To my Father and my Mother, who gave me the Life
To those who came before
To my brothers and sister, to Sean
To all the txalapartariak in whose search I shared
To all who have helped me
To you

I stay in my place
# Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................... viii
Declaration ........................................................................................................................................ ix
Acknowledgments ........................................................................................................................ x
List of Figures .................................................................................................................................... xiii
List of Appendices ........................................................................................................................... xv
Transliteration of Basque ................................................................................................................... xvi

**Introduction** ................................................................................................................................. 1

**Section I.**

**Chapter 1. Interpretation Approach and Methodology**

  **Introduction** ............................................................................................................................. 10

  **The Methodological Field of Embodiment** ........................................................................ 11

  Identity and Embodiment: Sensibility ................................................................................... 15

  On Fieldwork as Experience, and Experience as Grounding ............................................. 17

    *The Field* ................................................................................................................................. 18
    Iruña .......................................................................................................................................... 19
    Ireland ...................................................................................................................................... 23
    Fieldwork Amid Conflict ..................................................................................................... 24
    Ethnographer’s Horizons ................................................................................................. 26

  **Research Delimitation** ........................................................................................................... 28

  Participants ................................................................................................................................. 28

  Time Span: The Present ........................................................................................................ 29

  Research Duration and Space Delimitation ........................................................................ 31

  Research Techniques ............................................................................................................ 31

    *Learning To Perform* ......................................................................................................... 34

  **Inter-Influence and Reciprocity** .......................................................................................... 35

  The Figure of the Researcher ............................................................................................... 36

    *Proving Myself Through Action* ..................................................................................... 37

    *Applied Ethnomusicology in Research* .......................................................................... 39
Chapter 2. Encountering Txalaparta

Introduction ....................................................................................... 57

The Old Txalaparta: A Rhythm, A Way of Playing, and “An Instrument” with No Name. ................................................................. 58

Txalaparta as Played by the Old Txalapartariak. Descendants’ Memories .............................................................................. 63

The Awakening ...................................................................................... 75

The Generation of the 1960s and 70s ...................................................... 76

The 13th Apostle: The Basque Artist Jorge Oteiza ..................................... 80

The Birth of Txalaparta Zaharra............................................................... 86

The Artze Brothers ............................................................................... 86

The Discovery .................................................................................. 86

The Poet Txalapartari .......................................................................... 96

Ez Dok Amairu (1965-1972) ................................................................. 104

Txalaparta in Ez Dok Amairu ............................................................... 117

The End of Ez Dok Amairu. 1972 ...................................................... 123

The Beltran Brothers ........................................................................... 127

Argia Dance Group ........................................................................... 130

Avant-Garde Txalaparta ...................................................................... 136

Mikel Laboa’s Compositions ................................................................ 137

Further Promotion and Popularisation of Txalaparta .......................... 141

Txalaparta Festa .................................................................................. 144

Conclusion ............................................................................................ 150
Section II. Performance. Interface Between Discourse and Action

Chapter 3. Narratives

Introduction ................................................................................................. 153
The Horse Totem ......................................................................................... 157
Euskal Herri Musika .................................................................................. 163
Calling Device / Calling Rhythms .............................................................. 173
The Basque “Tam-Tam” (Talking Drums) .................................................. 173
   A War Call .......................................................................................... 180
Work and Celebration ............................................................................... 181
   Auzolan ................................................................................................. 182
Txalaparta Festa. The Making of Community ......................................... 185
Socialist Ethos ......................................................................................... 192
Conclusion ............................................................................................... 214

Chapter 4. Plural Understandings and One Project

Introduction ............................................................................................... 217
Limits of Txalaparta. When Txalaparta Is No More ............................. 218
Interlocking Technique ............................................................................. 224
   “Variants” of Txalaparta ....................................................................... 227
   Improvisation ....................................................................................... 232
   Bertsolaritza ......................................................................................... 237
Txakun Beat ............................................................................................... 250
Txalaparta is Music ................................................................................... 258
Understandings of “Music” ...................................................................... 259
Sound Making Spectrum .......................................................................... 263
Construction of Music: What Ought To Be ........................................... 266
Txalaparta Batua? ................................................................................... 272
Conclusion ............................................................................................... 274
Section III. Efficacious Performance

Chapter 5. Ritualising Txalaparta

Introduction ............................................................................................................. 278
Art, Ritual, Ritualising .......................................................................................... 279
Tendency to Ritualisation in Relation to Txalaparta ........................................ 285
Rhythms of Struggle ............................................................................................. 293
Call To Battle ......................................................................................................... 303
Political Prisoners ................................................................................................. 327
Homage Events for Released Prisoners and Deceased Militants .................. 340
Homage Events of Farewell for the Deceased .................................................. 341
2006 Ceasefire ...................................................................................................... 353
“Ritual Criticism” ................................................................................................. 358
Rhythms of Healing .............................................................................................. 366
Let the Circle Be Wide .......................................................................................... 381
Conclusion ............................................................................................................. 384

Conclusion ............................................................................................................. 390

Bibliography .......................................................................................................... 411
Electronic Sources ................................................................................................. 424
Audiovisual Sources and Sound Recordings ....................................................... 427
Appendices ............................................................................................................. 431
Abstract


Author: María Escribano del Moral

This dissertation, the first extensive academic work on Txalaparta as a social phenomenon, explores the ongoing revival and construction of this tradition and percussion instrument amid the Basque struggle for self-determination. Based on ethnographic work mainly undertaken from 1998 to 2006 in the capital of the Spanish State, the Basque Country, and Ireland, this thesis examines current constructions of meaning and “reality,” from a broad spectrum approach to the study of performance as well as praxis perspectives within the field of ritual studies. Anarchistic reflections of freedom and general Marxist aspirations, memories of past sovereignty and current dreams of independence, emerge in the commitment of many of those who have engaged, and engage today, with Txalaparta, shaping narratives and practices, and giving way, in particular, to an ongoing project: the making of “music” on a par with the making of nation.

In-depth interviews with different Basque artists, including relatives of the old Txalaparta players, Basque ex-prisoners, political rally organizers, and other left wing and independentist Txalaparta players within and outside the so called Basque Movement for National Liberation, as well as fieldwork with Txalaparta groups of different ideological leanings within the left, provide the multiple voices that inform the insight this dissertation intends to provide into processes of national construction and resistance amid conflict by means of expressive culture.
I hereby declare that this is my own work and has not been submitted for the award of any Degree in any other University or Third Level Institution.

María Escribano

Signed: _______________________________ Date: _________________
Acknowledgments

Eskertu nahi dut lana hau egiten lagundu duten guztioi.

Many people have helped in the development of this dissertation which started in Ireland, at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance.

I would like to thank my supervisors Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin and Colin Quigley, who have always facilitated me and who provided me with invaluable assistance, always patient and supportive. I wish to thank also Lillis Ó Laoire, for his insightful advice at the onset of my research journey, and Helen Phelan for her kind guidance, always making the daunting easy. She introduced me to the exciting world of performance and ritual studies, becoming a decisive influence in the development of my interpretations.

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Thanks to Tommy Sands and Tom Newman, with whom we, a group of Txalaparta players and I, lived a dream; and thanks to all the Irish who so warmly welcomed us and with whom we spent such unforgettable moments in our tours.

To Seosamh Mac Muirí I am very grateful also, for he shed light on my incipient understandings of Basque issues that resonate with the history of Ireland, supporting me with his advice and the cadence of Irish, An Teanga Álainn!

The Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences afforded me a three year scholarship for the completion of the PhD studies that have led to this dissertation, for which I have also counted with some funding from Ballyhoura Development Ltd. and a grant from the Limerick City VEC. I am very thankful to them.

Among those who have helped me are many who carry Txalaparta dearly in their hearts, people who opened up to me despite the difficult circumstances of the conflict, and who immediately set out to facilitate me as soon as they knew I was undertaking research in relation to this tradition and instrument, disclosing passions and a depth of feeling that I hope I have been able to portray in this dissertation to some
extent, since I often wanted nothing more. I am deeply grateful to all of those who have participated in this research: Gaizka, JosAnton Artze, Juan Mari Beltran, Josu Goiri, Erlantz Auzmendi, Juan Antonio Urbeltz, Andoni Aleman, Benito Lertxundi, Josu Zabala, Rafa Egiguren and others whom I mention by their real names in this dissertation or I have chosen to present by means of pseudonyms. I am indebted to them for their generosity, for all what they have shared with me, for moving me like they have.

I shall mention the late Mikel Laboa, who kindly provided me with a present of some of his recordings as a contribution to this research; Andoni Esparza, who enthused by this work, granted his permission for the copy of the film Ama Lur by the Basque Film Library and run with the costs, sending me, with his authorisation letter, a beautiful blessing and words of wisdom that touched me deeply, wishing that all my dreams come true; and Fernando Larruquert who also granted his authorisation for the copy of Ama Lur and the film Euskal Herri Musika.

Oier Araolaza, Henrike Olasolo and Arantza Lasuen helped me with some necessary translations from Basque into Castilian, or with free grinds of Basque. Amets, who opened up the topic of this dissertation for me, kindly commented on my Master’s thesis and a paper that emerged from this research. Patxi Larralde shared with me extensive material from his own research on the history of cider in the Basque Country and the sound making tradition of kirikoketa, Jean Claude Enrique provided me also with important sound recordings, and Oskar Tejedor kindly donated a copy of his documentary film Txalaparta, herri baten oihartzuna. I also thank those participants who provided me with audiovisual excerpts of political rallies without which an important part of this research would not have been possible.

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Last but not least, I am deeply grateful to my family for their love and all what they have given me, and to Sean, whose great generosity, advice, patience and support has been crucial all along this journey.

I shall point out that any possible mistakes there may be in this dissertation are only my responsibility, and that the interpretations offered are not necessarily shared by those I have so far acknowledged.

In the summer of 2006, in Euskal Herria (the Basque Country), I met Simon Goikoetxea, the son of one of the old txalapartariak. He took me to the cider press in the baserri of his childhood, there where his father passed on the tradition of Txalaparta to him, a baserri which was going to be demolished soon to open the way for a motorway. He explained to me how he learned to play Txalaparta from his father and uncle, and we played together. Toward the end of my visit, I was deeply honoured and moved when he gave me a makila that belonged to his father. “I’ve never done this before and will never do it again, mind it well,” he said. I have now one of the old makilak, in Ireland, the other one remains in Euskal Herria. Whatever this may mean, it is not for me to say. May Ireland and Euskal Herria complete the ttakun together.
## List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Euskal Herria in Europe</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Borders of Euskal Herria</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sociolinguistic areas of Euskal Herria in 2006</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Ramon Goikoetxea (1909-2000) and Asentsio Goikoetxea (1906-1986),</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>txalapartariak from the Erbetegi-Etxeberri baserri</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Tobera</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Kirikoketa</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Cider-press from which the board to play Txalaparta was extracted</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Simon Goikoetxea, son of Asentsio Goikoetxea</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Joseba Zuaznabar, son of Miguel Zuaznabar</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>In memory of the father. Utensils to play Txalaparta</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>Aritz Goikoetxea and his father Simon progressing toward the ends of</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the 67 plank in search for different sounds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>Father and son return to the centre of the plank as they prepare</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>for the final stage of the performance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>Juan Antonio Sarregi and Ramon Goikoetxea at the Euskal Jaiak in Zubieta</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>Jorge Oteiza. 1983</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>“Metaphysical Furniture Piece, No. 1” (1958) by Jorge Oteiza</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>Artze brothers in their beginnings</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>Artze Anaiaik, 1975</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>Artze Anaiaik. 1971</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>Ez Dok Amairu performing the mutil dantza from Baztan</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>Txalaparta on the stage, encircled by the mutil dantza. Ez Dok Amairu. 1971</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>Ez Dok Amairu logo</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>Sculpture Txalaparta by Remigio Mendiburu</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>Artze brothers. Ez Dok Amairu. 1971</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>Juan Mari Beltran recording the testimony of Miguel Zuaznabar</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>Cover of Juan Mari Beltran’s 2006 CD: Orhiko Xoria</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>Beltran brothers performing in an intermission of the dance group</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Argia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>Haizearen Orrazia (The Wind Comb) by Basque sculptor Eduardo Txillida</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>Pello Zuaznabar and Ramon Goikoetxea at the 3rd Txalaparta Festa in</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1989</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>Txalaparta Party Aparta (Txalaparta Festa)</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Prehistoric paintings. Caves of Ekain (Gipuzkoa)</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Jorge Oteiza and Juan Antonio Urbeltz</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>One of the initial images of the film Euskal Herri Musika</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Page No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Ramon Goikoetxea and Iñigo Urreaga</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>The <em>zamuazain</em> dancing in the woods</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Stela associated to Bereterretxe</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Close-up of the Virgin of the pietà by Oteiza</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Scene of the pietà</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>Closing performance of the documentary film <em>Euskal Herri Musika</em></td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.10</td>
<td><em>Txistu</em> from Isturitz</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.11</td>
<td><em>Artaxuriketa</em> (corn-winnowing session)</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>Txalaparta “free session” on one of the txalapartas scattered on the pelota court at the celebrations of the Korrika, in Maule (Zuberoa, Iparralde)</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>Logo of the Txalaparta group Sestao Tx</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Harriparta. Txalaparta made of stones</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Erlantz Auzmendi’s txalaparta</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Example of notation developed by Juan Mari Beltran in its simple form</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Example of an exercise for Txalaparta from the home produced book <em>Ariketen Bilduma</em> (collection of exercises) by the group Sestao Tx</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td><em>Takataka</em> as understood in the Txalaparta Eskola of the Music School of Hernani</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Beltran’s demonstration of the emergence of a ternary rhythm in a piece by the old Zuaznabar txalapartariak</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>Txalaparta tablature notation for the “Txalaparta dantza” composition</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Txalaparta performance opening the political rally for the presentation of candidates of the Independentist Left coalition AuB.</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Txalaparta and joaldunak performance opening a political rally of the Independentist Left formation Euskal Herritarrok</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Logo of the Basque publishing house Txalaparta</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Call for help. Video clip designed for Euskal Herritarrok’s website featuring a short Txalaparta performance</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>EH celebratory rally</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>Txalaparta performance at the closure of a celebratory EH rally</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>Political representatives sing the “<em>Eusko Gudariak</em>” together with the audience, accompanied by a musician playing the tune with a <em>xirula</em> and <em>ttuntun</em> and txalapartariak.</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>Crowded stadium at celebratory EH rally during the peace process scenario in 1998-99</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>Illustration in Marc Legasse’s book of political texts <em>El zortziko de IRAETA para arpa y txalaparta</em> (The IRAETA zortziko for harp and txalaparta) (1999)</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>Stage exhibiting graffiti containing political claims at the 1989 Txalaparta Festa</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>Ornament of a miniature txalaparta sold by the organisation of support of political prisoners Askatasuna to raise funds in 2006</td>
<td>327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Page No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>Common image in Euskal Herria: Pictures of political prisoners on a wall</td>
<td>329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.13</td>
<td>Txalaparta performance at a demonstration in support of political prisoners Koldo Kareaga and Bautista Barandalla</td>
<td>337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.14</td>
<td>Banners requesting the release of political prisoners</td>
<td>338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.15</td>
<td><em>Txalapartariak</em> from the Txalaparta group were actively involved in the event collecting signatures against torture</td>
<td>338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.16</td>
<td>Poster by TAT (Torturaren Aurrkako Taldea, “Anti-Torture Group”) for the collection of signatures against the torture of Basque political prisoners</td>
<td>339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.17</td>
<td><em>Bertsolari</em> Gabi Basañez improvises some sung verses in relation to the protest</td>
<td>339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.18</td>
<td>The txalaparta remains on the stage after opening the rally at the end of the march</td>
<td>339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>Video announcement of ETA’s 2006 ceasefire</td>
<td>354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.20</td>
<td><em>Txalapartariak</em> Mikel H. Urrutia and Mikel Ugarte performing at the Txalaparta Party Aparta</td>
<td>379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.21</td>
<td><em>Txalapartariak</em> Kaiet Ezkerro and Mikel H. Urrutia, from the group Jo Tta Kun, recorded in Armagh by the BBC2 NI for the TV programme <em>First Stop</em>, in relation to their participation in the remake of <em>Tubular Bells</em></td>
<td>382</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**List of Appendices**

Appendix A: Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations ........................................ 431
Appendix B: Manual Transcription of Txalaparta Zaharra (Escribano 1999) ........ 442
Appendix C: Page 1 of the score for Txalaparta “*Odolaren Boza*” (“voice of blood”) composed by Kepa Junkera ........................................ 444
Appendix D: Notated copy used by the txalapartariak as a guide for their performance at the poetry reading of “*Nire attaren etxea*” by Gabriel Aresti .................. 446
## Transliteration of Basque

Transliteration of Basque Language in its formalised version (*Euskara Batua*).

### Consonants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Transliteration</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>like g</td>
<td>as in gate</td>
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<tr>
<td>h</td>
<td>not pronounced</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l (before a/ak at the end of a word)</td>
<td>like ya</td>
<td>as in yale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r (at the beginning of a word)</td>
<td>like r</td>
<td>as in rock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rr</td>
<td>like r</td>
<td>as in rock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s</td>
<td>like s</td>
<td>as in son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tt</td>
<td>like t</td>
<td>as in tea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tx</td>
<td>like ch</td>
<td>as in chat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>z</td>
<td>like s</td>
<td>as in soup</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Vowels:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Transliteration</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>like a</td>
<td>as in chat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>like e</td>
<td>as in yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>like i</td>
<td>as in tip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>like o</td>
<td>as in loch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>like u</td>
<td>as in pull</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Stress:** Theoretically words are not stressed, though stress usually falls on the end of the sentence, according to the Basque speaking cadence. This cadence might vary from a region to another, and may not the same between *euskaldun zaharrak* (those who have learned Basque language at home as a first language) and *euskaldun berriak* (those who have learned Basque language as adults).

**Pronunciation:** Pronunciation varies from a region to another, so that in some regions “i”/“j” is pronounced as a “wh” (as in whole), and in others as a “y” (as in yahoo), and “z” is pronounced as “th” (as in thought). The pronunciation in the northern Basque region also presents differences, depending on the dialects considered. It may suffice to point out as a very general guide that, in relation to the short texts showing a northern dialect that appear in this dissertation, “ü” (belonging to the Zuberoan dialect) is pronounced similarly as “u” in French (there is no equivalent sound in English).
Introduction

“The Txalaparta is young and revolutionary” stated Amets, whom I interviewed on several occasions in 1998 for a research project on the meaning of Basque language for its learners in Madrid (1997-1998). I was studying social anthropology at a postgraduate level in Madrid at the time, my home and place of birth, and was also a member of the Basque choir and the mountaineering club of Euskal Etxea of Madrid (the Basque House of Madrid). I knew very little about the Basque Country, but was eager to know more about a nation whose culture and language fascinated me. I was at the same time exposed to a mainstream discourse that harshly demonised the Basques through the media, and which I also encountered in the university. At one of our encounters I asked Amets would he come to one of our concerts (the Basque choir’s) which also featured txistulariak (players of txistu, a traditional three holed flute accompanied with a snare drum played by the same performer). He was not attracted to the idea, and explained how he felt that the music for txistu represented a conservative form of nationalism\(^1\) that made Basque culture into a museum object, ignoring the contemporary situation of Euskal Herria and unable to respond to its needs. He felt such nationalism (represented by the Basque Nationalist Party, created in 1895) was neither committed to nor capable of achieving the independence the Basques long for: “I would rather identify with the music of Txalaparta” (Interview, May 1998).

What did it mean that an instrument, or a percussive tradition, could be “young” and “revolutionary”? What did it mean “to identify” with its sounds? Amets spoke of an avant-garde aesthetic in relation to a socially oriented and left wing form of nationalism (a term, “nationalism,” which he actually rejected), in opposition to frozen “folklore” images of an idealised past. In long in-depth interviews in which he discussed his sense of self and belonging against denial (a recurrent theme with other research participants), he elaborated on the significance Txalaparta had for him: He spoke of Txalaparta as ancient, yet contemporary; he mentioned its presence in the political events of the Basque Independentist Left, in the homage ceremonies to welcome released political prisoners or for deceased militants. He spoke of struggle. With Amets, the research that has led to this dissertation began.

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\(^1\) For a discussion on the promotion of txistu and a certain type of music for it within the type of nationalism that emerged toward the end of the 19\(^\text{th}\) C., see for instance Sánchez, K. (2005) Txuntxuneroak. Narrativas, identidades e ideologías en la historia de los txistularis, Tafalla: Altufaylla.
How many other Basques shared Amets view? What type of community (or communities) was being imagined and put into practice through Txalaparta? How had the iconicity of Txalaparta had come to be? What drives young people to commit to it in the current socio-political scenario in Euskal Herria (the Basque Country)? What motivates their love and their passion? What are they searching for? What does Txalaparta mean and evoke for them? What are they constructing? What action is being mobilised, and for what, in this contemporary phenomenon? What kind of an insight could the social phenomenon of Txalaparta offer into the Basque struggle, and more generally, what may the study of expressive cultural processes reveal in relation to dynamics of individual and collective self fashioning amid conflict? These are roughly some of the questions this study has engaged with through the ethnographic exploration of the revival and re-creation of Txalaparta in the Basque Country. Though the dissertation engages with processes generally classified under the umbrella concept of “identity,” I have tried to avoid (or have experimented with avoiding) this term for the sake of new insights that might be gained, as discussed further in chapter one, notwithstanding the usefulness of this concept.

