility results from the Spanish monarchs' written recognition that all people born in Gipuzkoa and some other areas were *hijosdalgo* (of noble birth). Given time and the conditions, this is a most surprising idea. It affirms nobility and equality of all Basques, regardless of occupation, in a Europe of divine kings, blood nobility, warriors, merchants, artisans, peasants, and serfs. In the context of the extreme social stratification of European society, collective nobility is remarkable. That a cobbler should be, in some sense, the equal of a wealthy aristocrat was an ideal with very limited appeal to most Europeans. Yet when the Spanish monarchs successively swore to uphold the *fueros* of many Basque regions, they included specific recognition of Basque collective nobility.

9. In 1635, Armand Jean du Plessis Duc de Richelieu, the French Minister of War declared war on Spain (Elliott, 1986). When Count-Duke of Olivares became the Spanish Minister of War in 1636, he had the unfortunate task of upholding the Spanish territories abroad, contending with insurrections in Portugal and fighting off French invasions. Also, in 1636, the Spanish Naval Admiral decided to sack several of the French-Basque border townships. In the same year, the Gipuzkoa militia under the acting command of Marqués de Valparaiso and Francisco de Irrazábal, respectively, the Viceroy and the Captain General of the Kingdom of Navarra besieged the towns of Urrugne, Ziburu and Sainte-Jean-de-Luz (Múgica, 1903: 130–131). The siege of these French towns caused more than 7000 casualties and after it had been lifted many Gipuzkoan troops remained to secure the borderland area. An eyewitness account of these sieges by Castilian-Gipuzkoan troops of borderland-French towns is found in a document in the Municipal Archives of Hondarribia. It records a group of whalers who had returned from an expedition to Greenland and had just arrived in Saint-Jean-de-Luz, where they encountered the invading Spanish troops and complain to the Hondarribian magistrate about the conduct of the Viceroy, Marqués de Valparaiso.
10. After the French defeat of 1638, Hondarribia was given a royal title by the Crown of Castile, “The Very Noble, Very Loyal, Very Valorous and Always Faithful City of Fuenterrabia” (*La Muy Noble, Muy Leal, Muy Valerosa, y Siempre Fiel Ciudad de Fuenterrabia*). Notice the use of Fuenterrabia instead of Hondarribia for the township. The former is the Castilian equivalent for the town and the latter name was officially adopted in 1979.
11. Casualties were very high. According to one source, on the Castilian side 2000 men drowned defending the outer ramparts of the town, 1500 died in the hilly countryside, while the French lost an astounding 11,000 (Múgica, 1903: 142).
12. By July of 1638, Richelieu had decided to invade Spain through the western Pyrenees with a considerable force and attack the fortress of Hondarribia from land and sea. Castile’s response was rapid under circumstances. The standing militias of Bizkaia, Catalonia, and Navarra were ordered immediately to dispatch troops of their own to save the town. The siege lasted through August. Spanish galleons were sent to relieve the town from constant bombardment by the French fleet. However, these galleons met with defeat off coastal waters near the Gipuzkoan capital of San Sebastian (Elliott, 1986: 539–540).
13. By September the Count-Duke Olivares believed all hope was lost for Hondarribia and its citadel if reinforcements did not arrive safely. He himself offered to leave for Gipuzkoa with more troops but King Felipe refused. Eventually, news arrived from Hondarribia and on 7th September the reinforcement troops under the command of Almirante y el Marqués de los Vélez were able to drive back the French invaders, firmly routing all French lines and ending the siege. With the defeat of the French in this battle, Count-Duke Olivares became a hero and was awarded several royal orders of merit. He was made hereditary governor of Hondarribia and was given a large sum of money as well as a bequest for his heirs to be seated in the *Cortes* of every city (Elliott, 1986: 540–541). The victory over French forces was widely celebrated in Madrid. Such celebrations would be short-lived since Spain was to lose the Netherlands a year later.
14. Although the Castilian Crown also ordered troops to be sent from Catalonia but the Catalans refused to comply (Lynch, 1969: 103).
15. A local historian, Florentino Portu (1969: 742), claims that according to legend the Virgin Mary appeared to two children on the Mountain of Jaizkibel in Hondarribia, however, as he states there is no written evidence to verify this. He says that the Guadalupe Mary of Hondarribia post-dates the sighting of a Guadalupe Mary in Extremadura in the fourteenth century [it is possible Portu is confusing Extremadura for Castile here]. In all likelihood, the shrine for the Virgin of Guadalupe in Hondarribia was a satellite shrine which as Christian (1981: 87) maintains met “the needs of people devoted to a shrine image who live too far away for frequent contact.” As Christian (1981: 88) asserts, it is unknown when the Guadalupe legend was founded in Spain, other than in Hondarribia, these were located in Rianxo, Galicia and Ubeda, Andalusia. There were also “proxy images in Hieronymite monasteries in major cities” (Christian, 1981: 88).
16. An archival document from the Hondarribian Municipal Archives, 4th September, 1639, comments on the town’s devotion to the Virgin of Guadalupe. It states: “this day all things considered and tried of new in relation to the festivity of the sovereignty of Our Lady, the Virgin of Guadalupe by