Little scholarly research has been undertaken about the social phenomenon of Txalaparta to date, only an unpublished short thesis by Gregory Antipás (1998), and work in progress by other researchers 2, including previous work I undertook for an MA thesis in Ethnomusicology in 1999. With the aforementioned exceptions, the published work that exists in relation to this tradition and instrument, mainly by Josu Goiri and Juan Mari Beltran, has been undertaken by performers of Txalaparta whose work has developed largely outside of academic frameworks, and who approach Txalaparta primarily as an instrument or sound making technique with a view to shaping its practice. Rather than taking these works by participants as building blocks on which to put mine, even though this is the case, I have reflected upon them as ethnographic discourse. Given the scarce research published on the subject of Txalaparta as a social phenomenon, this study has relied on fieldwork that has taken place mostly from 1998 to 2006 in Madrid, Euskal Herria (mainly Iruñea) and Ireland, and has been primarily

2 There are also some short studies on Txalaparta as an instrument that I have not considered or mentioned since they were based on reproductions of already published material, or their authors have decided not to make them available. I shall mention however some audiovisual material, as well as an unpublished short essay based on a transcription of a melodic Txalaparta piece that a participant in this research, Argibel Euba, kindly shared with me (2004).
focused on people who engage with Txalaparta in the Basque Country in a non-professional manner, often with no musical training (as seems to be the case for the majority of Txalaparta players). As it has turned out, the majority of participants have been mostly male, and these could be generally identified as progressive left, independentist and euskaltzale (committed to the promotion of Euskara, Basque language). Ethical reasons and fieldwork circumstances, as explained with more detail in the first chapter, have precluded the use of participant observation material in this dissertation to a significant extent, moving me to draw mainly from interviews, though participant observation (perhaps better described at times as “observant participation”) has informed the interpretations provided. “Txalaparta” is not presented in italic fonts in this dissertation for it is not taken as an alternative foreign name for an instrument or tradition, but the name of it, whether spoken about in Euskara, English, or any other language. It is capitalised, as requested by a participant (chapter 4), when used to refer to it as a tradition that transcends physical form, and it is presented in small cases when it refers exclusively to a physical instrument or because it is presented like that in quoted material.

**Popular Culture**

The concept of “popular music” or “popular culture” is used in this dissertation as per “emic” understandings (in relation to participants in this research). In this sense, it is not used with the meaning this term currently has in ethnomusicology within the English speaking world, but as “people’s music” or “people’s culture,” as opposed to the elitist domain of the so called “high art,” and not necessarily linked to the spectacle industry developed after WW2. According to these “emic” understandings, the term also has connotations usually attached to “traditional” cultural expressions (often of rural origins, but not necessarily), even though within conceptions of “living tradition”. Participants rarely called such practices “folk” or “folklore” even though that is how they might be designated in English, since these terms had for them negative connotations and were associated to commodified, stereotyped forms of “national” culture and the tourist industry.
**Euskal Herria**

Euskal Herria (literally meaning “the country of Basque language”) is the name Basques use to refer to a Basque Country that extends to both sides of the Pyrenees over 20,864 square kilometres along the Bay of Biscay, between the Adur river in *Iparralde* (the north) and the Ebro river in *Hegoalde* (the south). Though its landscape is flat in part of Araba and the south of Nafarroa, the Basque Mountains (part of the Cantabrian mountain range) and the Pyrenees, with its sharp elevations, have been referred to by different authors as a possible determinant for the persistence of ancient cultural traits and ways of life until relatively recently. Its wealth of Palaeolithic paintings, dating back to the Magdalenian period (15,000-5,500 BCE.), and megalithic constructions, have contributed to a sense of prehistoric ancestry and rooting among Basques.

The Basque nation is believed to be one of the most ancient in Europe and their language, Euskara, of pre-Indo-European origins, is also believed to be very ancient (certain cutting objects are made out of the word “haitz” for “stone,” suggesting

**Figure 1: Euskal Herria in Europe.**

**Figure 2: Borders of Euskal Herria.** Names of provinces and province capitals are shown in Euskara and in French or Castilian underneath (small error in the name of Araba in the original map has been fixed). Source: *The Garland Encyclopaedia of World Music*. Vol. 8, p. 310.
the language coexisted with Stone Age technology). Euskara, which presents great dialectal variation within Euskal Herria, is unrelated to any other language. Euskal Herria comprises seven provinces and is currently divided between two states and three different administrative jurisdictions. Gipuzkoa, Bizkaia, Araba and Nafarroa (“Nafarroa Garaia”) in the South (Spanish state) and Lapurdi, Nafarroa Beherea and Zuberoa in the North (French state\(^3\)) constitute Euskal Herria. The south (“Hegoalde”) is officially divided in two autonomous communities within the Spanish political administrative system: The Basque Autonomous Community (comprising of Gipuzkoa, Bizkaia and Araba) and the Autonomous Community of Navarre (Nafarroa\(^4\)). A small area located within the Basque province of Araba, known as Condado de Treviño, belongs to the jurisdiction of the Autonomous Community of Castilla y León (though its population claims belonging to the Basque Country and maps that depict Euskal Herria rarely exclude it). The provinces of Lapurdi, Nafarroa Beherea and Zuberoa, within the French State (“Iparralde”, the north), are part of the Department of the Pyrénées-Atlantiques in the region of Aquitaine together with neighbouring Béarn.

Euskal Herria has a population of approximately 3 million, of which 9% is from Iparralde. In Hegoalde approximately 71% of the population of Euskal Herria is found in the Basque Autonomous

![Figure 3: Sociolinguistic areas of Euskal Herria in 2006. Source: Fourth Sociolinguistic Survey. Vice-Ministry for Language Policy. Basque Government (of the Basque Autonomous Community), 217.](image)

\(^3\) The names of the northern Basque provinces tend to vary from a publication to the next, and different speakers may also use slightly different versions, as per local dialects. Thus, Nafarroa Beherea is also referred to as ‘Benafarroa’, ‘Behe Nafarroa’ and ‘Baxenafarroa’, and Zuberoa is also referred to as ‘Zubero’ (in Euskara batua, the standardised version of the language), ‘Xüberoa’ and ‘Xiberoa’. I will use the names Nafarroa Beherea and Zuberoa consistently throughout this dissertation, except when quoting.

\(^4\) Spanish administrative entities will be spelled in Spanish or English throughout this thesis.
Community and 20% in Nafarroa. Most of the population concentrates in the urban centres from Baiona to Hendaya, in the province of Lapurdi (Iparralde), and in and around the province capitals of Bilbo, Donostia, Gasteiz and Iruñea (Hegoalde). Though Basque society has been predominantly rural until the 20th century, rapid urban growth since the late 1950s, alongside rapid industrial development and massive waves of immigration from different regions of the Spanish state until recent decades, has merged rural enclaves with each other and the larger neighbouring cities, as well as the life styles and characteristics of both rural and urban environments.

The massive immigration that has taken place in Hegoalde in a short period of time—the largest immigration waves taking place between 1941-1975 and especially between 1961-1965 (del Valle 1994, 9), has also meant an important blow to a language that has experienced recession and persecution across history, and that is today classified as endangered by UNESCO. As per the Fourth Sociolinguistic Survey undertaken in 2006 by the Basque Government (an organisation which pertains only to the Basque Autonomous Community,) Basque speakers amounted to 41.1% of the population of Euskal Herria aged 16 or older. Euskara is today spoken in Iparralde and the Northern regions of Hegoalde, in marked contrast with most of Araba and the south of Nafarroa, where the language has been lost (fig. 3). This is not to be taken literally though, since the movement for the recovery of the language since the 1960s (initially clandestine during Franco’s dictatorship) has meant the alphabetisation of many adults who consciously speak Euskara also in those areas of Euskal Herria where it has technically disappeared. In Hegoalde, Euskara is co-official with Castilian in the Basque Autonomous Community (Gipuzkoa, Bizkaia and Araba) since 1979, and in Nafarroa, linguistic legislation from 1982 and 1986 has divided this Basque province into three different linguistic areas: a “Basque speaking area” where Basque is co-official with Castilian, a “mixed area” and a “non Basque speaking area” where Euskara has no official status. In relation to Iparralde, Euskara is not officially recognised by the French state.

The borders of Euskal Herria (fig. 2) are based on the historical Kingdom of Navarre, which was sovereign from 824 to 1620, decreasing in size through the ages as

3 The exact figure for 2006 is 3,015,558 inhabitants for the whole of Euskal Herria. Of these, 2,133,684 inhabitants are counted for Bizkaia, Gipuzkoa and Araba together; Nafarroa has a population of 601,874 inhabitants and Iparralde 280,000 (Basque Country Administration, 2008.)
neighbouring political entities gradually developed into what are today the Spanish and French states. Historical events that are regarded as unconnected by Spanish nationalists are, however, regarded by Basque independentists as coherently threaded moments in the historical continuity of a people. Thus, for Basque independentists, the contemporary stateless and partitioned nation of Euskal Herria is a continuation of what once was a sovereign and independent European entity (the Kingdom of Navarre). Equally, the current armed conflict is regarded as the continuation of the fierce battles put up against the conquest (or occupation, as put by participants) of the ancient kingdom in the south by Ferdinand the Catholic in the 16th C.; the Carlist Wars of the 19th C. to protect Basque independence; and the Basque Republican front during the Spanish Civil War (1936-39). The ancient laws (foruak) that granted Basques their independence (the remaining legal frameworks of the ancient Kingdom (Urzainqui 2002, 2003)) were abolished between 1841 and 1876 by the Spanish state (after each of the two Carlist Wars). Thus, what was de facto a foreign country in relation to Spain, became fully assimilated as four more provinces of the latter. This, coupled with the changes brought about by industrialisation and Spanish immigration at the turn of the century, are credited for the birth of the Basque Nationalist Party (created in 1895) and a cultural nationalism dominated by beliefs of racial purity and supremacy, within authoritarian, evolutionist understandings, on a par with similar European trends of the times. After the Spanish Civil War, during the dictatorship that ensued in the Spanish state, a Basque youth discontent with the passivity of the Basque Nationalist Party created ETA, Euskadi ta Askatasuna (Basque Country and Freedom), in 1959, amid an international atmosphere of uprising and decolonisation. With ETA, an organisation that would not officially engage in armed resistance until 1961, a different form of nationalism emerges in the Basque Country, one of a left wing orientation⁶. It is during these years that the revival of Txalaparta, alongside Euskara and other Basque cultural manifestations, takes place amid great social turmoil and state repression during the last years of Franco’s regime. This brief and necessarily limited overview of the Basque Country and the Basque conflict, which in this introduction stops before the so called

“transition to democracy” that followed Franco’s death, is further continued, as necessary, throughout this dissertation.

**Thesis Outline**

The dissertation is divided in three sections, each comprising two chapters except for the last section, which consists of a single more extended one.

Section I sets the context of the research. Within this section, chapter one introduces the methodological and interpretive orientation of the work, outlining the specific circumstances under which ethnographic work has taken place and which have determined the course of research, informing interpretation. Ethical issues that concern representation are also explained, as well as the nature of the subject of expressive culture participants and this dissertation engage with. Chapter two introduces Txalaparta by means of accounts by relatives of the old txalapartariak and the experience of its encounter in the 1960s by some of the main agents of its revival and re-construction. Themes that inform interpretation provided in the next sections are outlined here relying on participants voices, which I have sought to paraphrase as little as possible, not as to conceal a preliminary interpretation on my part, present in the necessary editing, but for the sake of the insights provided, which become more evident as the dissertation progresses.

Section II introduces interpretation from the broad performance studies perspective advocated by Richard Schechner among others, exploring the interface between verbal discourses and practice, where the boundary between both blurs, since verbal discourse is itself behaviour and emerges as performative. Chapter three introduces the three main narratives encountered in relation to Txalaparta that will eventually be analysed in terms of performance, focusing on the narrative that links Txalaparta to the celebration of work. By means of this third narrative, a general understanding of the community of practice encountered is offered through a reflection upon what seemed a generalised aesthetic and ethos of a left wing orientation. A focus on the purpose of “entertainment” that Schechner identifies as predominant in one of the extremes of a proposed spectrum of performance, is also introduced in this chapter and elaborated further in chapter four within the project seemingly put forward by one of the
main revivalists and promotional agents of Txalaparta: the making of “music”. The complexity of understandings encountered in relation to what I initially imagined as a homogeneous community, introduced in the previous chapter, is further represented in chapter four through a discussion of boundaries (seemingly related to wider personal and ideological perspectives) from which the project of shaping Txalaparta as “music” emerges. Discourses that contest the project of “music construction,” introduced so far in the dissertation, belong to this project in so far as they are addressed by it, and are therefore necessary for its comprehension. This picture is however incomplete without the final piece of the “jigsaw,” provided in the next section.

Section III engages with Txalaparta in relation to events of a more clearly political nature, more explicitly related to the Basque struggle. If the former section has engaged with performance in the sense advocated by Schechner’s broad spectrum approach and dwelled on “entertainment,” this section engages with performances that seek to be “efficacious” (at the other end of Schechner’s proposed spectrum), approaching behaviours in relation to Txalaparta and the Basque struggle through the perspective facilitated by Catherine Bell’s concept of “ritualising”. In this way, chapter five deals with an engagement with the struggle by means of Txalaparta, presenting once more diverging discourses which, however, seek a similar outcome: overcoming the armed struggle and ultimately the conflict. A course of fieldwork determined by a desire to prove myself (explained in chapter one) and my base and residence in Ireland, parallel to a Basque resonance with the Irish peace process, is briefly discussed in this chapter.

Finally, the conclusion, bringing together the different themes explored so far in reverse order, presents an overarching interpretation in relation to the ultimate goal of national construction. The personal journey that is intertwined with the research endeavour, containing and contained in interpretation, also reaches, at the end of the conclusion, some kind of destination.
Chapter 1. Interpretation Approach and Methodology

Introduction

This chapter introduces the methodological orientation that has guided my research. Relevant research details and strategies followed are presented next, including a discussion of the fieldwork circumstances and concerns raised by participants that have determined the final written outcome of this study. The overall orientation, methodology employed, fieldwork circumstances and mode of delivery of the results (writing strategies of representation), can not be separated from the content conveyed in this work. Thus, this chapter also offers an explanation of the writing approach adopted in the dissertation.

The approach in which this research may be framed is an interpretive one, which is necessarily coupled with the use of qualitative methodology. In tune with an anthropology training that held onto the “science” label for social studies and the concept of “objectivism,” I initially had a more positivistic understanding of ethnography which, however, increasingly moved in my practice towards an anthropological interpretive perspective. Fieldwork practice was the test that exposed a discourse of control contained in the research endeavour itself that soon field participants engaged in highlighting. The socio-political context in which this work has been undertaken, with the cooperation of highly politically and socially aware individuals, has greatly determined the development of this research and reflections on its ethical implications.

The interpretive approach proposed by Clifford Geertz among others, regards culture as a text that the ethnographer must interpret. In order to engage with meaning and its construction by social agents, the use of qualitative methods becomes necessary. Qualitative methods (especially participant observation) provide access to the voices of the communities we engage with in order to provide the “thick description” advocated by Geertz and other interpretive anthropology scholars. This work has sought to engage with participants’ discourses and their own conceptualisation of their world, in order to disclose the meaning contained in these discourses (sometimes referred to as “emic” understandings and views: that is, those upheld by the community we wish to understand). My initial starting points were a demonising mainstream discourse about the community I sought to engage with, rising like granite walls in front of me and
awakening my desire to transcend them, and an identification of Txalapar ta with the Basque Independentist movement, which I encountered during a previous research project and then was initially inclined to generalise. The subject matter, defined by the keywords of “music” and “politics,” needed a careful approach that only qualitative methods could provide. Engagement with social discourse and the lived experience of those engaged in the performance of, or who identify with, Txalaparta in the present, called for an immersion into their realities that only observant participation could effectively accomplish. In this approach, rather than relying simply on social discourse, the researcher’s experience itself becomes a powerful means for the comprehension of the social realities that participants’ discourse aims to construct or maintain. It is for this reason that fieldwork has been the basis for this study. The framework on which the interpretation offered is built has developed in a symbiotic relationship with the fieldwork process, as issues of ethics and research have been brought into my scope of inquiry not only through the contact with a community (a Basque progressive left in general terms, with independentist aspirations) that is very active at a grassroots level in cultural, social and political matters (both national and international) but by participants who have openly raised questions about the research endeavour and in some cases also proposed and facilitated bibliography.

The Methodological Field of Embodiment

Gadamer’s conception of hermeneutics, which he developed as a philosophical concern with the interpretation of history within the contextual stand points of different historical moments (1981 [1975]), has been an important contribution to interpretive anthropology in its application to cross-cultural studies. Based on the subsequent concept of cultural hermeneutics, I hope to expose the process of inter-subjectivity that has been established between those I have encountered in “the field” and myself, between their ideological horizons and my own personal and academic horizons, for that hermeneutic process, or fusion of horizons, models the methodological orientation of this research and resulting interpretations. The framework for interpretation that I use contains the particular “hermeneutic” of the different actors I have encountered and worked with. For instance, some Txalapar ta players have provided me with readings and authors that inform them in particular, contributing to their own “web of meaning” as well as to a larger picture, if only as one of the many voices that compose the
heterogeneous world I have encountered. It is thus from their own epistemology, so to speak, that I attempt to understand them.

I initially conceptualised the interpretive approach that has guided this research in the terms put forth by Clifford Geertz (1973). However, in the course of research, and in particular in the interpretation process that has unfolded during the writing stages, I have become more explicitly aware of the dynamics of embodiment that have characterised my engagement with the subject of this dissertation. This has become particularly evident to me as I sought to write in a manner that helped me address somehow the sentiment involved in processes of knowing and doing that I feel pertain to so-called expressive culture, and in particular to the so-called performing arts. For this reason, I have decided to adopt Thomas J. Csordas’s proposed paradigm of embodiment (1993), which helps me make better sense of my own engagement with the subject in terms of methodology and the task of interpretation, also informed by the work of Tim Rice (1997) on phenomenological hermeneutics and fieldwork experience, as I explain soon.

Clifford Geertz, main exponent and developer of the interpretive approach in anthropology, regards culture as a semiotic structure of social significance (that is, a structure of socially created and shared meaning.) Influenced by the work of Max Weber, Geertz claims with him that: “...man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun” (Geertz 1973, 5) and culture is those webs whose analysis is to be undertaken as the search and interpretation of meaning. Geertz states that culture is, therefore, a stratified hierarchy of meaningful structures in terms of which actions are produced, perceived, and interpreted. The ethnologist must interpret those structures of signification through what Geertz refers to as “thick description.” Thus the anthropological endeavour is moved closer to humanities, according to Geertz’s metaphor of culture as a text, and the ethnographer as a literary critic endeavouring to interpret without trying to impose his view, but rather to suggest it as his second or third hand interpretation. All that we do as ethnographers is to interpret social actors’ own interpretation of what they do. As Geertz states, interpretative anthropology seeks to account for man’s answers to questions, not to answer them itself.

1 This can be objected though: the ethnographer, furthermore the ethnomusicologist, try to go beyond social discourse, into social practice, which means that we, as any or both of them, do not only interpret social actors’ interpretations of what they do, but test that discourse in their practice and vice versa, facing their and our contradictions.
(Geertz 1973). The main concern is the search of meaning rather than the search for laws that characterises experimental sciences. Postmodernism, the wider movement and historical time in which the interpretive approach may be situated, is characterised by a suspicion toward meta-narratives and discourses of power embedded in them, which Geertz expresses also as a criticism of Levi-Strauss’ structuralism. With Geertz there is a shift of focus from the analysis of cultural systems in search of grand theories, to fieldwork and the written delivery of the ethnographer’s account (the strategies used by the ethnographer in order to construct and convey a “truth”).

Interpretive anthropology corresponds to a moment of profound social change and associated theoretical developments of the last decades of the 20th c. If the 1950s and 1960s are characterised by a borrowing from linguistic models in order to produce scientific grand theories of culture (i.e. structuralism), in the 1970s and 1980s, a general theoretical concern with discourses of power and truth, and their construction through texts, replaced such pursuits in the discipline, marking the emergence of interpretive anthropology (Marcus and Fischer 1986). The new approach, still relevant in the field as we move through the first decade of the 21st century, is now concerned with issues of contextuality (i.e. Gadamer’s hermeneutics), the search for meaning (emic categories) exemplified by Geertz, and “the explanation of exceptions and indeterminants rather than regularities in phenomena observed” (Marcus and Fischer 1986, 8).

Rice’s approach, inspired by Clifford Geertz’s interpretive approach, as well as by Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricoeur, as he states, attempts to mediate “between experimental, objectivist strategies of observation and experiential, subjective knowledge of the force of meanings and intentions” (1997, 114). This approach which he denominates “phenomenological hermeneutics” (following Ricoeur, whose adoption of the “culture as text” metaphor Csordas points out (1993)) places the locus of the mediation between the ontological condition and the epistemological condition in the self. It is in, and by means of, the latter that the individual experiences, and experientially comes to terms with, a pre-existing world of “culturally and historically constructed symbolic forms such as language, dress, social behaviour, and music” (Rice 1997, 114), and whereby the individual, equipped with “ethnoscientific methods” that stand between him as a ”subject” and another subject’s symbols, attempts to understand and explain the latter’s intentions in producing such symbols. In the hermeneutic approach, the self interprets and understands the world, and only then does the self
proceed to explain it. This preceding interpretation and understanding of the world is phenomenological, that is, experience is embodied, as Rice exemplifies with his own experience of learning to perform the Bulgarian *gaida*, which then disclosed for him a world of meaning that he might not have been able to understand otherwise. Rice’s approach takes Geertz’ interpretive approach further: We do not just “translate” a culture’s symbols into our own, we also experience those symbols (our self is one self among many within the world of symbols we wish to understand.) Our interpretations result from our hermeneutical horizons, that is, our own capacity to understand as per our positioning at a particular intersection of personal circumstances, national and international histories, as these inform, and intertwine with, our phenomenological first hand experience. These reflections posit a need for mediation between the traditional separation of interpretation from experience.

In a similar line, anthropologist Thomas Csordas (1993) proposes a phenomenological paradigm of embodiment that overcomes the mind/body duality and Cartesian superiority of the first element over the second, implicit in the “culture as text” metaphor. Csordas’ proposed paradigm complements, as he states, the dominant semiotic paradigm in interpretive anthropology, by placing the body at the centre of praxis, including that of knowing and interpreting. He does so by merging Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological approach with Bourdieu’s theory of practice within a new understanding in which the body, as Csordas argues, is “understood as the existential ground of culture” (1993, 135). I elaborate further on this approach in chapter five. What is particularly relevant at this moment, within a discussion on methodology, is Csordas’ understanding of the kind of praxis he refers to as “embodiment.” Drawing a parallelism with Barthes’ conception of the text, Csordas describes “embodiment” as “an indeterminate methodological field defined by perceptual experience and the mode of presence and engagement in the world” (ibid., 135). This kind of methodological field, or way of knowing, not divisible from being, as discussed by Csordas and Rice, is hard to grasp intellectually (something that Csordas discusses at length in relation to a principle of “indeterminacy” in our existence and analytical categories of embodiment), for it requires the senses (it takes place in and through the body) and happens in experience (the “here” and “now” that is the focus in phenomenology).

Embodiment is relevant in this discussion both in terms of participants (in relation to their own “methodological field”), in terms of my own experience of them as
Identity and Embodiment: Sensibility

The concept of identity, and its “negotiation” by means of Txalaparta, is central in this dissertation; yet it is not mentioned often. Brubaker and Cooper (2000) have argued against its use as a category of analysis, stating it is a “taken for granted” construction in the social sciences, and rather advocate the study of those processes ascribed to it without the necessary adoption of the concept. The widespread understanding in the social sciences of “identity” as a basic concept in social processes, so that different social dynamics may ultimately be traced or related to it, seems to make its use somewhat redundant, or to an extent analytically numbing, as Brubaker and Cooper argue. Seeking to understand those dynamics involved in the social phenomenon of Txalaparta, I have thus sought to engage with them without the use of such a category as much as possible in the interpretations provided in this dissertation. Participants, especially those who engaged in the revival of Basque language and other elements of Basque culture during the 1960s and 1970s, did speak of a “lost identity” (i.e. poet and txalapartari JosAnton Artze or singer and song writer Mikel Laboa) or a “subtracted identity” (Urbeltz), which they sought to recover by means of so called “expressive culture” and Basque language, Euskara. Occasionally the term “identity” came up also in conversations with young txalapartariak (as a “category of practice”) (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 4)). Oteiza, Basque sculptor, poet and philosopher, introduced in the next chapter, spoke of a “Basque style” (1994 [1963]) as he engaged in identifying and reclaiming forms and ways of doing that he perceived as specifically Basque (rather than Mediterranean); ways of doing that in films like Ama Lur (1968) or Euskal Herri-Musika (1978), were linked to “expressive culture” in a kind of cause and effect relationship (as it also emerges explicitly in Juan Mari Beltran’s understandings of “music,” discussed in chapter 3). Rather than “identity” as such, I often encountered,

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2 “Expressive culture” is used in this context as an etic term. Participants rather spoke of “song,” “dance,” Txalaparta and “music.”

3 This division between a category of practice and one of analysis is clearly drawn along the duality analysis/practice, akin to that of mind/body and other dichotomies along this line. It is useful to an extent though it presents limitations also, as it imagines a difference that may be questioned, which would be a matter for another work.
formulated in Castilian (the primary language through which I have engaged with the subject matter, given my basic command of Basque, which I regret), the term “sensibilidad,” in participants’ discourse and in Oteiza’s writings. “Sensibilidad” which in every day English translates as “sensitivity” (and which I rather translate in this dissertation as “sensibility”), was also expressed as “una forma de sentir,” “a way of feeling,” not referring to “mood,” but hinting at a particular way of perceiving the world around us that is culturally elaborated, and which implies a connection of the senses with sentiment (“deeply felt sentiment,” borrowing Steven Felds’ expression (1990), as I experienced from participants when it came to cultural traits they held dear and that they saw as endangered). Such a form of understanding, or embodied interpretation (by means of an embodied mind (Lakoff and Johnson 1999; Lakoff and Nuñez 2000) and/or a minded body (Fraleigh 1987)) I feel is better conveyed in English by the term “sensibility.” This last expression, “a way of feeling,” often came up in conversation in the formulation “another [a different] way of feeling” to refer to something indeterminate, perhaps that methodological field of embodiment which Csordas explains is “defined by perceptual experience and the mode of presence and engagement in the world” (also quoted earlier); something indeterminate contained in, and regarded as specific to, Basque cultural traits steeped in tradition (not necessarily fully traditional, but partaking of traditional idioms). I encountered this concept of “sensibility,” or indeterminate idea, which I apprehended in an also indeterminate sentient manner, perhaps because of the kind of subject I have engaged with, that which is categorised under labels such as “expressive culture,” including the so called “performing arts”: forms of behaviour that take the senses as their articulation point or axis, establishing frames out of the ordinary. I discuss this further in chapter five. Such indeterminacy of embodiment, which Csordas argues is “an inevitable background condition of our analyses” (1993, 150) [italics in the original], and which lies in the very blurring of boundaries between subject and object and other dual distinctions such as mind and body or self and other (ibid., 149), is part of what ethnographers engage with in the study of the aforementioned behaviour in its various denominations of “expressive culture” (a label advocated by Reyes for “music” (2009)); “performing arts” (a denomination commonly used in performance studies); “visual arts”; “musicking” (Small 1998), and so on. Geertz’ advocated a role for the ethnographer akin to that of a literary critic, or the interpreter that translates –recreates– a text (culture) into the terms of another. Within a paradigm of embodiment, we as ethnographers don’t “read” webs of significance (even though reading in its literal sense is part of our research), but live
them; we engage with our whole cultural and social sentient bodies and embodied mind in the intersubjective experience of ever changing webs of significance in whose threading and weaving we participate.

**On Fieldwork as Experience, and Experience as Grounding**

The outcome of ethnographic research, as stated above, is intrinsically connected to the fieldwork experience, it is grounded in it and at one with it. This dissertation is based on an ontological conception of fieldwork whereby experience (the “field”) becomes the focus of attention, and fieldwork itself is understood as an “experiential condition” (Titon 1997, 87). It is based on the premise that what we research is “we in fieldwork” (which is how we experience life and the world, that is, ourselves in it). Fieldwork is the story of our interaction with other human beings. We are as much “subjects” within our own research, as those we seek to learn from. We are part of the phenomenon we study, if only because the community we focus on is a ‘community with ethnomusicologist’ (the ethnomusicologist being us). And we are agents too of the realities we seek to know and then construct in our ethnographies. If “…a person reading a text is himself part of the meaning he apprehends [and] belongs to the text that he is reading” (Gadamer 1981, 304), the ethnographer who learns about the culture she is studying by means of her own body, is herself an inseparable part of her final work. Our main qualitative methodological tool, or the very “field” perhaps, as Csordas’ proposed paradigm of embodiment seems to indicate, is in fact our own human and social self, in which and through which we pay attention to the cultural world we seek to understand (a kind of “somatic mode of attention” (Csordas 1993)); a self with its own set of existential questions and social and personal circumstances (as Ortega y Gasset claimed: “I am myself and my circumstance” (1914))⁴. How can the kinds of sensual-affective processes involved be conveyed? What is “lost in translation” through conventional writing strategies when we as ethnographers try to portray what is at stake for participants who engage in (or when they do engage in) such sensory practices? I will come back to this soon.

Conceptions of “fieldwork” in ethnomusicology began shifting during the 1990s, as exemplified by Rice’s proposed mediation between the tidy clear cut

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⁴ *Meditaciones del Quijote* (Ortega y Gasset, 1914).
conflicting yet coexisting categorisations of fieldwork as experimentation and fieldwork as an ontological condition (Rice 1997, 105). It is a focus on the second conception of fieldwork, as experience preceding interpretation, rather than a research phase for the testing of hypothesis, that constitutes what Titon refers to as “new fieldwork” (Titon 1997). It is within this “new fieldwork” paradigm that this research has developed.

Representation and interpretation cannot be separated from the process of “doing” fieldwork and of understanding through experience. The “new fieldwork” does away with previous separations between field research and its outcome. Representation stems from the unique experience of the researcher, perhaps caught up between national agendas, the worldviews of the community she studies and their and our own personal circumstances (Cooley, 1997), as she comes in contact with other peoples and the world of symbols she wishes to understand. It stems from this that the researcher’s experience must be acknowledged for it discloses the source of interpretation, an interpretation that has validity so long as it is connected to its source. Fieldwork is indeed everyday life, even though an “anomalous” kind, I would argue, when confronted with participants’, since we don’t necessarily share their daily routines and schedules, or indeed our own outside of this process. Part of the experience that informs this dissertation and the hermeneutics of my interpretation, is my anchoring in the city of Iruñea, Navarre, and its reality, as I explain below in relation to “the field.” A different “anchoring” would have possibly rendered a different interpretation, not necessarily in conflict with the interpretation offered in this dissertation I would believe, for we are only taking snapshots of the “dark and unfathomable” (as Lao Tzu refers to The Tao).

The Field

The ethnographer’s insights emerge from that multidimensional concept that is termed as the “field,” a “field” to which the ethnographer’s self belongs to and which is fashioned by the ethnographer’s self. Indeed, as Rice puts it, “the field is the metaphorical creation of the researcher” (1997, 107). The “field” is here understood, therefore, as experience and a place of “being.” Rather a space where perhaps a blinded researcher moves clumsily yet carefully, trying to figure out his way and his surroundings while participants move supplely, sometimes perplexed at the researcher’s lack of dexterity and her questions. Light comes in as we are increasingly prepared to perceive it, and we leave with memories of some faces and memories of silhouettes we were never able to grasp fully, and we leave changed and changing.
The field is also the space of a movement led by what we knew, what we wanted to know, and what we did not even know we wanted; something that was perhaps compellingly pulling or pushing, or leading us throughout our journey. The field is also something that connects us to others, something perhaps co-created with participants regardless of who call it as such and who thinks “started it all.” “Field” may be also interchangeable for “body,” in tune with Csordas’ approach as explained earlier. Some participants in this study would perhaps explain it in less usual terms. The txalapartari Josu Goiri, for instance, opened “the field” into a different dimension, as he presented a world explained in terms of energy, spirituality and the extrasensory, induced itself by sound through Txalaparta and adarra (the ox horn). A negotiation of our imaginations, our dreams, encounters with fascinating and sometimes not so fascinating participants; personal growth as we engage in dialogue with them, addressing our own circumstances, and wrestling with academic expectations we may feel we can hardly meet (unless we put some “make up” and some fancy dress of “perfection” on the messy experience of life in the “field”), relieved by changing paradigms that do justice to our research experience as they increasingly make their way into the academy and our expanding scope of knowledge while our field research is in progress.

Iruñea

The epicentre or anchoring of the fieldwork research I have undertaken has been Iruñea, not only from a geographical but from an experiential point of view. The groups encountered in Iruñea, one which I easily identified with the Basque Independentist Left, and another one of a more anarchist ethos that took me more effort to grasp (if I did), were my main frame of reference, my point of departure and arrival. Long chats and discussions about my emerging understandings with key participants from both groups in Iruñea are a significant part of what I mean by “reference.” I travelled extensively throughout Euskal Herria to meet other groups and performers (leaving many others out due mainly to time and financial constraints,) which offered me a contrast and a context for a better understanding of the groups from Iruñea, who were in turn my reference to understand the latter. The context of the historical capital of the Basque Country, and the province of Nafarroa, infuses a special character on this particular anchoring, and also imposes the limitations natural to such a selective focus.
Each Basque province has its own history within the general history and socio-political context of Euskal Herria. Among the seven provinces that constitute the Basque nation, the position of Nafarroa (Navarre) is especially difficult. If the Basque Autonomous Community (composed of Bizkaia, Araba and Gipuzkoa) is regarded as Basque in the mainstream Spanish view and has indeed being given the distinctive of “Basque” in its official name, Nafarroa is however a more highly contested territory: As a Basque province, it is divided between the French State (Nafarroa Behererea) and the Spanish State (Nafarroa Garaia), and the partition in the South (officially, the Autonomous Community of Navarre) is not officially considered as Basque by the Spanish. Nafarroa has also had an españolist right wing formation in government since 1996: UPN, Union del Pueblo Navarro, a branch of the Spanish right wing party Partido Popular until 2008. The borders of The Basque Country claimed by Basque nationalists, those which include the seven provinces, are based on the former Kingdom of Navarre. The Autonomous Community of Navarre takes its name from the kingdom that since 824 C.E. preceded it, so much so that according to independentist participants it is not so much that Nafarroa is Basque, which they claim it is, but that all Basques are in fact Navarrese (since the three provinces under the jurisdiction of the Basque Autonomous Community, and the Basque provinces in the French State, are historically Navarrese.) Basque nationalists in Navarre face an added difficulty, as an important part of the population, especially in the South, uphold españolist claims and keep voting for right wing formations (this seems to be changing though in the last few years). The Spanish Constitution contains a special clause that reserves Nafarroa the right to have a referendum and join the Basque Autonomous Community, but as some Basques explained to me, Nafarroa authorities (of a españolist orientation) refuse to have a referendum in case what they claim is an overwhelming españolist population happen to vote to join the Basque Autonomous Community (some Basque nationalists I

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6 From 2003 to 2007, UPN ruled in the Autonomous Community of Navarre in coalition with its excision CDN (Convergencia de Demócratas de Navarra).

7 Zazpiak bat, which translates as “one made of seven.”

8 The Basque Autonomous Community is also referred to as “Euskadi,” which is sometimes used to refer to the whole of the Basque Country, though participants argued for “Euskal Herria” to refer to the whole, and “Euskadi” for the Basque Autonomous Community. The term “Euskadi” is an invention of the leading figure of the modern nationalism that emerged at the turn of the 19th century and early 20th C., Sabino Arana. The term, initially “Euzkadi,” with a “z,” referred to a Basque Country based from Bizkaia and under the hegemony of Bizkaia (where Sabino Arana was from).

9 This clause stems from an acknowledgment, at the time it was passed (the so called “Democratic Transition”)—alas forgotten in the Spanish collective memory—of a singular shared history between both autonomies.
have encountered up to 2008 equally fear such a referendum would give negative results to unify both autonomous communities.) Basques in Nafarroa face, in their quest for the survival of Euskara and Basque cultural traditions, and in their engagement with social and Basque nationalist political activities, the obstacle of the Spanish nationalist “Navarrese” powers, which, as was pointed out to me oftentimes, are endeavouring to suffocate any signs of Basque cultural or political specificity. Thus, the Basque Independentist left is actively committed to reviving and infusing life into Basque traditions and making them fresh and lived, while, as I was told, the Navarrese government and the powers it facilitates (Nafarroa is a stronghold of some extreme right Catholic organisations), is devoted to obstructing such efforts. For instance, in April 2003 the “Navarrese law of symbols”\(^{10}\) was enacted, whereby the Basque flag is banned from local councils in Nafarroa. Euskara, which became co-official with Castilian in some parts of Nafarroa since 1982, three years later than in the Basque Autonomous Community, has been declared an endangered language in the region by UNESCO:

During the fieldwork research that constitutes the basis for this dissertation, the elimination of Euskara from public signs and street names by the Navarrese government, already reported by Behatokia (Basque Observatory of Linguistic Rights) in its April 2002 newsletter, was making its way to newspaper headlines as was, too, its condemnation by international organisations.

During fieldwork in Iruñea, the historical capital of Euskal Herria (the capital of the Kingdom of Navarre, whose council has been in the hands of UPN since 1999,) as well as other areas of Nafarroa where I undertook fieldwork, capitalism as a threat linked to exploitation and expropriation, facilitated by Navarrese institutions and powers, came up often in conversations as participants tried to explain what they were up against: their valleys and environmental wealth under threat due to rampant land speculation, and the building of motorways as a strategy to increase the monetary value of the land and foster urbanisation, and related political corruption, are some examples participants put forward. While I was undertaking fieldwork in Iruña in 2003 there was great uneasiness as the council was going ahead with the public works (started in 2001) to build an underground parking in the central Gazteluko Plaza (La plaza del Castillo, in Castilian), which revealed 2,000 year old ruins of important archaeological value\(^{11}\).

\(^{10}\) “La Ley de Símbolos de Navarra.”

\(^{11}\) At that stage, and as I was being told of the refurbishment of the old castle of the kings of Navarre, of which the architect left nothing, as I was told, I could not help stating “they say you make up history, and
When I returned in 2004, the works were finished despite the protection the law granted to such discoveries (a participant claimed he could find coins from Roman times in the landfill where rests were dumped\textsuperscript{12}). Some participants pointed out to me that the finished parking resulted in the increase of stars of a local hotel, indicating what for them was an intentional outcome. Anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist protests were a common recurrence among the Basque left in Iruña. The event mentioned is just but one example of the perceived destruction of the environmental, historical and cultural heritage of Iruña (and Nafarroa in general) continually reported by the Basque progressive left (whether \textit{ezker abertzale}\textsuperscript{13} or not).

Fernando, a Spanish anthropologist resident in Iruña (who self ascribed to the Spanish political party of Izquierda Unida –United Left) worded his perception of it as “a very divided city,” adding that “on one extreme you have the Basque radical left and on the other the [Spanish] extreme right, with Opus\textsuperscript{14} and UPN. There is no middle” (fieldwork, March 2003). “Here we have to fight for the Txalaparta, for the \textit{txapela} [traditional Basque beret] and for everything!” argued a \textit{txalapartari} and Independentist Left supporter, as he was giving me an insight into the situation in the city (fieldwork, March 2003). From what I was able to experience and I learned from participants, Iruña emerged like a galaxy where each of those opposed worlds was a different planet. What Fernando represented as clear-cut communities, were each other’s extraterrestrials, with completely different perceptions of reality and the world. I recall asking him, after only a week-and-a-half in fieldwork, if he spoke Basque, and stating with surprise, at his negative reply: “But boy!” He said nothing and looked away disturbed at my inappropriate comment. I realised I had put my foot into it: The Basque speaking Iruña, the progressive left-wing Iruña, the \textit{euskaltzale} Iruña of the Txalaparta I was in contact with, had nothing to do with the Spanish Iruña (or “Pamplona”), of that Navarrese from the south who lived and worked in the city and who seemed so conservative to me in comparison with the Basque Left, despite his self ascription to a Spanish left-wing party (and he was not even part of the right wing sector he described as the only alternative to the Basques).

meanwhile they’re actually destroying it,” to what Bixente replied: “some say they do it on purpose,” and added that may be it was not deliberate, but the result of profit motives (Fieldwork, May 2004).

\textsuperscript{12}This was reported by the press and a book was written about it by the Plataforma en Defensa de la Plaza del Castillo (Platform in Defence of the Plaza del Castillo), Plaza del castillo (2003), Iruña: Pamiela.

\textsuperscript{13}\textit{Ezker abertzale} is used here to refer to the Basque Independentist Left (see p. 35 and glossary).

\textsuperscript{14}“Opus Dei,” a right wing Catholic organisation.
This was the “field” that provided the context for most of this research. Even when part of my fieldwork took place in Ireland, during the tours I organised for a Basque Txalaparta group from the city, Iruña was present in the person and motivations of the txalapartariak I was with and other Basques from it whom we met. Alex Maskee, the first Republican major of Belfast, in his speech after a march in Falls Road (Republican neighbourhood in Belfast and important scenario of “the troubles”), in August 2004, publicly acknowledged “our friends from Iruña” (rather than “our Basque friends”), awakening me to the uncanny similarities between both cities.

The choice of Iruña as the anchoring of the research was part of the unplanned flow of the fieldwork process. When I embarked on fieldwork in February 1999, I only had the reference of Juan Mari Beltran (“the father of Txalaparta” as the Basque student of Euskara I met in 1998, Amets, explained to me) and the webmaster of a website with the soundest and most comprehensive explanation of Txalaparta that popped up in an Internet search at the time, who happened to be based in Iruña, and somehow related to one of the Txalaparta groups I encountered through him. The only website exclusively dedicated to Txalaparta that I found had been put together by a group or person from Iruña, and whatever my personal motivation for my subject was, it led me there (chance or providence, perhaps a matter for another discussion).

Ireland

Ireland was also part of “the field” in a multifold way:

It was my permanent place of residence at the time I initiated this research and has been so all along (and still is), which I feel provided me with the freedom I needed in order to undertake research with a community that arouses so many passions in the Spanish State, where I am from. Discussions, lectures and talks about the Basque Country in my home university in Madrid always aroused, from what I can recall, impassioned Spanish nationalist feelings and reductionist discourses, moreover discourses that often denied the political nature of the conflict. Basque secessionism seemed to function in a way that brought people together under an imagined Spanish singularity in a world of Good versus Evil (basically, it seemed to strengthen a weak Spanish national “identity” and provide “sanctity” all at once). This I feel would have greatly limited and restricted my possibilities in many respects had I been based in a university in the Spanish State.
I encountered Ireland as also present in “the field” at a political and musical level in the discourse of participants and their sound collections and fusions. A participant expressed this, stating that nations in conflict look up at those whose struggles are greater in terms of their scale and the resistance they put up: “for instance, the Catalans look up to us, we look up to the Irish, and the Irish look up to the Palestinians” (fieldwork, May 2004).

Both my position in Ireland and participants’ dreams of Ireland merged together in the tours of Ireland already mentioned. I elaborate on this some more soon and in the last chapter.

Fieldwork Amid Conflict

It was in a very politically charged environment, after 9/11, during times of unprecedented state repression by the Spanish State in the Basque Country since the end of Franco’s dictatorial regime, that I embarked on fieldwork in 2003. I arrived into the “field,” in Iruña, at a time of tension and expectation of the imminent war in Iraq, which broke out the next day, despite massive street demonstrations against it throughout the world. Only seven days after this event, on the 27th of March, the democratically elected coalition of the independentist left, Batasuna, was banned by the Spanish Government, with Partido Popular, the Spanish extreme right wing party, in power, denying political representation to a few hundred thousand Basques (the very people among whom I wished to undertake my research). This was part of a wider attack against the Basque independentist community, launched in May 1998 with what is known as the 18/98 Macro-Summary (see glossary). The proceedings, which targeted several cultural, social and political grassroots entities, movements, businesses, newspapers and radio stations, reached people and organisations who did not even operate within the parameters of, or identify with, the so called Basque National Liberation Movement, and who portrayed themselves as neutral, such as the only newspaper in Basque language, the Egunon Egunkaria, which had directors detained and tortured.