demonstrating our sublime and grateful thanks given to the town for the successful miracle that merits the devotion of the whole town to this holy image and its free intercession by our lord on this tried site, that the enemy had oppressed and pulling in the last lances of defence. . .and the following day that is the birth of Our Lady on 8th September a procession of those of age able to handle arms and those that are not, axes with lit candles and children singing in chorus. . .and the captain and first mayor Don Juan de Justiz goes with his stallion captaining his people of arms and his second lieutenant and sergeant with their insignias that take people in a military order.”

17. However, there is no clear evidence that the townspeople of Hondarribia commemorated those who died in 1638, only that a religious procession to the shrine was held every year on 8th September (the same day as the “Birth of the Virgin Mary”). It is possible that the religious procession was an act of special devotion whereby townspeople could give thanks to the Virgin for defeating their enemies. According to popular myth, some think the Virgin intervened because her effigy was saved from the shrine of the Virgin on Mount Jaizkibel during the 1638 battle. The statuette of the Virgin had been taken from the shrine for safekeeping and held within the protective town walls until the siege ended. Such ideas about the powers of the Virgin and her ability to defeat the French enemy are part of local religious lore.
18. One of the more famous rebel leaders, Francisco Espoz y Mina of Navarra, led several campaigns against the French in and around the townships of Hondarribia and Irún. In addition to such guerrilla campaigns, spy networks were created in 1808 to undermine the French forces. To some extent Hondarribian fishermen likely aided Wellington because the fishermen knew the river estuaries and their tidal changes and spied for English forces as guerrilla fighters (Gates, 1986: 437).
19. According to Múgica, after Wellington arrived on the scene at the end of the battle near San Marcial, the general commented, “that the Spanish troops had conducted themselves like the best of soldiers in all the world” (1903: 177). Such articulations of local bravery are certainly hearsay as there is no evidence of such words being spoken by Wellington himself. Such embellishments of history are not particular to the likes of Múgica but are perpetuated by most accounts of local historians. For example, Aramburu (1987: 127) omitted or is generally ignorant of the significance of Wellington’s invasion in Gipuzkoa. He attributes the defeat of the Napoleonic forces to locals rather than acknowledging the English forces at all. It is quite clear from all contemporary accounts that without the English, there would have been no defeat of the French during this time. Likewise Larrañaga (1997) chooses to undermine the significance of Wellington’s forces in the area by not mentioning them at all and his article concentrates solely on the role of local guerrillas. Larrañaga completely fails to mention that the local guerrillas were used as aides or spies for the English forces and either he assumes his readership knows this, or chooses to make such omissions because of his own biases toward past glories of locals.
20. From 1833 to 1837 Carlist forces controlled the forts located in Hondarribia and Irún. These two towns became some of the most important Carlist strongholds (Múgica, 1903: 189). While not far away, many of the Liberal forces were concentrated in the capital of San Sebastian. On 17th May, 1837, Irún was captured by Liberal troops and the following day, Hondarribia fell to the same forces. The capture of these two towns was significant both strategically and in regard to military material. The failure of the Carlist forces to take Irún in November 1874 became a turning point in the second Carlist uprisings. This defeat meant that additional money for the Carlist cause could not be raised because control of border customs in the area would have provided needed revenue (Carr, 1966: 340). In fact, the Carlists would never again regain control over Hondarribia and Irún after losing these towns to Liberal forces in the first Carlist campaign (Múgica, 1903: 192). The punishment meted out to the Carlists for causing a second uprising was an elimination of any Castilian privileges enjoyed by regions like the Basque Country. This removal of “foral laws” (*los fueros*) was more symbolic than tangible, but nonetheless demonstrated the distrust the Spanish Republic had for the Basque region.
21. Carr (1966: 187) writes:

The base of Carlism was the countryside of the Basque Provinces and Navarra where its organized rural state remained ringed by liberal towns: Bilbao, San Sebastian, Pamplona, and Vitoria. . .It was

this rural character which made Carlism so difficult to defeat; its strongholds inaccessible—the foothills of the Pyrenees...Because of its rural character Carlism failed to gain any support in the “enlightened classes” who saw in liberalism a political system better suited to their interests and way of life.

22. Carr (1966: 186–187) states:

The foral issue was nevertheless, an expression of what was perhaps the deepest current in Carlism: the hatred of the country for the town, the mountain for the plain. . .Outside the north, Carlism only took root in the backward, primitive society of the mountains of Aragon and Catalonia.

23. Today many parades in the region are still known as “drum marches” (*tamborradas*) instead of “military reviews” (*alardes*). The origins of these names has to do with the particularities of the municipalities which celebrate such marches. Other terms are employed as well, such as the “main drum march” (*tamborrada mayor*) or simply calling them “drums” (*tambores*). In Basque, the term for “drum marches” is *danborradak*. The celebrations in San Sebastian and Tolosa are more closely linked to the defeat of the Napoleonic troops than for other townships such as Hondarribia and Irún.

Also, uniforms worn in the Hondarribian parade are Carlist even though the parade celebrates the 1638 defeat of the French. In towns such as San Sebastian and Tolosa Napoleonic uniforms are worn to celebrate their drum marches.

24. Many from small towns moved to larger cities to find work in the new factories. The Carlist Wars were fought in part to combat the rise of the urban mercantile class and to eliminate the deep social divisions that were resulting from industrialization.
25. The incorporation of these new characters in the parade was most likely from the carnival celebrations (*maskarradak*) of towns in the French-Basque Country (*Iparraldia*).
26. Prior to 1920, the *Alarde* of Hondarribia was suspended in 1909 for the War with Morocco and for the First World War in 1914 as well as the period between 1916 and 1918.
27. In the past, boat crews had a restrictive hierarchical order. The elderly fishermen were to be respected in a given fishing boat and young fishermen were expected to work for lower pay as well as be expected to pass through an apprenticeship phase. Young fishermen on any given fishing boat would be called *txo* or *txotxoa* (meaning “boy of the boat” or “kitchen scullion”; in Spanish these are, respectively, *mozo de barco* and *Marmitón*).
28. The town council wished to increase tourism by nationally promoting the event. In its view, the more spectators who came to see the *Alarde*, then local revenue would likewise increase. Townspeople’s reactions to the town council’s assertions were fierce. To most Hondarribians, any outside interference meant a declaration against private, municipal property and such interference was contra ideas about protecting traditions. As Greenwood (1989: 179) states, “this decision directly violated the meaning of the ritual, definitely destroying its authenticity and its power for the people.” According to him the *Alarde* became a “cultural commodity”, a packaged product of local colour.
29. Some informants I spoke to about the event said the following year that many men in several companies brought with them real shotgun shells instead of blanks. They stated they would have fired on the police if a similar incident occurred the following year. Such claims may only be hearsay and part of the veracity Hondarribian men ascribe to their masculinity.
30. One of my informants was an eyewitness to the killing on this day. He recalled the event when he was a boy and being scared by the police and how the festival atmosphere was ruined by the young man’s death. He told me how he had been enjoying a meal with his family following the parade. He described the police rushing on the scene in riot gear who paid no attention to crowds of people sitting outside at the town’s restaurants. According to him, shots were fired in the air causing everyone to flee in panic. He remarked about Zabala, “He was just a normal guy, like you and me, just a normal guy and they killed him, and for what?!”
31. At the turn of the century people adorned their balconies with garlands and white *mantillas* (silk or laced headscarves). The use of embroidered *mantillas* is most often associated with southern Spain and practices of cities like Seville than northern Spain. This example illustrates that so-called

aspects of Spanish culture were incorporated at all levels in the Basque region. Even today, most adamant “Basque nationalists” (*abertzaleak*) can be heard speaking Spanish on a regular basis rather than “Basque” (*euskera*). Language code-switching from Basque to Spanish in the same conversation is also a common feature.

32. I know of one fisherman in particular who fought in Franco’s navy during the Civil War and later became an adamant Basque nationalist advocating Basque separatism and violence. Later, he moderated his views and became an opponent of hostility.
33. I have purposefully not discussed the word custom in relation to either history or tradition. The reason for this is that the Basque word for “custom” and “tradition” are the same (*ohitura*). The word for “history” is, however, distinct (*kondaira*).
34. This active engagement with tradition is similar to what Toren (1988: 173) has described as “cultural categories” that are “constituted and made manifest in action”. They are also similar to what Jarman (1997: 25) states: “maintaining one’s identity does not involve invoking tradition but actively maintaining it, year in, and year out. Maintaining a tradition means being seen to maintain it.”
35. Toren (1988: 713) criticized Sahlins (1985: vii and 148–149) for asserting that “cultural schemes” forming Hawaiian history are put at “risk” by “cultural action”. Sahlins (1985) gives the impression that the past was imprinting itself on the present in a “ready-made” manner. Bloch (1998: 102) also questions Sahlins’ (1985) perception of history by wondering why he suggests “there are two kinds of history, one for Hawaiians with their cultural associations and the other kind “found in post nineteenth century western thought”.
36. The range of criticism is varied, see for example Jolly and Thomas (1992), Poppi (1992), and Sutton (1998). Also, Ranger (1993) has since reconsidered his earlier ideas about the concept of “invention”.
37. Boissevain (1992: 2) stated that his work, *Revitalizing European Rituals* was inspired by Hobsbawm and Ranger’s (1983), *The Invention of Tradition*. He outlines the differences between the two works:

...[The contributors] deal with local rather than national celebrations. Second, although often using history, they deal with contemporary celebrations. Third, they pay more attention to the minutiae of the processes and events of ritual change. Fourthly, they are not limited to invented rituals. Finally, most of them make a greater effort to place the events in a wider social context in order to provide an understanding of the changes. (Boissevain 1992: 2)

38. MacClancy and Parkin’s (1997) article has provoked a reply by Boissevain (1999) and a counter-reply by MacClancy and Parkin (1999), thus continuing the debate.
39. Sahlins (1985: 144) argued:

What, then, of the corollary between stability and change? Again, Western thought presupposes the two are antithetical: local and ontological contraries. Cultural effects are identified as continuous with the past or discontinuous, as if these were alternative kinds of phenomenal reality, in complementary distribution in any cultural space. The distinction runs deep, through a whole series of elementary categories that organize common wisdom: the static vs. the dynamic, being vs. becoming, state vs. action, condition vs. process, and—should we not include?—nouns as opposed to verb.

40. Gell (1992: 52–53) argues:

Synchronic time is something of a misnomer: synchronic relationships are relations between categories in a classification system which are unaffected by time, even though the criteria on which certain categories may be based can include various kinds of temporal relationships (e.g. an age hierarchy for purposes of social classification...There is no reason to believe that there are any but diachronic temporal relationships, i.e. the relationship between events and history. There is no contradiction between synchrony and diachrony, because synchronic classification does not conflict with diachronic historicity. One can classify entities (synchronically) according to events in their diachronic histories, just as one can synchronically classify entities according to their colour, size, price at market, how many of them there are etc.

41. MacClancy and Parkin (1997: 71) assert in reference to the ritual of San Bessu: “Today, for instance, no-one goes barefoot or on their knees, though many can remember people who did. Also, Cognians make only three, not nine, circuits of the rock, and they climb it only once, not after every Rosary.”