All political representatives had gone into hiding as I was trying to arrange interviews with some of them to discuss Txalaparta and the aesthetics of political rallies from their perspective. Bad times to be asking for them, which only caused concern
about who I might be (needless to say I did not succeed in my naïve attempt to meet them.) I was aware that I could be awakening suspicion at such politically delicate environment, since the only proof of my identity so far, in relation to the community I wanted to access, was an MA thesis, and a paper delivered at a conference in Iruña in 2001, full stop. Identity documents mean nothing as they can be forged, I was told eventually. I was welcomed and trusted to a great extent, however, and even a meeting was facilitated for me, on my request, with the Basque sociologist Justo de la Cueva (communist and Basque independentist prolific writer and political activist), a man under death threat and who had suffered an attempt at murder in 1984 in which, as he explained, the Spanish Civil Guard was involved and which was claimed by GAL ("Grupo Antiterrorista de Liberación," an illegal para-military force sponsored by the Spanish Government to target members of the *ezker abertzale* during the 1980s). I was told that he was heavily watched by the special Spanish forces and visiting him might awaken an interest in my identity (by all sides). I had been told while in Iruña that all phones in the city are tapped, and that mobile phones can actually be used as tracking and listening devices by third parties. On several occasions, when I went alone to have my lunch at restaurants and bars, which happened quite often as I was on the move most of the time, I ended up joined by a stranger at the table and a conversation would ensue. I could not help wondering at times whether that was really a product of chance. Rightly or wrongly, I could not help becoming suspicious. I had landed in the middle of a troubled environment of conspiracy, informers, clandestine activity, siege, repression, police raids and reports of torture under police custody, occasional shootings, car bombs, daily street demonstrations, profound discontentment and challenge against ethnocide powers and the capitalist system, strong enough to move many youths into joining an armed struggle. The tension of the conflict, heightened by my imagination, became part of my everyday field experience, even though the possibility that I could be watched by some kind of Basque Left Independentist network never worried me, except in relation to gaining trust, and in fact it was something I expected. I could imagine how I might be perceived by potential participants, as a totally unknown individual, from Madrid, trying to access a besieged community under the pretence of research.

The emotional engagement of most participants with Basque culture, Basque language and specifically Txalaparta, as well as the mists and beauties of the Basque mountainous land, strongly resonated with me throughout this research. I often felt that I was dealing with people who would literally die for what they were talking about, and
indeed I knew that some of them had put themselves in high-risk situations through their active engagement with the Basque struggle. The politically and emotionally sensitive nature of the subject of this research has largely determined the development of my fieldwork process in a dialectical relationship with the interpretation framework. Related to this, the course of events and the dialogical nature of fieldwork also imposed its own logic in my research progression. My initial intentions for the phase of fieldwork research commencing in 2003 were to spend at least a year of continuous fieldwork in the Basque Country, as per the cannon in ethnographic work, and join lessons of Euskara and Txalaparta in Euskal Herria. These did not materialize, however, due to circumstances beyond my control. I studied Euskara on my own and managed to achieve a basic level to get by that used to fluctuate depending on the length of time spent with different participants (some were active Basque speakers and others spoke Basque only on occasion or never; at least in my presence, that is). I made a commitment nonetheless to use the little Euskara I had as much as I could and to listen to it, which was only a pleasure for me, releasing me from any desire to ask people to turn into Castilian to the extent possible. I was determined not to be the one spoiling at a micro level the push Euskara needed, regardless of whether this meant missing information that might be relevant. My engagement with Txalaparta as a performer became also sporadic as I explain later.

*Ethnographer’s Horizons*

We, as researchers, approach the subject matter we wish to study with a baggage of our own. As Van Maanen states, fieldwork “is both a social and personal act, and, as such, is subject to the same sorts of biographically and situationally specific understandings through which any individual act can be understood” (1988, 83). The same circumstances that take us to our subject are part of our construction of the field and determine our hermeneutic horizons, that is, what we are able to perceive (or imagine) and what remains outside of our scope. Conscious and unconscious motivations come and go like ocean waves into our awareness, changing through time, as our own research progresses (there may be permanent motivations buried somewhere in our self, or shared selves, too.) Our partly hidden personal search and our research intertwine together with the search and research of those we encounter in the “field,” as I have experienced in the fieldwork process. Our desires to “belong” to an academic community as fully qualified researchers seem parallel to our need to “belong” (or “access”) those communities we engage with in order to complete our academic rite of
passage. Participants’ socio-political claims and needs, or whatever the nature of the latter are, may induce a process of awakening to the power participants invest in us as they share their lives, meanings and concerns with us. We are then faced with the ethical choice of using that power for our own personal gain, or to satisfy the reciprocity expected from us (we are “given” under the prospects that we can offer something), if only for the sake of balance.

Throughout the research process that has culminated in this dissertation, I have become increasingly aware of my own personal hermeneutics (what is traditionally referred to as “the personal equation.”) Research, as a process of “becoming” and awakening experienced in dialogue with participants (both face to face and imagined afterwards), has thrown light onto myself and my circumstances in a more significant manner than I thought could happen, and the latter in turn have shown me some of the hidden processes that are contained in the outcome of my research. As Denzin states, “we are or own subjects. How our subjectivity becomes entangled in the lives of others is and has always been our topic” (1997, 27).

It is through song that I first encountered some kind of an idea of “Basqueness” as a child. I spoke Basque in my songs well before I knew what I was saying. I was also told I was Navarrese, since one of my grandmothers was original from the Roncal Valley (Erronkari in Basque), and that was pretty much what I got to know about her for different reasons. Lillis O’Laoire advised me many years ago, in relation to my research, to get in contact with my “Basque grandmother,” whom I have not met since I was 6 years old, after I casually mentioned this fact to him. It did not make sense to me at the time in the context of my research. He suggested some years later again, that my research was perhaps some kind of strategy to get in touch with an identity that had been denied to me, just as participants in my research were also developing their own strategies to access their own denied identity. His insight moved me, and stayed somewhere in my mind.

During all this research I always felt that I was searching for something more, enmeshed in this study. I discussed it with some participants and wrote about it in my field diary reflections. Wandering the streets of Iruña or Donostia, I felt as if I was wandering through streets of my life, in search for something unclear, undefined, something I was yearning for with angst. The mix of feelings I had during my fieldwork in the Basque Country made it very hard for me to confront my field journals once back
home. A storm of emotions emerged from every page, overwhelming me and shaking me like a flame in a draft. Only by putting my diaries away could I regain some form of illusory balance. The loneliness of the fieldwork endeavour so often reported by ethnographers, and a longing for something unknown, seemed to converge with other dynamics: The passion, suffering and emotions invested in the struggle by participants; the beauty of the language, the culture and the landscape; the anxiety of being an outsider, trying to come into terms with the complexity of “symbols” participants handled so well; seeking to access as deeply as I possibly could a community whose heterogeneity seemed to increase as my knowledge of it did, while imagining dangers that were perhaps very far from me. I loved it while I was “in it,” but I could not handle it when I was back home.

Our stories, the stories of our families, our circumstances, are intertwined with the fates of the larger groups to which we belong and beyond. It was only toward the end of the fieldwork research undertaken in the Basque Country, especially after my encounter with the now deceased singer and song writer Mikel Laboa, that I realised the bearing the Spanish Civil War had on me, as he was telling me of his own experience with it. I had not realised before, as third generation that I am, how important it may have been not only in regards to the Basque struggle, but in shaping my own life. In fact, I came to the conclusion, after all these years of fieldwork, that the Civil War never ended, it is ongoing, burning silently in some areas of the Spanish State, and flaring up in flames in others, such as the Basque Country. I noticed greater empathy with older participants who had participated in the revival during the 1960s and 70s; somehow their questions were familiar to me. I also found out by the later stages of fieldwork, in 2006, that my grandmother’s family came from Iruñea (where they lived for three generations, as she told me over the phone) and I could not help wondering about such coincidence, since that was, as explained earlier, my fieldwork anchoring.

**Research Delimitation**

This section delimits the scope of this research along general lines. The initial research goals were very flexible and open, becoming in fact mostly determined by the course of events along the fieldwork adventure.

**Participants**

The main collective I have focused on is constituted, by those Basques who engage with the tradition of Txalaparta in the present, often with no musical training
and in a non-professional manner. I have also considered Basques who may not be performers but who identify with Txalaparta in one way or another. Most of the participants have been male as I often found very few females in those environments where I undertook research (Txalaparta workshops, the festival Txalaparta Festa and other events with Txalaparta), which is also coupled by the fact that, for whatever reason, I tended to gravitate more toward males, of which I was not completely aware until the last stages of fieldwork, when I explicitly sought the discourse of female txalapartariak in a more proactive manner. Participants were generally within their 20s and 30s, with some exceptions, especially at the last stages of the fieldwork research. I also sought to learn about the views of others who could not be “classified” within the collective described above, as I felt it was necessary to enhance my understanding of the phenomenon I wanted to understand. Some participants have been therefore professional musicians (Txalaparta players or not) who were part of the recent history of Txalaparta or have recently started showing an interest, a professional musician’s promoter, some anthropologists encountered through the Basque anthropology association ANKULEGI and the cultural association Ortzadar from Nafarroa, and sociologist Justo de la Cueva and his wife, the late Margarita Ayestaran, among others. Some dancers were also interviewed as well (a number of participating txalapartariak (Txalaparta players) were also committed to the revival and promotion of Basque dances, among other cultural activities). Overall, as it turned out, most participants in this research could be described as euskaltzale (literally meaning “Basque language lover”), and in terms of political ascription, as progressive left and independentist in their majority.

**Time Span: The Present**

The period of time that has been the focus of this research, has been the ongoing present. The past has been considered as a thread that emerges from the present, woven from and for the present. It is only in the final stages of the fieldwork process, in 2006, that I explicitly started researching the past as a theme (mainly the 1960s and 70s) as the present demanded the past to make sense in the picture I was constructing for interpretation. It is my interviews with agents of the revival back then that explains the different age group mostly targeted at that later moment. Even so, this was a past contained in the present.
This perspective touches on the concept of “living tradition,” whereby the latter is considered as continuous, evolving and changing, always in the making, belonging to the living and those who honour the living as legitimate. This concept of “living tradition” is one that most participants ascribed to and it is also how “tradition” is understood throughout this dissertation unless otherwise stated. “Living tradition” and the element of oral transmission that goes along with it and which characterises the world of Txalaparta I have encountered, demands a focus on the present, and necessitates participant observation as the main research technique, that is, an engagement on the part of the researcher with lived experience, with participants’ everyday life, discourse and action. This is a study of change. While for the community studied the present shall be rooted in a past in order to move forward, this work approaches the past as a flowing dimension rooted and sited in the present, in the social discourse encountered at the meeting point of different subjectivities.

I approached this study of Txalaparta initially with an interest in the present that was flowing in front of me. There was a parallel in Amets’ discourse between the view of Txalaparta as “young and revolutionary,” in the here and now, and Euskara Batua (the unified/formalized form of Basque language): “It is there to be worn, like you wear clothes. To put it on and use it” (Interview, May 1998), in opposition to a museum object that cannot be touched, but worshipped as the representation of a long gone past. Txalaparta, as Amets presented it to me, was something alive, youthful and breaking through, happening right now, in the present. I sought to study Txalaparta as it happened, in progress. I wanted to see the people, their faces, and listen to them; ask questions to the living tradition and listen to the replies, and find out about their questions too. I wanted to learn how did those engaged with Txalaparta “put it on and use it” and hear what they had to say; how they looked like, how they moved, how they interacted with me and with other people. I wanted to see their body language, their emotions as they spoke. I wanted to see and experience events as they unfolded in front of me, to experience the present and bathe in it, and to be part of it. I also wanted to meet the Basque question face to face, beyond the dominant discourses about it in the Spanish State, and in Madrid in particular. I was coming from an environment, as Madrilian, and former sociology student in Madrid, where I felt no one was listening, a society with its ears and eyes closed to the Basque question, and I dearly wanted to listen, a task, listening, that I felt was being neglected.
Research Duration and Space Delimitation

This dissertation is based on ethnographic work that expanded intermittently from 1998 to 2006 in Euskal Herria at both sides of the Pyrenees (in the French and Spanish States), Ireland, and also in the capital of the Spanish State, Madrid, for some small fraction of the field research. Fieldwork continued with Basques in Ireland until 2008, and via e-mail up to 2011. Roughly, fieldwork accounted for in my fieldwork diaries has amounted to the equivalent of eight and a half continuous months.

Research Techniques

The main research fieldwork technique employed has been, in tune with the nature of qualitative research, participant observation (or rather, observant participation). In-depth interviews, with differing degrees of structuring and duration have also been undertaken, including group interviews. The average duration of interviews was usually quite extended, within an average of three or four hours with participants who were especially eager to share their understandings. Video footage was also used as a means to facilitate players’ review of their performances and in turn learn from them about their understandings and performance expectations. Written texts published by participants and other relevant Basque authors have been considered as qualitative data, that is, as social discourse. Other techniques utilised are presented soon.

Less than 25% of the interviews were recorded. Conscious as I was of the climate of siege experienced by the Basque community I engaged with, I rarely proposed the recording of interviews, which were, for the most part, informal conversations and group discussions in the everyday life moments txalapartariak shared with me and at different events I attended with them: at home with my txalapartari hosts or other participants who offered me their flat as temporary residence in different occasions; at Txalaparta workshops during rehearsals; at concerts we attended together or at which participants performed; at the txoznas festival in Sestao; at the Korrika in April 2003; at a pub, bar or Herriko Taberna; the Euskal Jai gaztetxe of Iruñea15; the Txalaparta Festa (see chapter 3); during a car journey or at some of the political events I attended.

Only in the summer of 2006, in a political climate marked by ETA’s unilateral indefinite ceasefire, and at a time when I was feeling more confident in the field, I dared

15 The Euskal Jai gaztetxe of Iruñea, important centre of articulation of the cultural life of the progressive left youth, was later demolished by police among strong popular resistance in August 2004.
to ask in a more systematic manner whether I could record interviews; interviews which were explicitly framed as such by all involved. Though in un-recorded interviews participants, as well as interviewer, may speak more freely, and thus may be more appropriate at given times for this reason, I often felt that a lot more information than I could possibly remember was being conveyed to me by participants, which moved me to propose recording them, in the more relaxed juncture of a potential peace process. The approximate 65 hours of recorded interviews that resulted are also coupled with approximately 40 hours of video footage of performances that took place from February 1999 to August 2004, including footage of the tours of Ireland for txalapartariak to keep as a memento of the experience (some of the footage was done by participants themselves.) Analysis has also included videos of Txalaparta Festa from 1987 to 2005, videos of Txalaparta and Kirikoketa performances located through the Internet (some of them put up by participants in this research) or facilitated by participants (including Txalaparta performances at political rallies,) published and unpublished sound recordings (CDs by different performers and groups and also a participant’s taped diary of one of the Irish tours,) documentary films and printed documents on their work about Txalaparta facilitated by txalapartariak, including unpublished booklets, fliers, posters, banners, leaflets, stickers and t-shirts promoting Txalaparta events. Several photographs, taken by both the participants and me, have also formed part of the data analysis and interpretation. Many of the photographs, those I took with a small digital camera for the sake of non-intrusiveness, and at the expense of quality, present bright circles that makes them unusable for the dissertation, though valuable for interpretation (and for personal inspiration).

During the fieldwork periods I spent in Euskal Herria, I was often hosted in participants’ homes, whose generosity opened precious research opportunities for me in this regard in the form of insights into their way of life and views on different issues. During long chats in the familiar space and intimacy of their homes my hosts kindly shared with me not only their food and shelter, but their understandings concerning Txalaparta, the Basque struggle, their social commitments at local and global levels (in the form of internationalist solidarity), or lack of them (as was the case with a participant of Spanish descent who presented himself as “non political”). I could learn about their life styles to an extent, and experience them also through their own sense of
aesthetics in their living space\textsuperscript{16} (see Marcus 1995) and through our daily interactions (both indeed mediated by my own perceptions and persona).

Hosts made up a very heterogeneous group of people, which allowed me get a sense of different approaches and subjectivities, and more importantly, break through my tendencies to generalise, reduce and classify in fixed categories what emerged as a complex community and subjective realities. For instance:

Jokin, \textit{txalapartari, euskaltzale}, “radical anarchist” as he defined himself, stone mason, “primitive,” as he also told me (no mobile phone, no TV, austere, hand labourer on stone and player of wood), whom I recall making his own washing machine soap for the sake of the environment, concerned with organics and recycling, mindful, socially committed, former conscientious objector and antimilitarist. Jokin displayed in his home a kind of intuitive, delicate, and earthy sense of taste: Casual-like, evocative arrangements of natural and hardly crafted objects, such as stones carved by the eternal movement of the sea; recycled materials from which a plant would emerge infusing them with new life; a little wooden abstract sculpture, “soinua,” with which different sounds could be made; a little “sorgiña” (“witch” in Basque) suspended from a shelf; lots of books on different subjects; walls painted in subtle pastel colours; and the lavender he had picked on the mountain drying off on the dining table covered with pages from the newspaper \textit{Gara} (of an Independentist Left line). That was his living room, “my” bedroom. Jokin’s sense of visual aesthetics illustrated for me his sensitive nature and seemed parallel to his approach to Txalaparta (which informs, along others, sections 2 and 3 of this dissertation).

Then Kemen, \textit{txalapartari, also euskaltzale, ezker abertzale} (Independentist Left aligned), electrician for a living, fond of so called Basque Rock, with a long corridor filled with books of which I could not have enough, many of them from the publishing house Txalaparta (participants were generally self-educated into humanities and politics, within a spirit that reminded me of Paulo Freyre’s

\textsuperscript{16} Wall photographs and decoration items in display provided, for instance, starting points for spoken discourse. I was alerted through this, for instance, to the fact that showing commitment toward more humane prison policies for political prisoners and claiming their inclusion in the peace process (as has been the case in the peace process in Northern Ireland, i.e.), which was exemplified by the display on the balcony of the white cloth featuring the shape of Euskal Herria in black with arrows pointing to it (“Basque prisoners back home”), was not necessarily a sign of support for the banned Independentist Left political coalition (Batasuna, or subsequent banned formations like AUB, or more recently Sortu).
Pedagogy of the Oppressed). In contrast with Jokin, Kemen was a technology lover, with a huge TV and sound cable in all the rooms. I was impressed by the pictures on display of his social volunteer work visits to other stateless nations (in Latin America). His energetic playing style seemed to me powered by the same electricity he worked with.

I was also generously hosted by other txalapartariak from Nafarroa and Bizkaia, and by participants who were committed members of Komite Internationalistak (“Internationalist Committees,” international solidarity left wing organisation which operates outside of the Basque Movement for National Liberation), which provided me with a contrasting view in relation to the struggle to an extent. Other participants who generously shared their homes with me were also related to Txalaparta or txalapartariak in a way or another. Particularly intensive, enriching and informing, research wise, was the fieldwork period spent in Ireland with the group of txalapartariak for whom I organised two tours of Ireland during 2003 and 2004.

I also stayed at youth hostels and pensions for short periods of time in Gipuzkoa, Bizkaia, or Iparralde, which also provided me with a certain level of detachment.

Though observant participation has informed interpretations presented in this dissertation, certain ethical concerns emerged in my scope of inquiry that preclude my use of material resulting from this research method, moving me instead to rely mostly on the use of interview material. These concerns are related to a feeling of uneasiness in relation to both the writing “in the field” (the keeping of a fieldwork journal) and “out of the field” (ethnographic outcome), induced by the conflicted nature and circumstances of the field described earlier, and concerns raised by participants that I discuss soon in relation to issues of reciprocity and representation.

Learning to Perform

Practice of txalaparta performance as a research technique was not systematic and only happened on occasion. Often my nerves interfered with my capacity to maintain the rhythm or “play” with my Txalaparta counterpart. I actually played better while practicing with other “novice” trainees, as in such occasions I was able to relax and better able to conceive the playful dimension of performing the tradition. Learning
to perform proved very useful to understand the main concepts of Txalaparta as per different performers and their explanations, and it did provide a situation of critical understanding for me on one occasion as the performative dimension suddenly disclosed a discourse that had been concealed up to that moment by a participant during an interview. My lack of confidence in relation to performance was a limitation I had to endure, as many others outside of my control, during the research process. It resulted in harsh questioning of my research capabilities by a few participants who felt perhaps, as it seemed to me, that a researcher who was not a “musician” was not only not qualified to approach the tradition, but was in fact some kind of an affront to it.

**Inter-Influence and Reciprocity**

My observant participation has been characterized by a high level of mutuality, that is, a constant bi-directional feed of information between participants and myself, as they would ask me about my findings, or I would consult with them my emerging interpretations. This practice was part of a need to ensure whether I was on the right track, to gauge participants’ sensitivity toward my representation of them, and to learn of their views about different discourses encountered in relation to Txalaparta. Mutuality was also part of a concern with issues of power contained in the categorisation researcher/researched that I had a need to transcend, and a form of transparency on my part about my research activities.