42. These everyday social practices are discussed in my unpublished DPhil dissertation, “Basque Imagination and Commemorative Identity: local history and everyday life in relation to the Hondarrribian *Alarde* (1638–2000),” University of Oxford (Linstroth, 2002).
43. In 1996 two opposing positions were formed between those for and against the equal participation of women in the parade: the “traditionalists” (*Betikos*—a name derived from their support group, *Betiko Alardearen Aldekoak*, “Always the Town’s *Alarde*”); and the “feminists” (*Emakumaldekoak* or *feministas*, and their support group being *Juana Mugarrietakoa* or “Women of *Juana Mugarrietakoa*”).
44. The Popular Memory Group (1982: 230) state that in their experiences of recording oral history in Italy that silences were two kinds. Sometimes whole life stories were told “without any reference to fascism, except for casual ones”. Yet silences also posed theoretical problems. As Passerini (1992: 16) argues: “...the naïve claims of oral history, in its early decades, to simply give voice to those who had been silenced by history is almost derisory...silence is not even an appropriate term for the task to come: what is to be fought is not only silence but distortions or *false memory*.”
45. According to Jauristi (1987: 20), there are several factors that contributed to the promotion of Basque traditions. These are: the dismantling of the agricultural economy and proto-industries; the dissolution of social relations (such as agnatic inheritance, neighbour relations, etc.); and a systematic process of acculturation into the Castilian way of life that included substitution of the Castilian language for Basque and an erosion of a system of beliefs.
46. Feminism may be defined as “the awareness of women’s oppression and exploitation at work, in the home and society as well as the conscious political action taken by women to change this situation” (Moore 1988: 10).
47. Most Hondarrribian feminists I became acquainted with were all single women their ages ranging from 20s to early 40s, some among them favoured same-sex relationships. All of them were university educated. Some of them were not Hondarrribian natives but most of the ones I knew between 1996–1997 had grown up in the town.
48. By “hegemonic” I am using the term as defined by Cornwall and Lindisfarne (1994: 3):
- Hegemonic masculinities define successful ways of *being a man*; in so doing, they define other masculine styles as inadequate or inferior. These related masculinities we call *subordinate variants*. . . One reason the rhetoric of hegemonic versions of masculinity is so compelling is that it rests on an apparent certainty: that *a man is a man* everywhere, and everywhere this means the same thing.
49. Also, I disagree with Boissevain (1992: 12) and his definition of insiders as excluding non-permanent. In Hondarrribia, it is perhaps exceptional that “people from Madrid” who spend the summer vacation there are allowed to form their own parade company (*Mixta*), because *Madrileños* have been coming to the town every summer since the turn of the century. In the past, their parade company was considered to be the “outsider” group. Today, however, because many *Madrileños* support the traditionalist position against the feminist group, they are considered as insiders.
50. Hence, I am not asserting a cognitive process of memory as discussed by Bloch (1998) but rather a socially derived conscious effort to avoid conflict and to disavow past disputes.
51. Douglass (1969) and Ott (1981), discuss similar notions of conflict avoidance among household members and neighbours elsewhere in the Basque region.
52. I am not alone in assessing the Basques’ extended metaphor of the house, which represents one of their notions of social cohesion. Others such as Del Valle (1985), Zulaika (1988), and Martínez Montoya (1999) also have done so in the context of examining Basque nationalism.
53. During the *Alarde* debate different political parties took sides, with “Basque Solidarity Party” (*Eusko Alkartasuna*, EA) and “United People’s Party” (*Herri Batasuna*, HB) in favor of the wider participation of women and “National Basque Party” (*Partido Nacional Vasco*, PNV), “Socialist Party of the Basque Country” (*Partido Socialista de Euskadi*, PSE) supporters generally against. Spanish national parties also took sides on the issue with the “Popular Party” (*Partido Popular*, PP) and ruling national party, and “Spanish Workers’ Socialist Party” (*Partido Socialista Obrero Español*, PSOE) against female participation and the communist party, “United Left” (*Izquierda Unida*, IU) favouring wider female participation in the *Alarde*.

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