The collective I have mostly worked with in the field has been the Basque left (often within the so called Basque National Liberation Movement (MLNV)). This is a sector of Basque society which is constantly demonised in the mainstream media, and which has been and continues to be, in the case of the Basque Independentist Left

17 The term “Basque Independentist Left” is generally understood to refer to the community that is politically “represented” by the banned political coalition Batasuna (I write “represented” between inverted commas, since such representation has been put in jeopardy by the Spanish Government, disenfranchising a significant number of Basque citizens –some of the Basque Independentist Left formations that are banned in the South of the Basque Country are legal and operative in the North, within the French State.) In this work, I use the term of Basque Independentist Left, or *ezker abertzale* to refer to the aforementioned community (even though a break away group, Aralar, which differs in relation to defensive and offensive approaches to achieve the goal of self-determination, and some anarchists I have met which equally differ, declare themselves also *ezker abertzale* –or have done so in casual conversations at certain points in time).
disenfranchised and besieged by the Spanish Government. Most of the participants in this research are culturally and socially active in the protection and promotion of Basque culture and/or anarchist and/or other political organisations, regular participants or organisers of activities against capitalism, in support of political prisoners, etc. Many of them have relatives or friends who are in prison and visit them as regularly as prison regulations allow. In our conversations, some of them recalled having been followed in the street, having found their cars opened and searched in the morning, or explained to me, for instance, how to find out if your phone is being tapped (I was told, as one extreme example, of incidents where they could lift up the phone and hear what appeared to be police conversations,) or their gut feelings about possible informants or undercover police (which some claimed were easy to identify years ago, but not so much anymore.) I all too often heard dark and frightening stories of people who had been detained and tortured for being culturally, socially or politically active (or all three) in their communities. I was told, for instance, during a casual conversation with Jokin in February 1999, about a guy whom Spanish police took to a deserted area in the outskirts of Iruñea at night by force, who was then raped with a gun as he was threatened with being shot, and went mad from then on. During another casual conversation in Hernani with Arrats in May 2004, I was told of a guy in the town who was very bright, very healthy, full of worth, as Arrats put it; they took him once, beat him up badly in police barracks and mentally disabled him as a result. The case of sociologist Justo de la Cueva and his wife is also illustrative. As mentioned previously they were subject to a failed attack by Spanish paramilitaries. Justo is still under death threats from Spanish nationalists for his blocked website: The Basque Red Net (I was informed he had to change phone numbers often because of this.)

The Figure of the Researcher

Recalling Michelle Kisliuk’s observations in Shadows in the Field, regarding her efforts to define her identity against previous Western figures with different colonial agendas in her work with BaAka pygmies (1997), during my fieldwork to date I have struggled with the shadow of state repression and Spanish imperialism. My main concerns were accessing the community that is at the heart of my research, and defining my identity (who I was considered to be) as indeed something different from any role related to state intelligence or a bearer of mainstream values. My interest for the relationship between the practice of Txalaparta and the political context was something that was not readily understood as part of a research project about “music” either. One
of the groups whose workshops I attended, insisted on referring to me initially as the “journalist from Ireland” (fieldwork, February 1999). As a young Basque participant put it when I tried to explain my difficulties to her: “Maria, no one talks to no one, you talk to whoever you have to talk to and that’s it, you can’t trust anyone, you don’t know whom are you with or who can be listening” (fieldwork, May 2006). Artizar offered me a vivid portrait of that environment in which I insisted upon asking questions (in relation to the Basque Country in general). She spoke of everyone being monitored with cameras in the section of the university where classes are delivered in Basque, with menacing security guards inside the college and outside. “Your classmate might be a militant, you don’t know, and your friendship with him or her might be enough to incriminate you.” She explained that everyone's movements and activities were followed by the state security apparatus. She spoke of the pain of families literally torn apart by the struggle, with relatives either in prison or in hiding. Feelings of being besieged were a recurrent theme with many of those Basques I spoke to. Indeed I realised quite soon that my explanations about the nature of “ethnomusicology” and ethnographic research could never be enough in such fieldwork circumstances, I soon felt the need to follow my declaration of intentions with self-proving action –I could not expect to be trusted, but I firmly believed that with my actions I could work toward the attainment of trust. This necessity to achieve the trust of the community I wished to study and a personal tendency toward a dialogical research relationship with those I was working with, greatly determined the methodology I was to use during the fieldwork research in terms of active engagement.

Proving Myself Through Action

My position in terms of the phenomenon I was engaging with was ambiguous. I was coming, in relation to my background, from an urban environment (Madrid) and was undertaking research in a region where the rural and the urban often merge physically and even more so symbolically. The official language (or one of them) was Castilian, my native language, which was misleading: I was a foreigner. Not only in terms of cultural, social and political specifics of the Basque country, but also in terms of my peer popular culture, to which I have always been a bit of an outsider. If I ever thought I was going to do research in “my own backyard,” this idea certainly was proved radically wrong as soon as I immersed my self “in the field.” I knew nothing about anything. I was and felt as a complete stranger.
This was the case not only in terms of Basque culture, Basque social life and the Basque political scenario (especially in relation to the rich grassroots social and political life of the Basque independentist and progressive left), but also in terms of the values contained and expressed in my usage of Castilian language itself, Spanish—or Western-mainstream values I took for granted until I entered in contact with a people that put them to question. The native/nonnative categorisation (and consequent emic/etic categorisation in relation to native/non native views, categories and understandings) was meaningful and useful to me in the first stages of fieldwork, since there was such a stark contrast between myself and the Basque world I was coming into contact. This changed for me toward the last stages, when I encountered other Basques (not necessarily from the left) who regarded me as belonging to the community I was engaged with through my research, or participants (again not self ascribed to the Basque Independentist Left) who, claiming to be natives and pushing me to the “non native” and “outsider” condition, knew very little about the MLNV (Basque Movement for National Liberation) beyond mainstream stereotypes: indeed, in 2006, in the last stage of fieldwork undertaken in Euskal Herria, I was often taken for a Basque and many of the participants who did not know me were surprised when I told them I was from Madrid (this was possibly helped by a badly needed haircut I got in Iruña—which had an punk style to it—and my simple casual looks). In one instance, a paradox of fieldwork, a participant from Bilbao (one of the few exceptions who did not self-ascribe to the Basque left) was greatly challenged by those “Basque looks,” disclosing a discourse that revealed his own issues with his sense of belonging (Spanish parents, whose culture of origin he did not identify with, and reclaiming for himself a Basque brand of origin his peers contested for his lack of interest in Basque culture or language and españolist views), allowing me experience the type of feelings and attitudes a Spanish nationalist Basque citizen may reserve for someone that may be stereotyped as part of the ezkerr abertzale. Suddenly I was more Basque in the “Basqueness” gradient than someone born and bred in Bilbao. This categorisation of native/non-native has been challenged by ethnomusicologists of the “new fieldwork” and, as Basque anthropologist Zulaika has observed, is linked to colonialist understandings based on images of societies as homogeneous entities. In this sense, this dissertation is the result of my partial understandings, which however, stand side by side in “partiality” to those exhibited by Basques I have encountered. As Rice points out, “[a]ll individuals operating within a tradition continually reappropriate their cultural practices, give them new meanings, and
in that process create a continually evolving sense of self, of identity, of community, and of ‘being in the world’ (1997, 117). During the fieldwork process, I encountered different views upheld by different “insiders,” and I was often questioned by Txalaparta players about the many expressions I had encountered of a tradition they themselves knew little about but were eager to know.

**Applied Ethnomusicology in Research.**

The nature of “the field” described above, which I felt required an active disposition on my part if I was to be trusted in some way, added to the proactive participation of those Basque performers who have collaborated, and the disposition toward applied ethnomusicology within the institution where I was undertaking research (the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance,) resulted in a form of Participatory Action Research in the fieldwork endeavour.

Different scholars have argued against the label of “applied ethnomusicology” as they understand that all ethnomusicology is applied, which makes such a distinction redundant. Salwa El-Salwan Castelo-Branco (personal communication, Sheffield 2005) and Philip Bohlman (2007), for instance, have argued in support of a position that regards researchers as activists. This argument acknowledges that all research is political, whether we are aware of it or not. Other scholars, however, like Jeff T. Titon, Svanibor Pettan or Adelaida Reyes, to name a few, do argue in support of this label, or “sub field” within ethnomusicology, since it defines a conscious step beyond acknowledgement of activism in research. Applied Ethnomusicology thus defines a series of activities motivated by an explicit intention to empower those communities we engage with through our research and which make our research outcomes possible. These activities might range from presenting music performances to unfamiliar audiences (Long 2003) to establishing non-profit record labels or acting as culture brokers, among a long list of other kinds of applied work (Titon 2003.) Titon acknowledges that applied work is often the natural result of long-term fieldwork as it leads into relationships of reciprocity, being in fact collaboration between the fieldworker and participants; part of “the New Fieldwork” earlier explained in this chapter. When the communities among which we choose to do our research are disempowered in some sense and have issues that they urgently need to have addressed and sorted, expectations are placed on us in this regard to help sort those issues; the collaboration we encounter, and which is essential for a successful outcome of our
fieldwork research, is or may be based on those expectations. This means that we are or
become part of the process that generates those expectations and that might solve those
needs or worsen them or ensure they continue. It is only the fact that we are part of that
process, at the local level of the community we choose to study, that makes our research
possible. We can’t take without giving.

The felt need to establish a balanced exchange in the circumstances outlined so
far in this chapter, led me into the conscious leap of applied ethnomusicology within the
research endeavour. Thus I organised a tour of Ireland with a Txalaparta group in 2003
which resulted in the active creation of “the field” as a process that also emerged from
the performers’ reflections on Ireland and its struggle; a struggle that in our imagination
included the occupation of the island for many centuries, rather than just the republican
plight in the North at that particular point in time. This reflection and the hopes that the
Irish peace process could eventually be replicated in the Basque Country, as was already
the case in 1998 with the Basque “Lizarra-Garazi Agreement” (modelled in the “Good
Friday Agreement”) were again behind the organisation of a seminar with that as its
main theme, from which other opportunities arose within the fieldwork development
(see chapter 6).

This applied work was more than an exchange, it emerged from a personal
commitment toward participants who were themselves already involved in the strong
Basque grassroots tradition of “public ethnomusicology” (Titon 2007, electronic
communication) and applied cultural work in general within their communities. I was
researching a subject matter that was alive and in progress, and in so doing, I became a
participant myself and responsible in part for its course, as were the rest of participants.
I became a member of the group I was studying to some extent and participated in the
shaping of the group’s musical curriculum and part of their history for a short period of
time. At the same time, unfortunately, I did not manage well my efforts on reciprocity,
letting down, to my deepest regret, the first group I had met in the field, causing
division between the two groups. Mistakes can open great possibilities when we own up
to them, as I learned when, disheartened, I contacted members of the group I let down to
apologise on my arrival to Iruña again in May 2004. The conversations that ensued
provided me with important insights, and enriched me greatly in terms of personal
growth. A long conversation with one the txalapartariak in particular, Jokin, was
particularly enlightening: it revolved around the very nature of research as an act of
power. “Researcher” and “researched” engaged in an open discussion about the nature of research, of my own endeavour, science and control. In line with post-structuralist approaches, Jokin addressed issues of knowledge and power: The act of naming, the act of defining, is an act of power over something or someone (the “named” or “defined”).

My fieldwork experience among Basque left-wing txalapartariak (most of them Independentist), has been a field experience of personal awakening. It is through a community that has serious issues with the powers that be that I have become especially aware of what those powers involve and my own position as a researcher and indeed as a person within that particular relationship that takes place between the Basque left-wing independentist community, placed at the periphery of power, and the power centre (French and Spanish States and interest groups and political formations positioned somewhere in between): an asymmetrical power relationship which underlies the Basque struggle for self-determination. I became aware that the community I am engaged with has a high level of awareness and is well advanced in the process of decolonising their minds and regaining the power that the sanctioned political and economical system denies to them. The Basque community I am engaged with constitutes the bones of Basque civil society, they are not only engaged with the grassroots revival of Txalaparta, Basque language and many other forms of cultural expression, but are also very active politically both in that which refers to their own struggle and internationalism (solidarity with other disenfranchised peoples.)

Jokin questioned my research endeavour when I told him how I felt, in my previous work with his group, of a strong anarchist orientation, that I felt that their attitude was that “if I had to ask, I was not prepared to know.” “People ask to pigeonhole you, and I don’t like that, why do we have to pigeonhole things. No, no, I am nor this nor that! Why shall I be pigeonholed!” (Fieldwork, May 2004.) Jokin questioned the authority of those who ask questions in order to label, to classify and ultimately to control (namely social researchers, also journalists, a familiar label they applied to me in my visit in February 1999, despite my explanations of who I was and what I was doing, much more difficult to understand, or perhaps to believe.) He further questioned social researchers’ efforts to represent others and the reasons behind making statements about others: for whom, for what, with what ends. What ideologies or processes are being legitimised, he was asking: Are we perhaps high-jacking others for our own personal gain, and/or the gains of powerful others.
Though he self-ascribed to the Basque independentist claims, he expressed concern at my initial focus on the *ezker abertzale* and my initial belief that all the Basque left was homogeneous and politically oriented toward Batasuna (the banned political formation). He let me know he had felt uncomfortable at feeling framed within that overtly political stand, as if soul, humanism, aesthetic pleasure, art, sentiment could not exist except within the function of serving the strategic needs of politicians. He equally claimed his right to be whatever he wanted, anytime he wanted; his right to say one thing at a certain point in time, and assert the opposite at a later stage; the right to change, and the right to be ambiguous, or incoherent, if so he wished or needed. Why should I, as a researcher, freeze him in time, or expect him to produce perhaps a justification for his practices and his discourse.

The little book that Joxean Artze had handed to me a year earlier to illustrate his own concerns at social research and representation, bringing Zen into my mode of inquiry, resonated with my anarchist friend’s concerns. In it, *Zen Buddhism and psychoanalysis* by D. T. Suzuki and Erich Fromm, the Japanese thinker Suzuki compares a poem by an English poet (Tennyson) and another by a Japanese poet (Basho). Tennyson pulls the flower he admires from a wall, detaches her from her source and context, which Suzuki understands as a disregard for the fate of the flower (killed for the sake of knowledge) in order to satisfy his curiosity, further mirroring western scientific dissection. Tennyson wonders whether he understands the flower and remains detached from the flower, as the Japanese thinker states (1998 [1960]). The Japanese poet Basho, on the contrary, expresses his admiration for the little *nazuna*, a small generally unnoticed flower Suzuki understands the poet has found after looking attentively into a shrub, and this is all Basho does (“*When I look carefully / I see the nazuna blooming / by the hedge!*”) Suzuki explains that Basho’s poem expresses the love for nature characteristic of oriental poets, whereby they are at one with it, unlike most westerners, he claims, who see themselves as separate from nature and regard it as something to be used. Basho rejoices in the enormous beauty he is able to discover in the humble unpretentious *nazuna*, and in his love and admiration for the mystery of life that he is able to recognise in the flower. Suzuki identifies this as a sentiment as transcendent as what Christians call “divine love.” This has been enough for Basho, he never pulls the flower, he feels something in his spirit, Suzuki speculates, but has no words to express it, nor does he want to conceptualise his felt experience of the *nazuna*. Tennyson resists to being at one with the flower and remains detached from what he
wishes to know, intellectualising what Basho has refused to conceptualise, remaining in what Suzuki calls an “absolute subjectivity.” Suzuki further adds, in his reflections on Basho’s poem: “The word ‘carefully’ [in the poem] implies that Basho is no more an onlooker here but the flower has become conscious of itself and silently, eloquently expressive of itself. And this silent eloquence or eloquent silence on the part of the flower is humanly echoed in Basho’s seventeen syllables” (1993 [1960], 4). I realised, in my discussion with Jokin, that the nazuna was talking to me.

This dissertation represents an attempt to mediate between the voice of the nazuna and the urge to pull her from the bush. It is an exercise of mediation between Tennyson’s approach and Basho’s sacred admiration for the mystery of life in the nazuna who refuses to be stamped upon by the imperialist forces of the powerful nation states, the exploitative and ethnocidal forces of capitalism, the blinding flashes of journalist cameras and the armed scalpel of warmongering intellectuals. Indeed, by reflecting upon the subject matter from my personal experience I have tried to avoid plucking the nazuna for dissection, jeopardising her life and her strength. When personal experience is acknowledged, we recognise her in us, for we recognise we are part of the subject matter.

Induced by this dialogical process, mainly with anarchist participants, and my own experience with the work of Bert Hellinger (2006, 2006b, 2008, 2010), of a phenomenological orientation, a certain sentiment of scepticism about the task of interpretation and theorisation has moved me to apply theoretical perspectives in a manner that avoids detachment from lived experience when possible, rather privileging the multiple voices of the participants. The framework for interpretation utilised is largely grounded in experience, though I have also utilised categories that participants have not used to present their realities (what is traditionally known as “etic” perspective) when I feel it helps the task of interpretation (such as “performance” as it is used in performance studies (chapter 3)).

**Representation**

Issues of representation are relevant, in relation to this dissertation, with regards to the literacy related processes involved in the outcome of research: notated sounds of
Txalaparta pieces on the one hand, and writing, on the other. I discuss here both, and in particular, relevant concerns in relation to the task of writing “in the field” (record keeping in the form of fieldnotes) and “out of the field,” despite the somewhat inaccurate nature of this last expression, since during the write-up process we as ethnographers still inhabit the social spaces we are writing about (albeit differently).

Partial Truths

The social researcher does not provide absolute truths, as James Clifford argues, but in-depth interpretations (1986). These interpretations are informed by our prejudices and background, and by the fact that we are also part of the socio-political moment and environment that create our context and the context of our study. Thus, this dissertation offers an insight into the world of those Txalaparta players I have come into contact with, and one that is relative to the specific circumstances in which fieldwork has taken place and the kinds of interactions that have unfolded in the field, as explained earlier in this chapter. The interpretation offered in this dissertation offers a “partial truth” (Clifford 1986) based on social dynamics as I have experienced them. “Observation” modifies and influences the “observed,” and the “observer” is herself part of the phenomena she studies. Boundaries are blurred. The ethnographer does not study the experience of those she encounters in fieldwork, but a shared experience (or rather the ethnographer’s experience of the exchange that is established in “the field”). This is what is referred to as “inter-subjectivity,” a process of double hermeneutics. As Gadamer states in relation to historical interpretation, but which is equally pertinent in relation to the task of the ethnographer, a fusion of horizons takes place in the process of understanding (1981, 273). Gadamer refers to a fusion of past and present horizons in the interpretation of history, which is equivalent, for the purpose of the study of culture, to a fusion of the ethnographer’s horizons and those of the people she attempts to understand. In the case of this dissertation, “multiple hermeneutics” might make more sense than the concept of a “double” one. James Clifford states that “every version of an ‘other’, wherever found, is also the construction of a ‘self’, and the making of ethnographic texts ... has always involved a process of ‘self-fashioning’ ... Cultural poesis -and politics- is the constant reconstitution of selves and others through specific exclusions, conventions, and discursive practices” (1986, 24). I elaborate on this in the next sections of this chapter.
Transcription of Txalaparta

Though I did engage in performance on occasion (as discussed in preceding paragraphs,) limitations regarding my lack of formal musical training and musical analytic skills meant that I have not focused as much on musical analysis as I have on social discourse and praxis in the field experience. I have approached Txalaparta experientially to an extent in a similar way to that of many of the participants in this research, who engage with it without musical training. I feel this has helped me empathise with their understandings of the tradition, even though I have not gone all the way in the process of learning to perform. Though I had taught myself some music notation many years before I undertook research on the subject (while I was a member of the choir “Villa de Móstoles,” in Madrid, during my late teens,) “music,” as structured, represented and defined by formal western standards, was always an “other” and remained largely so across my fieldwork research. This lack of training and skills produced great resistance from a few prospective participants who considered that without them I could hardly produce any work worth of mention on what should only be studied through western musical concepts and analysis. Partially for the aforementioned reasons, I have chosen to produce verbal descriptions of Txalaparta performances or pieces. A transcription that I undertook for a previous Master’s dissertation, based on visually centred representations (the notation system developed by Juan Mari Beltran, one of the main rescuers and promoters of Txalaparta today, and video footage with an introduced time line,) is included as an annexe at the end of this thesis. Other than that, I have not attempted to transcribe any sample. The complexity of Txalaparta, especially when other materials such as iron or stone are included in the make up of the instrument, make a notational representation of its sound gruesome and inaccurate for the purpose of representation: The sound of beats often reverberate, mixing with new sounds, creating a density that I have found difficult to discern, especially for instance when iron bars are part of the physical structure on which Txalaparta is performed.

“Writing in the Field”

The sensitive nature of undertaking research in the Basque Country amid the political and armed conflict was often brought to my attention by different participants in many ways, and it involved concerns of one kind or another about my fieldnotes. Gaizka, a participant who was always very helpful and who offered me some kind of
mentorship which I truly welcomed, advised me, for instance, to feel at ease and hand over my field journal if so requested by police. I felt he could read my mind, as that was something that was causing me great anxiety at the time: “You are transparent, Maria, you’ve got nothing to hide” (fieldwork, March 2003). Ease of mind however never came my way, as I recall, for instance, how Kemen, a year later, advised me to watch what I was writing in my journal, as it could be easily taken from me by police at a checkpoint (this was two months after the Madrid attacks of March 2004 which Partido Popular, the extreme right wing party in power at the time, tried to blame on ETA despite international media pointing in a different direction). I had already considered such a possibility nonetheless, especially after I was stopped at one such police control in the Pyrenees well past midnight when returning to Iruñea with some friends from the Korrika in Maule. As we waited in the van while Civil Guard checked our passports for ages, the friends I was with told me that this happened often and that they might decide to register the van and our belongings, which in the end did not happen. Luckily so, for the thought that they might go through my travel version journal, and the questioning it might start, did not appeal to me. I could not give up on record keeping however, not at such early stages of my fieldwork, where I was exposed to more than I could possibly take in, given my lack of knowledge about Basque society and about the “world of Txalaparta.”

The times I chose to write my observations of the day in my fieldwork journal was at night, sometimes well into the morning hours. At first I tried to do this on a laptop I had purchased for this purpose, but this brought on a lot of curiosity from my hosts, and perhaps some suspicion, or so I felt. Txalapartariak from the first group I encountered, of an anarchist outlook, started to enquire about the contents of my fieldnotes, and made this a subject of conversation on occasion. Though I explained upfront that I wrote about everything that happened to me during the day and everything I observed that I felt was relevant for my research in relation to Txalapartara, I felt rather awkward when they would come up to my laptop screen to see what I was typing. The thought of Jokin reading “Jokin told me today...,” for instance, did not seem right. I stopped using the laptop, which had become a burden, and decided to write in an A5 notebook. Taking notes at the Txalaparta workshops elicited comments that I interpreted as a sign of discomfort (which they were, as I eventually learned), despite the fact that they were humorous (“here is the teacher Maria,”) and I am sure they could notice how I tried to get rid of the small notepad and pen, as if casually, in some pocket of my trousers where they didn’t fit. I developed strategies around that, of course. Yet I
could not help but wonder about the nature of such an important element, as record
keeping is, that made me feel somewhat dishonest. How private were my journals? Was
it ethical to expect privacy from participants about whom I was writing fieldnotes meant
to inform a public document (this dissertation) in which they were going to be
represented? Participants, those who inquired about this issue in particular, overheard
me talk about them to a third party: a talk where they emerged necessarily as “other,”
where they could not make out the contents (I presume), and where my interlocutor
remained necessarily hidden (writing is always for someone). There was something
about it that felt somewhat dishonest, strange, and awkward (something that I did not
experience in previous smaller scale ethnographic projects where my “base” was the
privacy of my own residence at the time in Madrid). The younger Txalaparta group I
worked with in Iruñea, of an ezker abertzale orientation, reacted rather differently to my
questioning and note taking. They were eager to be heard and reflect in a kind of group
discussion about what Txalaparta meant for them, their motivations and the struggle.
When I asked whether I could take notes, not only did they have no problem with it, but
they made sure they could facilitate it. If members of the first Txalaparta group did not
want to be “watched” and “examined,” “dissected” and “analysed” in the “scientific”
spirit that the Japanese psychoanalyst Suzuki identified with a western, intellectual (and
thus, as he asserts, utilitarian oriented) form of knowing (1998 [1960]), the second
group, which ascribed to a banned and silenced political formation and community,
made me feel rather differently about the work I had set out to do. The journal, even in
this context nevertheless, raised concerns (as explained earlier in relation to Kemen, a
member of this last group).

The lesser privacy I enjoyed in the field, however, the more awkward it became
for me to keep a fieldwork journal, and the greater the distance I felt the journal created,
and might create, between participants (friends in the full sense of the word) and me.
This, coupled with a hectic schedule and intense immersion in experience, meant that I
did not keep a fieldwork journal during the tours of Ireland, but wrote notes in
retrospective once they were over.

“Writing out of the Field”

On Interviews and Participant Observation

Given the field circumstances explained so far in this chapter and
participants’ concerns in relation to my research endeavour and note taking, I have
largely relied on interviews for representation. What I framed as “participant observation” did not belong to a clear research frame for participants, who I felt did not have a clear understanding or category for the figure of an ethnographer, despite my explanations. Indeed I was initially referred to as “the journalist from Ireland,” and on one occasion a participant became scandalised (screaming in fact “you’re a journalist!”) when I expressed interest, reaching for my notebook and pen, for an anecdote (relevant enlightening research material for me) that he was telling me over a drink in a bar; that was the same notebook in which he himself had clarified understandings with drawings, arrows, and notation of Txalaparta sounds for me during a recorded interview days earlier. I felt that interviews clearly framed as such were, on the contrary to other time spent in my company (“participant observation” for me), clearly framed as research by participants, allowing them to have a control over their representation which I do not feel they had in other situations (research situations for me, but not for them), situations that happened because of a level of trust placed in me. I do not wish to say that participants did not “perform” for me (or me for them) in situations other than interviews, but that the improvisation outside of the interview frame was of a different nature and not understood in the same terms I did (some participants, as explained earlier, did suspect, and also reject, “observation” –or so I interpreted). The frame of the interview, intelligible for interviewees as research, ensured a degree of power balance between interviewee and interviewer that would be too great on my side, and I feel, abused, if I was too use that which I feel I do not have full permission for. This is not to say that these ethical issues may not be overcome in a different political scenario, perhaps one not characterised by persecution and perceptions of siege, which I feel would facilitate greater interaction with participants during the writing stages of the ethnography (and thus incorporation of resulting inputs, in a collaborative ethnographic process (Lassiter 2005), which remains a possibility for future work).

The identity of participants is confidential, except in some cases where I was given permission by participants to disclose their names. I do not disclose however the names of all the participants who gave me permission for it, for the same reasons that I do not disclose but a few participant observation instances to an extent. Of

18 An emerging political juncture, marked by an incipient and seemingly irreversible peace process, facilitated by an unprecedented involvement of the international community and ETA’s also unprecedented total cease of all its activities, may generate an scenario where power relationships between participants and researchers will be less asymmetrical from the onset (in the eventuality that Spanish police and political persecution, and associated perceptions of siege, cease also).
these participants who gave me permission to use their names, I have only disclosed, with some exception, the identities of those who have a central role in the history of the Txalaparta revival, or who, by the very nature of their views, are identifiable either way. In those cases where it has been feasible to contact participants with relevant thesis excerpts and they agreed to be named, their identity is also disclosed. Otherwise, names provided (with no surname) are fictional. Description of participants is often minimal for confidentiality reasons.

Inspired by participants’ self-empowerment and suspicion of constructions of authority, attuned to postmodernist, feminist, poststructuralist and postcolonial theoretical approaches that scrutinise textual constructions of authority and power, I have sought to address in my writing (in my representation of research participants) concerns brought into my awareness by anarchist and ezker abertzale participants, and by poet and txalapartari JosAnton Artze, who brought a Zen approach to knowing into my field of attention. Different writing styles and strategies construct relationships and inscribe power in different ways, as Clifford and Marcus (1986), Geertz (1988), Van Maanen (1988), Denzin (1997), Zulaika (1996), Sparkes (2002), Lassiter (2005), and a long list of other authors have pointed out. There is an intimate connection between theory, writing and ethnography (Denzin 1997). The advent of postmodern anthropology, with its questioning of grand narratives as exercises of power, brought with it the crisis of representation in the late 1970s. Self-conscious ethnographic approaches that sought and seek to scrutinise and challenge authorial constructions of power manifested and manifest in so called “experimental” forms of writing that reject the authorial and authoritative voice that characterises textual scientific constructions of truth. This is ultimately exemplified, for instance, in the different forms of writing espoused in autoethnography, as shown and argued for by the authors of the volume Ethnographically Speaking (Bochner and Ellis 2002). Ways of knowing, and knowing the social, are entwined with ways of writing about it, that is, with the ways of presenting it. Form and content are contained in each other and merge.

Furthermore, an experiential phenomenological and ontological conception of the field, and the acknowledgment of the sensorium, by means of embodiment, as central to knowing, demands performative forms of writing, capable of conveying the sensorial, lived experience, and the intersubjective space from which
ethnographic research emerges (Kisliuk 1997). I come back to this soon in relation to expressive culture.

**Writing Style**

Authority and power inscribed in the writing in relation to those represented in the text, may be balanced by presenting texts in which the voice of the ethnographer recedes to an extent, allowing a multiplicity of narratives to emerge. Thus, I have sought to reproduce a plurality of voices, enmeshed with texts that inform, and hence help understanding, given participants’ narratives and perspectives. I have avoided paraphrasing as much as I have been able to, bringing to the fore, by means of long interview excerpts (edited for readability), the analyses and reflections by participants upon their own practices, for the sake of the insight provided.

Power relationships are also inscribed in the text in relation to readers (Gergen and Gergen 2002). By means of a traditional academic impersonal formal writing filled with certitude we place ourselves, as authors, at a distant superior level from the reader, providing her with little chance to re-imagine or engage creatively with our authoritative tight construct, as Gergen and Gergen point out. On the contrary, these authors add, experimental alternatives that include performance or poetry, for instance, invite for a different form of engagement with readers. Allowing participants’ own voices in the texts, with their own expressions, repetitions on occasion, spoken hesitations, meanings… I have sought to open windows from which they can somehow emerge, so that readers may engage with them perhaps like the Japanese poet with the *nazuna*, the flower he gets to know without ever pulling her from the bushes (and yet I feel I have nonetheless somewhat pulled a few for close dissection). Those words that participants spoke with particular emphasis are underlined in the quotes. On occasion, I break the conventional distribution of words on the page when quoting, for the sake of illustrating spatially—as a form of interpretation on my part indeed— the poetry of the spoken word (as I have done with some quotes by poet and *txalapartari* JosAnton Artze).

A certain sceptical attitude toward theorisation and interpretation has moved me to avoid, to the extent possible, complex theoretical frameworks, induced by discussions with participants that brought up anarchist concerns and a Zen philosophical perspective on the task of research, and by my own first hand
experience and engagement since 2007 with a phenomenologically oriented practice that has always challenged my rationally oriented sense of logic. I cannot help but wonder, what is the task of theorising a strategy for? What is the philosopher gazing into? Furthermore, what unconscious dynamics are we trying to make sense of with well-referenced tightly argued scholarly explanations? I do not have the answer, struggling as I am between philosophies I increasingly resonate with, that call for lived engagement with the world and suspension of the intellect on the one hand, and an academic tradition of intellectual engagement, sometimes in a rather sophisticated and complex manner. It is at that point of struggle where the writing of this dissertation has been fashioned.

Weary of tight academic constructs and weary of offering a “totalising story” in relation to complex social realities of which, like an iceberg, much remains concealed to us, I have sought to present the different discourses featured in this dissertation in a manner that leaves interpretation somewhat open, inviting readers to come to their own conclusions on realities and participants’ strategies that I feel are too complex to grasp. As Jerry Gale states in the context of a conversation on the telling of stories and therapy: “there needs to be that pushing and or letting go, or creating that space around it so that other stories can still develop” (Gale cited in Bochner and Ellis 2002, 93). Open ends are ways forward.

Different narratives and voices in relation to Txalaparta by txalapartariak, political and social activists (often all in one), other relevant figures of the revival, and as stated earlier, authors that have informed them, are layered in a documentary performance like manner, obeying a kind of poetic logic (as I explain soon), in a manner that is to an extent inspired by the work of feminist writer and film maker Trinh T. Minh-ha. In her work *Framer Framed*, Trinh puts native voices and forms of knowledge vis-a-vis those of theorists and academically sanctioned knowledge, creating symmetrical spaces of encounter among them (1992). This I have sought where I have intuitively felt I could afford it.

*Expressive Culture*

I discussed earlier in the chapter the concept of “sensibility,” perhaps a kind of embodiment of the kind of dynamics that we refer to under the umbrella term of “identity.” The question of how to represent processes of embodied knowing and expressive *doing*, or engage with them in writing, despite their indeterminacy, given the
fact that they are yet central to expressive culture, is one that I have tried to engage with in the writing of this dissertation.

Expressive culture might be the participants’ “methodological field” of embodiment by means of which the world is known and constructed, and deeply felt (art “as a mode of inquiry” (Bochner and Ellis 2003, 510)). Jorge Oteiza, influential Basque sculptor, poet and philosopher whom I introduce in the next chapter, regarded art (or expressive culture, to continue with the category introduced herein) as an inherent part of his search for the void. When he found it, he considered his sculptural work over (not his advocacy of art, which he saw as necessary for decolonisation, as I explain in the next chapter). There are or may be dynamics at stake in expressive culture, perhaps dynamics of affect by which those of belonging and difference are effected, that by their nature don’t render themselves easily to a grasp by means of prose and a “scientific” logic, but to the particular expressive ways (or forms) in which they happen: what we call music making, dancing, story telling, painting and so on. Such dynamics or processes matter because we might suspect they are central to those realities we engage with in the study of expressive culture, and thus to interpretation, even though they may be elusive to languages other than those that better articulate or facilitate affect and the sensorium (poetry, for instance). There was a quality in the experience (my experience) of Txalaparta when it was performed, that seemed also to envelop and soak us, participants and me, in some kind of shared field, when we spoke about Txalaparta (this I felt especially with certain participants). Conveying that is part of my goal. “The link between narrative and experience is a poetic and artistic one,” state Bochner and Ellis (2003, 509). A desire to put experience into words, coupled with ethical concerns already stated, motivate my use of a kind of poetic logic, by means of poetic evocative fragments, in the construction of the argument, while drawing from an emic, or participant centred hermeneutic\(^{19}\), from authors that inform participants and that participants have advised in order to inform and shape my research. In this kind of logic, elements of the grammar are omitted, opening possibilities for other forms of unspoken connections, other forms of knowing; creating a rhythm, a time in the writing and reading outside of the ordinary in the thinking of the researcher that researches as she writes, and the transactional process between the reader and the text (Sparkes 2002),

\(^{19}\) This strategy has been used before, for instance, by Mary E. McGann in her study of the “music-worship” of the African American Catholic community of Our Lady of Lourdes. In her ethnography, *A Precious Fountain* (2004), McGann explains her reliance on what she terms “a Black hermeneutic,” which incorporates emic interpretive categories, and which she expanded to include “Black theologians and scholars of Black music” (2004, xx).
creating a space for sensibility. Through the gaps that fragmented writing creates in prose I have sought to open spaces for perception, and some kind of sentient engagement in interpretation, a kind of *hutsune*, or Japanese ‘ma’. By means of such spaces, I have sought to appeal to the reader’s own “methodological field” of embodiment (Csordas 1993) to fill them.

I have sought to bring Txalaparta into the writing attending to the way it has been used by JosAnton Artze in his poetry, and other *txalapartariak*, like Josu Goiri, and I have done so in evocative play with other elements of Txalaparta that I do not wish to explain, but rather invite the reader to sense. John Cage explains in his foreword to *Silence* that for him the difference between prose and poetry is that the latter allows “musical elements (time, sound) to be introduced into the world of words” (Cage 1973 [1961], x). A different timing than that of prose, a different arrangement of sound, a play with space, invites a different form of engagement with *txalapartariak*, with Txalaparta, on the page. At times I have left a theme “hanging,” and moved on to the next, to allow the former to linger somewhere indeterminate, until the theme is taken up again, perhaps pages later. I ask my reader to bear with me. Louise Rosenblatt identified a spectrum of reader engagement with a text that ranged from a mainly “efferent” to a mainly “aesthetic” stance. The “efferent” stand, she explains, is that where attention is placed on what is to be retained from the text, and “meaning emerges from an abstracting-out and analytic structuring of the ideas, information, directions, conclusions to be retained, used, or acted on after the reading event” (1986, 124). The “aesthetic stance” is characterised by “a readiness to focus attention on what is being lived through in relation to the text during the reading of the event” (ibid., 124). Engagement with this dissertation may require a prompt switch from the predominantly “efferent” to the “aesthetic” form of attention, and vice versa, or rather to remain in that place of the spectrum where both sit comfortably together, not too far from each other in weight. I have sought to use poetry on occasion (mine or that of others) to convey the affect invested by participants in their narratives as I experienced it, an affect that is not complementary or secondary, but rather an intrinsic part of their verbal and practice discourse (and my own), carrying within them the weight of semi-articulated meaning and a performativity that transforms, constructs and shapes action. Poetry by participants is framed in the same way quotes from their speech are (by placing them in inverted commas).
Writing strategies deployed are also relevant in relation to analysis and interpretation. As Michelle Kisliuk (1997) points out, boundaries between the field and the writing of an ethnography are blurred. This is illustrated, for instance, by our interaction with our fieldnotes as we seek to analyse, select, and re-interpret previous interpretations contained in them (Barz 1997), inhabiting the field with the intensity of our re-imagined (re-framed) memories. In considering that “we write when we are doing research, and we research while we write” (Kisliuk 1997, 41), the writing aspects discussed so far not only address an interpretive approach and certain concerns in relation to inscriptions of power, but have also been part of the interpretation process, for “writing differently allows us to know and analyse differently” (Sparkes 2002, 211).

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the interpretation approach that has guided the overall research and the choice of methodology. The interpretive approach has been complemented by the phenomenological perspectives advocated by Timothy Rice and Thomas Csordas, more attuned to the experiential nature of fieldwork and the affective nature of the enquiry that is found both in ethnographic research (from the perspective of the researcher) and in expressive culture (from the perspective of those who engage with it). Thus, while Rice places the locus of a mediation between experience and an intellectual pursuit of knowledge in the self, Csordas more explicitly discusses the embodied self, with a focus on the physical sentient body as a locus, and embodiment as a “methodological field.” By way of this approach I have sought to engage with understandings of “identity,” or rather social processes of fashioning and construction of “reality” pertaining to the self and social environments, which I have encountered in participants’ verbal expressions that addressed sensibility (ways of feeling) as inherent to such “reality” or “realities.” As advanced in the introduction to the dissertation, and further clarified in this chapter, I will try to avoid the concept of “identity” throughout this dissertation for its excessive general character and the possibility it might distract our attention from the nature of the aforementioned processes.

Given the intersubjective nature of research, and in particular of social research, it has been necessary to indicate the nature of the “field”: the city of Iruña (Pamplona), historical capital of the Kingdom of Navarre on whose borders are based those claimed for Euskal Herria, also capital of the contested province of Nafarroa (Autonomous
Community of Navarre), as well as divided city, according to participants, on two radical fronts that strongly resemble those of the Spanish Civil War (a progressive left front and an extreme right one) and that seem also set in terms of Basque independentism versus Spanish unionism. Many of my fieldwork related observations stem from that specific hermeneutic of Iruña, including also other regions of Nafarroa. The “field” has also included Ireland, where I was based and have permanent residence, as different circumstances and a need to proof myself through action, within a conflict in which I felt I could not possibly avoid arousing suspicion, led me to the organisation of two tours of Ireland for a Basque Txalaparta group and a seminar at my university to which txalapartariak were invited.

The research delimitation and methodology is explained in this chapter, as well as some of the techniques used and research opportunities offered by participants who kindly hosted me. Ethical issues related to my influence in that which I have sought to study (in terms of reciprocity, and more specifically applied ethnomusicology) are also reflected upon in terms of representation: taking fieldnotes presented me with certain difficulties and a feeling on occasion that there was something not ethically right about it (which precluded me from taking notes in certain circumstances). This concern, coupled with the fact that I have never felt assured participants fully understood the nature of ethnography, in relation to the time and conversations shared during “observant participation” in informal everyday settings that only I fully framed as research, have precluded significantly my use of fieldnotes and participant observations in this dissertation. I have relied instead largely on previously arranged interviews that participants did frame as research, an understanding that I believe offered them the possibility of a greater control on their self representation.

A certain element of distrust of scholarly pursuits that theorise interpretation, providing neat frameworks of meaning and closure of findings, induced to a great extent by participants in this research and personal experience with phenomenology based practical work, has moved me to avoid, to the extent possible, elaborated theoretical frameworks. The principle of indeterminacy of existence to which we are led in the recognition of embodied processes of knowing that acknowledge lived experience (inherent to a space where boundaries blur as a Cartesian thinking shows us its limitations) and the sensorial nature of expressive culture, has motivated my use of certain writing strategies of representation. The writing in this dissertation is thus dominated on occasion by a poetic logic that invites a certain engagement by the reader, where efferent and aesthetic stances (Rosserblat) are necessary in a measure that invites
a more active participation in the construction of meaning and an extent of co-
interpretation, consciously sought by the author from the reader. Forms of writing used
have sought to address the interpretive approach (Denzin) that has guided this research,
embodiment and sentiment, and the experiential ontological conception of “the field”
(in and “out” of it), from which final interpretations have emerged. Once the basic
interpretive and methodological premises that have guided and determined the outcome
of this work have been explained, an encounter with Txalaparta becomes necessary.
Both through the sons and one daughter of the old players, and through those who set
out to recover Txalaparta from near extinction in the 1960s, the next chapter introduces
us to the “revival” and initial re-construction of this tradition and instrument.

20 The concept of “revival” has been problematised and analysed, among other, by Tamara E. Livingston
(1999), Owe Ronström (1996, 1997), and authors featured within Neil V. Rosenberg’s edited work
Transforming Tradition (1993). The related concept of “tradition” was also critically questioned earlier
by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger in their seminal work The Invention of Tradition (1983). These
authors, and others who have focused on specific revival processes (see for instance Slobin (2003),
Brocken (2003), Olson (2004), Josep Martí (1999), Goertzen’s (1997)), have highlighted the changeable
nature of the social constructions that underlie such concepts, even though such constructions may be
taken as natural (fixed) given by individuals that are personally engaged in revival movements (not
without contention).

Ronström states that the concept of “revival”, like “revitalization”, “recreation” (non hyphenated), and
other similar ones (we might add “recovery” as well, to cover well half of this thesis’ title), implies “the
existence of a bounded cultural entity, once alive, then vanishing, dying, later re-vived” (1996, 2). Such
concepts, he argues, point at the existence of originals (the “authentic”, perhaps considered “timeless”)
and reproductions (where the “now” may be considered by some social actors as non-legitimate). This
author proposes Mackinnon’s distinction between “re-enacting” and “revival”, in order to make the latter
useful as an analytical tool. Within this proposal, “re-enaction” is reserved for the imitation of past
practices considered as fixed (implying an authority that lies, if I may say so not without a charge of my
own judgement, in the rigidity of death). “Revival”, in tune with the concept of “living tradition”, would
then be taken to imply “artistic evolution” (from a symbolic past) and composition, that is, change, as
inherent to it (whereby the present, life as it happens, is a legitimate source for the expressive practices
at stake). Revival, as Ronström puts it, “is only partly about ‘what once was’. More importantly, it is about
‘what is’ and ‘what is to come’” (ibid., 14). It is within this proposed understanding that I use the concept
of “revival” in this dissertation. I also include the more problematic term of “recovery” within this
understanding, used in this dissertation to refer to an initial stage of reclaim of the nearly extinct or
in threat of extinction. The concept of “re-creation” is also framed in this dissertation within Ronström’s
adapted approach to “revival.” The hyphen in this last term points out the element of creation, inherent
to the phenomenon discussed, without discarding the meaning of “recreation” (closer to “reproduction”).
As it is evidenced by the different understandings of what Txalaparta is (chapter 4 of this dissertation),
there is always an element that participants claim as essential to it, rooted in “the past,” and that is to be
preserved/reproduced/recreated, albeit of changes introduced, if the practice in question is to be
considered Txalaparta. The concepts of “revival” and “re-creation” are used in this dissertation from an
etic stand, for the sake of understanding, since participants never referred to their practices in those terms,
but rather spoke of “cultural renaissance,” “recovery,” or “awakening,” among other expressions, as is
shown throughout this work. “Re-construction” is used in this dissertation in a similar manner to “re-
creation.”

The phenomenon that is the focus of this dissertation has some traits in common with those of other
revival movements, sharing structural features (Ronström 1996), and it also presents significant
differences given its cultural and political specificity. A comparative study of such characteristics (both
within a European and a larger international context) falls outside the scope of this dissertation and would
be a subject worth of exploration for another work.

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Chapter 2. Encountering Txalaparta

“I don’t want to discover something new but something forgotten.”

Grotowski

Introduction

This chapter offers an introduction to the tradition of Txalaparta as described and experienced by the main agents of its revival in the 1960s, when it was about to disappear, whose accounts are preceded by some of the old Txalaparta players’ descendants’. It offers an edited account of the discovery and re-creation of Txalaparta during Franco’s dictatorship by two main groups, namely Ez Dok Amairu and the dance group Argia, and presents some important posterior developments, through the voices of contemporary renowned personalities within the cultural life of Euskal Herria: the poet JosAnton Artze; instrument revivalist, teacher and museum curator Juan Mari Beltran; the late Mikel Laboa, experimental singer who, with the Artze brothers, Andoni Aleman or Joseba Urzelai, among others, incorporated Txalaparta into his practices within avant-garde understandings; singer and song writer Benito Lertxundi; dance revivalist and theorist Juan Antonio Urbeltz; or writer Rafa Eiguren (also former ETA activist). The crucial figure of the artist and philosopher Jorge Oteiza is also introduced in these pages.

Some important developments and tendencies in relation to Txalaparta, necessary to understand dynamics discussed in the rest of this dissertation, are also presented here. Some of the values and discourses that inform the interpretation provided in the next chapters are revealed in this section, yet in a somewhat less mediated manner on my part. On occasion a more obvious element of interpretation is offered through the use of bold fonts (a part from the interpretation contained in the edition of the material presented) to highlight words or concepts mentioned by participants, or by means of strategies described in the previous chapter.
The Old Txalaparta: A Rhythm, A Way of Playing, and “An Instrument” with No Name

The old players used to tell us that the instrument had no name … Txalaparta is not the percussive material, but the sound product of the combination of ttakun…, the counterpoint that is done to ttakun with the herrenas (JosAnton Artze, interview 2003.)

If today Txalaparta is used to refer to an instrument as much as to a way of playing, for the old Txalaparta players remaining in the 1960s, Txalaparta referred to an old rhythm (a certain rhythmic structure), transmitted from generation to generation from times unknown, played in a particular fashion (interlocking) and beaten by two

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1 As per Juan Mari Beltran, the Artze brothers and Josu Goiri, researchers of Txalaparta who had the opportunity of speaking with the old txalapartariak, these used to assert that they learned the tradition not from their parents but from their grandparents (it is not clear if this is the case for all Txalaparta couples, such as the Zabalegi, formed by father and son; it must also be noted that they stated they learned by watching, was it the grandparents who performed then?)
men with two sticks each held in an upright position. The last remaining performers used to play it on a wooden plank (a written account by Severo de Aguirre from 1882 mentions two planks), which was supported by two baskets or chairs, or anything else at hand (fig. 2.10), with some padding material (such as corn leaves) between the supports and the plank to allow the latter vibrate. Some of the types of wood used were alder, ash and chestnut, found locally (Beltran 2009), though foreign woods have been readily incorporated. The makilak, or sticks used to play Txalaparta, presented different lengths, but some of those used by the Goikoetxea brothers (one of the last couples still performing during the 1960s) were approximately 60cm long, 5cm of diameter on the base and less than 4cm diameter on top. Longer and heavier makilak have been used (and have been preserved by Juan Mari Beltran at the Herri Musikaren Txoko museum, archive and research centre in Oiartzun, Gipuzkoa). The measures of the plank used by the old players depended on the size of the cider press it was originally part of, the approximate length was of 2.5m and the approximate thickness was 20 to 25cm, according to Joseba Zuaznabar (son of Miguel Zuaznabar, one of the two brothers that together with the Goikoetxea and a few others still played Txalaparta by the 1960s). In old accounts of Txalaparta by music collectors (as far back as 1882), the name was sometimes used to refer to the tradition of toberak playing

Figure 2.3: Kirikoketa. Demonstration by the cultural group Jo ala Jo from Baztan at the Txalaparta Festa in Hernani, Gipuzkoa, Euskal Herria (Fieldwork May 2004).

Figure 2.2: Tobera. Donostia (Gipuzkoa, Euskal Herria). Year 1952 approx. as per Juan Mari Beltran (Source: Beltran 2009, p. 91).

2 The makila Simon Goikoetxea kindly honoured me with in July 2006, which was approximately 70 years old, as he explained, and belonged to his father, has the measures described above, with an approximate weight of 800gr, and is made of irocco (testifying that foreign wood was readily incorporated by the old txalapartariak).
as well. The toberak, plural of tobera, was a sound device and tradition consisting of at least one suspended iron bar percussed by two people also in an interlocking fashion (fig. 2.2, glossary). One of the Txalaparta rescuers and researchers, Juan Mari Beltran, uses the term of “txalaparta” as well to refer to other interlocking sound making traditions found in Euskal Herria (I will not yet use the term “music” as I will explain later). For the purpose of this thesis, however, I intend to focus primarily on Txalaparta, or “the” Txalaparta, that was specific to the environment of the cider-making baserri and was performed by two players, and re-creations based on it by the new generations since the late 1960s (a similar tradition, the kirikoketa, found in Baztan, Nafarroa, and also classified by Juan Mari Beltran as a variant of Txalaparta, involved three performers who also played in an interlocking fashion (fig. 2.3)).

Each Txalaparta player had a role to represent sonically: As per the accounts of the old txalapartariak (Txalaparta players), one of the players (referred by the Zuaznabar as “ttakun”, and who played the ttakun beat) played a continuous succession of “ttakun” beats for the duration of the piece (a ttakun beat involved two immediate strikes, being the second one stronger -accentuated, resembling together a heart beat, that is, the space between every ttakun would always be greater than that between the two strokes conforming a ttakun, except toward the end of the piece when the space between all strikes became even). The other player, known as herren (meaning “one-legged” man), would constantly try to alter the ttakun in a kind of challenge, inserting

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3 Beltran and other researchers state that “kirikoketa” is itself an onomatopoeic name, a claim that is possibly related to the lack of a known meaning for this word and a need for closure on the part of researchers, thus not engaging with the question of a possible original meaning for the term, despite the fact that most of this word’s components do have a known meaning in Euskara. It is striking no attempt has been made on this direction by persons otherwise concerned with origins (who have engaged however in a discussion about the possible meanings of “txalaparta”).

4 While in earlier works by Juan Mari Beltran this beat is spelled “txakun” (pronounced “chakun”) (Beltran 1988, 1988), in more recent publications he spells it as “ttakun”, like Joxean Artze in his poetry. I was told by a college lecturer of Basque in Madrid and other participants (1998) that the normalisation of Euskara is ongoing. I use the newer “ttakun” spelling throughout this work.

5 The names offered here are those used by one of the last remaining couples of txalaparta players by the 1960s, the Zuaznabar brothers, since they have been consistently adopted by all Txalaparta players.

6 Juan Antonio Urbeltz and his wife Marian alerted me to the full meaning of herren: limp because of a fire burn (the Basque word erre means “to burn” or “burn”). This brought us to the figure of the smith, who is generally invested with extraordinary powers of some sort and liminal connotations in traditional societies (Interview, June 2006). Furthermore, this may bring also images of the “limping devil”, a benevolent and helpful character found in old stories throughout Europe (even though Zulaika stresses the sinister character of the “limp” in Basque traditional society (Zulaika 1988)). From these reflections, I can not help landing in the tobera, the tradition also referred as “Txalaparta” by early collectors, related to the work in the lime kilns (the celebration of which was referred to as “lime weddings” (Barandiaran 1972)) and used as mocking replacement of church bells to serenade couples the night before or after marriage.
either an *herren* (one strike), a *ttakun* (two close strikes) or none *in between* every *ttakun* performed by the former *ttakun* player. The piece, of an approximate duration of 3 minutes, would start with the *ttakun* performer playing a few *ttakun* on his own, to be followed by the gradual incorporation of the *herren* player, who offered a kind of counterpoint to the *ttakun* player, creating different sound patterns with his gradual involvement. This would finally be resolved into a final stage where the players, *ttakun* and *herren*, would both play a rapid succession of *ttakun* beats, always alternating, that would end the piece at its peak in tempo and volume (which increased gradually from the start). The “lame’s” intervention, the Herren, was decisive in creating a complex rhythmic structure out of what would otherwise be a kind of monotonous repetitive pulse: “*Txakun* maintains the balance and reminds of references. *Herrena* changes, suggests, fills or not, creating motives and patterns … the regularity of *Txakun* contrasts with the creativity of *Herrena*” (Sanchez and Beltran 1998, 34). Other names have been highlighted for the players (regardless of whether they are for *txalapartariak* or tobera players), but the most commonly used are those employed by the Zuaznabar brothers, which are the names presented here (the Goikoetxea brothers referred to the player who performed the succession of *ttakun* bits as “*tukutun*”, and to the other player as “*urgun*” (Beltran 2003, Simon Goikoetxea, personal communication, 2006)). “*Urgun*” means “lame”, Beltran further points out; however for Simon Goikoetxea it meant “water place” as he explained to me. Different dictionaries show “*urgun*” as lame, and “*urgune*” as “watery place”, “marshy place” or also “water source”. A reflection upon this is offered in chapter 4, within different perspectives about the *ttakun* beat.

During the performance, which was improvised within the previous parameters, both players engaged in an exploration of the board, disclosing the timbral qualities of the wood. According to Juan Mari Beltran, both players performed side by side, though sometimes they would play facing each other with the plank in between. Simon Goikoetxea told me the opposite, which might point at both arrangements coexisting depending on the *bikote* (the couple). Within the cider-making family Zuaznabar, the session was first opened by a third man playing the ox horn. The Zabalegi also played

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7 Accounts collected by Juan Mari Beltran, JosAton Artze and Josu Goiri (among others), and published by these (see bibliography and discography).
the ox horn at the start of their Txalaparta performances (Beltran 2009). Txalaparta was generally played at night, after an outdoor meal for all those who had participated in the work, and during a well-attended cider drinking session. It was linked to the celebration of the cider-making, when the work had been finished, usually by the month of November, in just a few baserriak, Basque rural farm houses, scattered in the mountains of Gipuzkoa, in Euskal Herria, when it was rediscovered almost near its extinction in the 1960s. The oldest written account of Txalaparta, dates from 1882, though Joseba Zuaznabar (b. 1935), whose father and uncle played Txalaparta together up to the 1980s, claims that his grandparents played it too, and so did his great grandparents. The board itself on which Txalaparta was performed had been extracted from the cider press, and had been in contact with the apple. The tradition of Txalaparta was practiced in areas of cider-making in the Basque Country, and in particular, as per secondary and primary sources compiled and reviewed by Juan Mari Beltran, in the North of Gipuzkoa and Northwest of Nafarroa. However, by the late 1960s the tradition had declined enormously and many at the time feared for its extinction. Changes in the economy and lifestyle, with the progressive decline of cider-making baserriak, the decline of the baserri way of life, the interruption of some traditional practices during the Civil War and the repression during the first decades of Franco’s dictatorship, as well as an orientation in traditional Basque nationalism that did not chose Txalaparta as an identity marker, are some of the factors that may explain the isolation and almost disappearance of this particular tradition. Despite the progressive decline of cider production in the Basque Country, cider has become very popular again since the 1980s as a seasonal social activity around the sagardotegi (now more like cider restaurants), with Txalaparta also reincorporated to this cider culture. However, Joseba recalls that his family did not only play as a celebration of the cider-making (in a gathering where

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8 The cider drank in this occasion, as Beltran highlights (Beltran 2009), was zizar (rather the juice of the pressed apples before the fermentation process, or after a short one).
all those who contributed to the job where invited), but also on New Year’s Eve, and during the festivity of St. Peter (29th of June), after a well-attended mid-day dinner. Whatever else was contained within this tradition is not known with certainty, nor is its origin in time, and it is the beauty of such mystery that has engaged new generations of txalapartariak in different interpretations.

**Txalaparta as Played by the Old Txalapartariak, Descendants’ Memories**

The interviews I carried out in the summer of 2006 with some of the family members of the old Txalaparta players (two of their sons and one of their daughters) disclosed a nostalgia for times gone, and a fear that the tradition of Txalaparta, as passed on to them, would not survive long enough into the future. For Simon Goikoetxea (b. 1949), son of Asentsio Goikoetxea (1906-1986), the threat to the tradition was more than imagined. He showed me the old cider-press, in the Erbetegi-Etxeberri baserrí, in Alto de Amara, Donostia, Gipuzkoa (Euskal Herria). Source: Fieldwork, 14 July 2006.

![Simon Goikoetxea, son of Asentsio Goikoetxea, standing in front of the cider-press building where his father and uncle used to play Txalaparta at the cider-making celebration. Erbetegi-Etxeberri baserrí, in Alto de Amara, Donostia, Gipuzkoa (Euskal Herria). Source: Fieldwork, 14 July 2006.](image)

The festivity of St. Peter was celebrated all throughout the Basque Country. Juan Mari Beltran states that the Zuaznabar only started playing in this day’s festivity from the 1950s and adds that this family also played in the night of the Summer Solstice (Beltran 2009).
used as supports were also used to transport the apples to the second floor of the *tolare* house, the floor from which they were thrown to the press downstairs. A cow in the ground floor, Simon added, was used to turn around the device that would activate the *matxaka*, the machine to crush the apple that had substituted for the manual crushing with the *pison* –manual pounder\(^\text{10}\) (the apple had to be crushed in a certain way to avoid mashing the seed, so as not to spoil the cider, and to facilitate a greater production of juice later on at the cider-press). The board on which to play Txalaparta was taken from the cider-press, soaking wet with apple juice. Joseba Zuaznabar explained to me, while serving me cider for the duration of the interview, how the plank was picked: When they were taking the boards out of the press, piling them up, they’d notice the special sound of the board when falling over the rest, “oh! What a nice sound that one makes!” That plank (*patsola* in Euskara) would then be put to dry, under the roof, as per Simon Goikoetxea, as it had to be protected from direct sun contact (the Zuaznabar hung the chosen plank vertically from the roof beams inside). There were slightly different practices from a *baserri* to the next. Pilar Goikoetxea, daughter of Ramon Goikoetxea (1909-2000), Simon’s uncle, remembered, at our meeting in a busy bar in Donostia some weeks earlier, a certain atmosphere of competition in the area to see who would finish the work earlier, who had the boards already drying on the roof, under the sun (as her father stated too in interviews with Beltran): “people kept an eye on the roofs,” Pilar remembered (interview, June 2006). The boards drying on the roof were also a sign that there would be celebration soon. At the sounds of Txalaparta (which players claimed could travel a long distance), neighbours would attend the celebration and be invited to a night of merrymaking: drinking, singing, sung verse improvising, dancing, music making, Txalaparta included, until sunrise.

\[^{10}\text{The pison was a manual pounder made of Wood, oval shaped, flat in one end and with a stick on the other side to lift it and pound with it.}\]
“It is a kind of call, to invite to jump over the fire or whatever”, explains Joseba Zuaznabar, as he discusses some occasions where they played in the Summer Solstice, “an invitation to any thing, it is a kind of call, for me Txalaparta has been that”.

“An invitation to something...” I replied intrigued.

“Yes, invitation to something, to eat, or to drink cider, or to sing verses, or whatever.” Joseba emphasised this with a slap on the table (Interview, May 2006).

The plank chosen for Txalaparta (the more knots in the wood it had the better) would be kept for the purpose of performing for as long as it lasted:

“My father and that,” Joseba claimed, “had an alder plank that had been cut in May’s full moon, the alder, and it had 45 different sounds [meaning “many sounds” rather than literally 45], because every knot has a sound”. “They played that plank for years up to about ten years ago”, he added, “since the year nineteen thirty…two, because I know that plank went to play to the radio. With that same board, up to ten, fifteen years ago.”

“So it still remains, or has remained for a good while, at least,” I said.

“Beltran has that plank in the museum.”

As Joseba also explained, it was always the same two performers per baserri:

There was one couple. The rest knew how to play from watching and because they might have played between them; but just one couple, I mean, it has a couple, and that couple… My father and uncle started young, the two brothers, and until they died, no one could play with them… Well! I did! But…! (May 2006).

Joseba was allowed perform only as a substitution, as he explained, when either member of the bikote was unavailable. He argued that the reason why the Zabalegi stopped playing after Jose Zabalegi died was because the couple (father and son) had been broken (Beltran mentions that other members of the Zabalegi family could also play.

Figure 2.7: In memory of the father. Utensils to play Txalaparta displayed in Simon Goikoetxea’s home, under the picture of his father Asentsio, resembling a kind of shrine. Fieldwork 14 July 2006.
though no one did after Jose passed away (Beltran 2009)). There was a special understanding between both of the “official” performers, so to speak, that could not be matched by any one playing with either of them. I felt Joseba was using “perform” (or “play”, to be more accurate), with two different meanings, one was “to play” at the public performance “per se”, either “in the square” to show the tradition (framed as Basque), or at the celebration of the cider-making as it was customary, initiating the celebration and inviting others to come along for it; and then another “play”, more “playful” perhaps, after the two specialists, so to speak, had already officially opened the celebration, and others might have been allowed to try, so to speak (at the “interstices” of the ritual perhaps).

Both Simon Goikoetxea and Joseba Zuaznabar claimed they were not allowed play –unless they were substituting for their father or uncle, yet they did grab the makilak and try at occasions: both recalled learning by watching their father and uncle play, and by spontaneous practice at those opportunities in which they managed to get hold of the makilak the adults had been playing with; sometimes at those occasions, as Joseba explained, the father or the uncle would play a little with him and explain about the ttakun and herren. As per the old players testimony, collected by Beltran and the Artze brothers, the old txalapartariak learned directly from their grandparents rather than from their father and uncle; it is not clear however whether this transmission was by “watching” (which might indicate it was the grandparents who played) or explicitly undertaken by their grandparents. Pilar recalled those moments in which her father Ramon taught her to play Txalaparta with the spoon and fork at the table. Asentsio Goikoetxea, the eldest of the two brothers, she explained, kept the baserri, and Ramon moved out when he got married11. She would always play ttakun, and her father would be the herren, he wouldn’t let her be the latter: “It was like I was background music, the accompaniment, he was the one that played”, she smiled. He used to be very protective of his board, he wouldn’t give a loan of it to anyone, and in his last years, when he did not play anymore, he ensured he knew everything about whoever was going to use it: “who’s going to play, when, how…” She performed with him after her uncle, Asentsio, died; before it was always Ramon and Asentsio who were the ones to play. He used to

11 As per the traditional institution of “maiorazkoa”, or primogeniture, it was the eldest son or daughter who inherited the baserri and all that came with it, while the rest of the siblings would move out into the city or town, remained in the baserri helping out with the work, or else would become priests, nuns, soldiers, government officials, or emigrate, or more recently, in the past century, become industrial work force (Zulaika 1988).
work in a woodwork company as well as giving a hand in the baserri, where they used to visit often: “Ramon was a wood lover, he used to caress the wood, to look well after it; he was a carpenter” she added. When we met, Pilar was very guarded, no smiles, no handshake, no kisses on the cheeks unlike it is customary in the Basque Country. She avoided looking at me when she spoke, at the start of the interview, which I jotted down. She then gradually started to open up, to smile and look at me more often while talking, as the good memories started flowing in. Pilar told me she does not play anymore since her father died. I felt speaking about Txalaparta was for her either painful or pleasing. I felt that she was guarded for the former, and started opening up for the latter. “What does Txalaparta mean for you?” I asked. “Emotionally Txalaparta for me means to go with my father and make him happy”, she answered.

In my conversation with Simon, her cousin, he wished he could take the old tolare (cider-press), or the family’s part of it, to his current house (not far from the old baserri). The plan was however to keep it at the Cider Museum in Astigarraga, following the will of Astigarraga cider merchants. Emotions of attachment, longing, memories of times gone by mixed with details about the life in the baserri, with introductions to Euskal Herria, to Euskara, with Txalaparta. Simon teaches Txalaparta at the school of music of Astigarraga without charging for it. I found out when I saw a little statue depicting two txalapartariak playing, a present of recognition for his work. “Don’t you charge for teaching?” “No, because it is something I like…” He is humble about it. I insist and he adds: “I’ve told you, those of us who come from a baserri are…”, but the sentence is left unfinished. He tells me about the school always wanting to pay him: “‘Hey, Simon, hey, damn, how much we owe you?’ ‘Get lost, damn it’”, he replies. “Of course, it is something that you like…” he adds, leaving the sentence again unfinished. He does not elaborate on it anymore.
During my visit in July 2006, Simon Goikoetxea set out a board on two baskets and we played together. He always teaches Txalaparta as it was played by his father and uncle, and always with a single board, just like they did, as he explained. He instructed me to perform **ttakun**: As soon as one stick hits the board, the other one immediately goes down, he explained. The space between both strikes is minimal (the space between one **ttakun** and the next is much wider), and the second strike is stronger (**ttakun** is like a pulse, as it was put to me by some participants during fieldwork). I was less nervous than other times I had played since, as he explained to me, I was the one that marks the rhythm (sure, I couldn’t lose it!). **Ttakun** provides the rhythm (tempo) for the **herren**, it is the base. The performance of the **herren**, he told me, requires more skill (this reminded me of my conversations with Josu Goiri, who told me that the old **txalapartari** Pello Zuaznabar never allowed him to perform as **herreña** when they played together). “You take off from the centre [of the plank]”, Simon explained, then one of the players moves to the right and the other toward the left (facing each other in this case), “thus, there are lots of different sounds”. You play on one board, he explained, and then you turn it around and play also on the other side for new sounds (a different Txalaparta piece, that is). “The **makilak** we used were made of hazel tree and the board was made of Guinean wood” (fieldnotes, July 2006).

The best board the Goikoetxea had, Simon told me, was made of acacia wood, and of course taken from the cider-press. Toward the end of my visit, his son Aritz arrived for lunch and they both played together for me. Aritz started as **ttakun** (though Simon told me he is the one who usually starts as **ttakun**), and Simon as **herren**, and suddenly changed roles at a certain point. They always do that, as they explained. The old **txalapartariak** did not: Ramon Goikoetxea was always the **ttakun** and Asentsio (four years older) was **herren**, Simon explained. Ramon and Asentsio played in front of the

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12 It is worth highlighting, however, that Beltran has obtained at least a recording of the old **txalapartariak** where they change roles spontaneously at a given point in the piece –which of course could have been
entrance to the cider-press house after the dinner celebrating the end of the cider-pressing job, and the neighbours would then come as they heard the sounds, as a kind of call to join in the party, as Simon put it. They also played Txalaparta in New Year’s Eve, and so did the Zabalegi from their nearby baserri. The bikote (couple) from one of the baserriak would play first, then the bikote from the other one. The sound travelled kilometres in the middle of the night.

By the early 1960s, few bikotes (couples) of txalapartariak were left in the area of Donostia (Gipuzkoa): The Zuaznabar brothers (Miguel (1901-1983) and Pello (1906-2001)) from Lasarte, the Goikoetxea brothers (Ramon (1909-2000) and Asentsio (1906-1986)) from the Alto de Amara (Donostia), and the Zabalegi family from Martutene (who stopped playing when Jose Zabalegi died in 1963), all from the area of Donostia (Beltran 2009). Juan Mari Beltran is also able to name many more old txalapartariak (nine couples and at least six individual txalapartariak). Joxean Artze claims that by the 1970s a great number of men aged older than 60 could play Txalaparta though did not. He argues that the number of txalapartariak was probably much larger before the Civil War (interview by Grégory Antipas (Antipas 1998)). Juan Mari Beltran states that performances of Txalaparta in events where it was shown as a marker of identity, as he explains, were offered at least since 1920 and in 1934 before the Civil War:

In these instances, txalaparta is outside of its natural environment. It is offered as a curiosity of our culture and as a symbol of our personality and identity, and is accidental (the txakun does an herren and immediately the herren player “saves” the piece by becoming txakun). Juan Mari Beltran considers it a mistake, though one sorted successfully.

13 In 1931 the Zuaznabar brothers offered a performance of Txalaparta also at an event organised by a radio, Radio San Sebastian, together with a local choir (Beltran 2009).
incorporated to the climate of vindication of our popular character (Beltran 2009, 83).

The Zuaznabar and the Goikoetxea brothers claimed that the reason why they had not played in the first years of the dictatorship, or played only in counted occasions from the 1950s onwards, as stated by their current families today, by Joxean Artze (fieldwork interviews 2006 and 2003 respectively) and by Juan Mari Beltran back in 1999 (fieldnotes 1999), is because it was forbidden by Franco’s regime. Nonetheless, some performances were offered publicly in the 1950s despite such circumstances, with the specific intention of showing the tradition. Such performances were offered by the Zuaznabar especially, and less often by the Zabalegi or the Goikoetxea, the latter apparently not playing in public demonstrations of Txalaparta until the end of the 1960s (excepting a seemingly spontaneous participation by Ramon Goikoetxea in 1961 with one other attending txalapartari at a Txalaparta performance offered by the Zabalegi at The Basque Festival –“Euskal Jaiak”).

Juan Mari Beltran offers a list of events, and years, in which Txalaparta performances were offered publicly, outside of the cider-press context, from the 1950s onwards: The Zuaznabar participated at the San Pedro festivals for a few years (where they seemingly experienced some jeering from the audience\(^\text{14}\) that one of their relatives states put them off to an extent from performing in such settings (Beltran 2009)); in 1952 txalapartariak from the town of Hernani, Donostia, performed publicly as part of a Basque “macro festival” in Donostia; in 1955 in The Basque Festival (Euskal Jaiak) of Zubieta (by the Zuaznabar brothers) and in 1961 in the same celebrations also in Zubieta (by the Zabalegi and other txalapartariak) (Beltran 2009), among a few other events. Such performances may be taken as an assertion of Basque identity amid the highly repressive atmosphere of the times under Franco’s dictatorship, since the Zuaznabar claimed they were afraid of playing, yet they dared and did it; the

\(^{14}\) In this respect, it is worth mentioning that Basque nationalism was very selective as to what was acceptable of representing Basqueness and which was not (which has meant the disappearance of some dances and the promotion of others, or the promotion of certain instruments, like the txistu, in detriment of others, by the Basque Nationalist Party for instance, traditionally Catholic). In ethnographic interview footage with Pello Zuaznabar and Ramon Goikoetxea recently released by Juan Mari Beltran (Beltran 2009), Ramon Goikoetxea mentions that “they used to say that it [Txalaparta] came from the Moors.” In the Spanish State, that which was not considered morally acceptable within Catholic Church standards (such as a baquic rite tradition might have been) used to be attributed to “the Moors.”
Goikoetxea openly stated it was forbidden (they did play in the context of the cider-making celebration at their baserriak however, as the Zabalegi did up to 1963).

Memories that arose at an interview with a participating txalapartari in his 70s were also hard ones of abuse and harassment:

“We used to live before…, we had a baserri down there [pointing on its direction] … It wasn’t ours… [small pause] Another misdeed by Madrid! [small pause] I’m going to tell you, look… Those times when… -four hundred, five hundred years ago- when Spain took charge of the Basque territory, five hundred years or more [1515, when Ferdinand The Catholic officially annexed the south of the Kingdom of Navarre to the Kingdom of Castile], then, what happened: They arranged for contributions to be paid for lands and houses. Here no one found out. No one.”

“What do you mean with ‘contributions’? Do you mean that some kind of taxes had to be paid?” I asked.

“They organised taxes to be paid to the State, and here no one found out. Some military from Madrid knew about it! They paid those contributions to Madrid, and after 10 or 15 years, it [the property] was theirs!’15 (interview, 2006). He further stated this happened to many houses in Gipuzkoa, and that explained Spanish surnames attached to Basque property from that far back.

“That is what happened in my baserri!”

“So you lost it”, I added.

“Of course! We didn’t lose it…, we lost it as in my grandparents’ grandparents…” “And then they are surprised we have grudges!” He added. “I am going to tell you something: They took my grandfather -after the war, they took my grandfather to the police station; they kept him two days in the station, and he had to pay a fine, because he could not speak Castilian and was speaking in Basque with his wife, in San Sebastian [pause]. Yes, yes, I’ll tell you!” He adds: “In the war, in the year 1939, the military here shaved both of my aunts’ heads completely for speaking Basque” (interview, May 2006).

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15 As per historical records, the former Kingdom of Navarre did not pay any taxes to Castile/Spain until 1830. The sociologist Justo de la Cueva argues that what this participant claimed, might have happened in the hard repressive war that ensued for 9 years after the kingdom fell in 1521 (personal communication, July 2010).
Juan Mari Beltran explained to me at our first meeting in the Herri Musikaren Txoko, seven years earlier, that Txalaparta had been banned, though now he is more cautious about this, and rather states he believes it was played with caution due to fear than to an actual prohibition. Beltran recalled for me what he explained was told by the old txalapartariak: they would send someone to the police station to check if Txalaparta could be heard there, which they said depended on the wind direction. Those at the baserri would produce some beats, and if these could not be heard at the station, they would then proceed to play at the cider-making celebration, “as they had always done,” Beltran stressed (Interview February 1999).

I asked Joseba Zuaznabar about the banning of Txalaparta by Franco’s regime, “is it true?” 16:

“Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. Here, my father and my uncle, before I was born, they went to a radio in San Sebastian, with the Lasarte choir, they went to play Txalaparta to the radio, and they performed in the squares…”

“When was this, sorry?”

“Before 1935, before 1936. And they used to go and play at celebrations… they used to go there. But as soon as the nationals [Spanish nationalist forces] arrived here… That is, when Franco wins the war, in the year 1939, he wanted to erase all what was Basque from the map. Then they banned those… certain dances, Basque dances; the bertolaris they were banned, it was forbidden to speak [Basque] in the streets, and all Basque expression was being banned, completely. And the first time… I’m going to tell you how did Txalaparta come out to the square. Look, I’m going to tell you: There were four or five known couples here, no more was left from the war. …There was people in the farm-houses that could play but did not come out. Those who came out, those who dared face the consequences were four or five couples. They went to the celebrations…, or whatever they were called, from one place to the next … The first time that it [Txalaparta] came out after the war: look, a Basque festival was organised here, in Lasarte’s racecourse, and, of course, there were carriages that were coming from San Sebastian… They got into the carriages in the racecourse and then they went to Zubieta, and in Zubieta it was organised… And of course, no one knew Txalaparta existed! Of course, this is…, 1950, 1945, or 1950, something like this, when I was 15

16 Not that I doubted JosAnton Artze, or Beltran when he told me in 1999, but this is the way the question came out.
years old, therefore the year… by the 1950s, I was 15 years old myself! … There was at the time a marchioness in Usurbil, and the Usurbil marchioness was married to a military officer, a Spanish military officer. The Usurbil marchioness was married, uh… Then, the marchioness’ son used to come here to… (besides, his name was Perico), he used to come here to spend the summer, and they said to him: ‘how come this is not…’, and he called his father, in Madrid, and someone intervened from some Ministry, and pulled off the authorisation for them [Miguel and Pello Zuaznabar] to go to play Txalapart, and they were collected at home, and they went, my father and my uncle, to play Txalaparta to the festival of Zubieta.”

Joseba added that articles started to appear in some newspapers and Txalaparta started to be known: “…then people found out… We went to play for all the authorities to the Fuenterrabía castle, the Carlos V Castle. We played there on the battlements. I went to play with one of my parents, then I was about 18 years old, and since then it all started. Then people started coming to our house to learn … (interview, May 2006).

“Euskal Jaiak”, Basque festival, may be understood as an assertion of Basque difference and of political/cultural claims along with it, a stand of nonconformity against the ongoing political and physical denial of a “difference” that for a long time had equally denied freedoms attached. It may be thanks to this stand against denial that Txalaparta reached new generations seriously determined to take it from its near death into being. In 1963 a musician and incipient film maker, Fernando Larruquert, attended a performance of Txalaparta by the Zuaznabar at a sagardotegi (cider shop/tabern) for Swedish TV; he would later incorporate it in his 1964 documentary Pelotari (co-produced with Nestor Basterretxea). That same year, Imanol Olaizola (among other things, founder of the Orquesta Sinfónica de Euskadi –Basque Synphonic Orchestra), who had been encouraged to do something about the loss of Txalaparta at the 1961 “Basque Celebrations” in Zubieta, set out to record a performance at the Zabalegi’s baserri, which a few days later got to Basque artist Jorge Oteiza, who immediately appreciated in it the presence of something ineffable, and published a news piece to divulge the discovery. The composer Francisco Escudero, also present at that cider celebration with Olaizola, set out to include Txalaparta rhythms in his Opera Zigor! in Basque language. Soon Txalaparta was also incorporated by the Artze brothers in their

17 The opera, which would be performed for the first time in 1967, is based on a legend about the first king of the Kingdom of Navarre, Sancho I, and the attempt to ruin his sovereignty (which in the end
emerging group “Ez Dok Amairu” (Olaizola 2006). It would be Oteiza who would put Juan Mari Beltran on the tracks (Beltran, interviews 1999, 2006). Of the new generation that took the baton from the old players and gave an important push to the tradition, the most well known and influential are perhaps the Artze brothers, and Juan Mari Beltran, who initially engaged in its recovery with his brother, and has become an authority on Txalaparta. Many others, however also went on to learn the tradition and make sure Txalaparta, like other Basque expressive culture elements and Basque language, survived. These and other young people would go on to initiate a period of cultural activism that I have found endures to this day. Each of them hold a fraction of a bigger multifaceted story, a story still in the making, for it is a story about life.

fails, hence the title “Zigor!” meaning “punishment”, which is what the character who attempts to take Sancho’s crown gets in the end). The opera establishes a symbolism with the current situation of Euskal Herria amid the Spanish dictatorship and further back to the loss of its once enjoyed freedoms (the Kingdom of Navarre, or Pamplona, is presented by Escudero as Euskal Herria itself (Larrinaga 2000)).
The Awakening

…Our people: Our Prehistoric soil keeps treasures for us which are a testimony that our artistic sentiment and our religious sentiment are one and the same within our traditional personality and sensibility, because both have had the same origin in the creative sensibility of art; for us to know today that for the recovery of our soul, our language, the whole Basque man, our re-education by art in all situations is essential: the recovery of the artist, the poet, the verse improviser in everyone of us. It is the time of our artistic vocations. We need help to found our popular university of Basque artists where we must find our identity again, study and work together: painters, musicians, txistu players, writers, sung verse improvisers, dancers, teachers … (Ama Lur 1968).

The film documentary Ama Lur (Mother Earth)\(^{18}\), released in 1968 after its initial prohibition by Franco’s censorship apparatus, opens with a panoramic view of a breathtaking Basque landscape of mountains and coastline, emerging from the fog as the passionate call by the Basque sculptor Jorge Oteiza soon turns from Castilian into a haunting Euskara:

\[
\text{Herriko danok: Lan egin behar dugu gure herri osoaren ikastetxe nagusia gaur bertan jasotzeko, orduan artisten laguntzekin han ziñan bezala elkartuak herriak nahi ta nahiez aurkituko du bere nortasuna galdua.}
\]

(Everyone in the nation: We need to work to establish today the university of our country, thus with the assistance of artists, joined together as you used to be, the nation will find its lost identity\(^{19}\)) (Ama Lur, 1968).

Oteiza’s call above to recover the lost identity, contained in a Basque expressive culture under threat of extinction, defined a new era in Basque history that would be


\(^{19}\text{Translation by A. Lasuen.}\)
marked to this date by a strong drive to ensure the survival and continuation of the Basque nation into the future. A drive that Oteiza hoped would reach the highest instances of the Government in Basque lands, involving and uniting every agent toward a single goal, yet has remained at a grassroots level. It was a call for both a recovery of the lost and creation anew, from an avant-garde contemporary stance in art that expressed a deep dissatisfaction with the immediate authoritarian social and cultural frameworks that had led Europe into the disaster of war and genocide and that still remained. Intellectuals and artists engaged in the search for something that once was, before culture became “corrupt”; a search for universals perhaps buried underneath disintegration and that had to be found and recomposed in new ways, with the desire to heal what was broken. This call by the Basque sculptor and thinker Jorge Oteiza, who infused his drive into a new generation of Basques, acting as a catalyst of the contemporary revival since the 1960s, defines identity in terms of sentiment, “deeply felt sentiment”, if we may borrow Steven Feld’s expression; identity as conformed by, contained, in art. For Oteiza, art and soul are one and the same: the immersion into Basque art will ensure the recovery of that which is most inner. Soul, sentiment, art, survival, struggle: these are keywords that combine in naming something that cannot be defined, something suspended between life and death, something for which many would be willing to pay a high price.

The Generation of the 1960s and 70s

Well, I received this situation, and the issue of Txalaparta ... like a resurrection a bit of the Basque culture, and all this, dealing with existence when I was 16, 17, 18 years old, about that, right? then..., and then..., well, the atmosphere..., you can imagine the atmosphere! In Europe..., well, in the world pretty strong things were happening: the Vietnam War, perhaps the first mass youth movement against Vietnam, and this kind of struggles there were in Indochina, and all this... Well, what happened in Cuba was also fairly new, and all this. Uh... That on the one hand, on the other hand the youth was taking a leading role that it had never had... These are interpretations I have done posterioris … but somehow it is the first time that the youth has the purchasing power, in some widespread manner. A consumer market for young people is created in music, in the way of dressing, the hippies, all of this... And all this is happening in the world. We were seeing this.
When we were teenagers, we were seeing all this that was happening outside, but from a..., stuck inside a cage which was the Franco regime” (Rafa Egiguren, interview, July 2006).

I met Rafa Egiguren (b. 1948) in July 2006 at a café in the old quarter of Donostia. Writer and poet in Euskara (and active agent in the normalisation and transmission of the language), he was one of the youth that learned to play Txalaparta in the mid 1960s, performing occasionally with the group Ez Dok Amairu, which is presented soon in this chapter. Egiguren, on a similar line to other participants of his generation and Basque authors who engage with the recent history of Euskal Herria, highlighted a confluence of different factors which influenced the climate of revival in relation to the Basque Struggle and the movement of Euskal Kanta Berria (Basque New Song): a period of decolonisation that gradually took place internationally after World War II, especially during the 1960s and 70s, within an international climate of revolution as the youth gained an unprecedented centre-stage position, becoming a promising force for change, as exemplified by the 1968 student uprisings in France and the hippy movement. From the start of the 1960s, Marxism gained currency as a leading ideological basis for liberation, which would also have a strong influence in the Basque youth of the 1960s, as Egiguren and other participants highlighted. The experience of social mobilisation of Cuba, Cyprus or Algeria, and other countries, such as China (and ten years later Ireland, with the Provisional IRA amid the worst times of “The Troubles”), became important references for ETA and a Basque youth that swiftly responded to the call for the survival of the nation, articulated around Basque language and Basque culture (a youth also with a strong internationalist orientation). In the meantime, the south of Euskal Herria, like the rest of the Spanish State, was under the oppressive regime installed by Franco after the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939).

During the Civil War and the next initial decades of Franco’s dictatorship, relevant personalities in politics and Basque culture disappear from the Basque scene. This and the severe repression and banning of political parties and unions, and the banning of Euskara and often Basque cultural activities, created a vacuum that will be deeply felt by the younger generations:

What the Civil War meant here must always be had into account, you know? The Civil War motivated lots of things, and among them, many people from here, intellectuals, had to escape or were killed ... Then we didn’t know our history
practically. Everything was hidden. You could not speak in Euskera… Everything that was “euskaldun” and so on was practically hidden … it was very, very persecuted, you know? (Mikel Laboa, interview, May 2006).

During the first decade of ETA’s existence the organisation was mostly dedicated to its cultural front (the promotion of Basque language, clandestine since it was banned at the time by the dictatorship). Several ikastolak, schools where education is provided through the medium of Basque language, were founded; Euskaltzaindia (the Academy of Basque Language, founded in 1918) initiated its work to produce a standardised form of Euskara, which gave fruit in 1968; and there was a remarkable emergence of social and cultural movements, initially clandestine during the ‘60s decade of the dictatorship. The climate of popular resistance to oppression in Latin America, also exerted a strong influence in the Basque Country, not only from a social-political perspective, but also in the realm of culture, a culture that was politically engaged and set out to denounce oppression and mobilise people against it, articulating humanitarian values of equality, sharing and brotherhood, while invoking the cultural roots of the colonised in their themes and musical forms (the Nueva Canción phenomenon, with Violeta Parra, and Atahualpa Yupanqui, for instance, whose repertoire the Basque singer Mikel Laboa used to sing initially). Coupled with the influence of popular musicians that were brought in through a media industry that was taking off was the Marxist philosophical thought of European thinkers from the Frankfurt School, French existentialism, German dramaturgy (Bertolt Brecht), the work of anthropologists like Frazer or Eliade or philosophers like C. Jung (to whom some youth turned to in a desire to make sense of humanity at such critical historical time), or composers like John Cage, among others, as well as an increasing exposure to Oriental philosophies and belief systems. The engagement with these new currents of thinking and doing would soon be infused with an inward reflection and revindication of a local culture threatened of extinction. The general spirit of action showed not only in the armed struggle but in a parallel movement of revitalisation within popular culture, recovering the old and creating anew: the oppressed were starting to rise up, in the Basque Country as much as in Ireland, Chile or Zimbabwe (Rhodesia at the time).

Rafa Egiguren, also former member of ETA until 1970, when the Trotskyists left the organisation at its 6th conference further explained:
When I was 14 years old I was already distributing ETA pamphlets … The structure [ETA] had was four fronts … a cultural front, a political front, a military front and a working class front, and then crisis emerged… because it was changing, but that time was the one of the four fronts, right? And then, well, there were pamphlets that somehow theorised, or suggested, or proposed, a little also what kind of things [were of concern] in the cultural front. For instance, the recovery of Euskera, such as the movement of the ikastolas that had begun, the necessity of producing culture in Euskera, and so on, but they were more or less general approaches, that somehow greeted what was being done outside [of ETA], … those things did not emerge because ETA said they had to nor because ETA promoted them, rather it was a spontaneous movement of the people … Before that … what had to do with Basque culture, and with Euskera, and all that, most of it was quite folkloric, … [it] was a bit like a kind of preserving what was there and so, and without developing anything. … And then, there, during those years, a true revolution began. I think that, well, there was, I think, cultural winds in Europe, in the world, and all this, and it could be seen here too, the youth wanted to do something new, right? And then that, it wanted to do something new in politics, and that’s how ETA was born, it wanted to do something new with the schools … It was an enormous rupture with the Basque Nationalist Party … It felt that [PNV] was not radical enough, but not radical enough not only in the struggle way, but in relation to approaches to Euskera, independentist approaches, those kind of things. PNV at the time, we, when we served during several years in ETA, we didn’t see PNV anywhere! That is, PNV appeared when there were elections and that [during the so called transition after Franco’s death], and then it wins over the whole market! Right? But I mean that during the times of clandestinity and that PNV was conspicuous by its absence! … But the orbit was more like that, right?, it was of ETA, of the radical nationalism. And then, of course, I think that in those years that go from the nineteen sixty and a few to 1970, 71, or more, a left wing working class sentiment starts emerging there (interview, July 2006).

A sector of the Basque clergy was very supportive of the youth’s cultural activities of the times and the recuperation and activation of Basque culture, such as the Capuchins order, whose Church in Donostia was the choice of many families since, as stated by
some participants of the 1960s and 70s generation, Euskara was incorporated in the mass. As I was told by different participants who were in their 20s at the time, the Capuchins facilitated the voice of the younger generations through their magazine Zeruko Argia (“the light of heaven”), which would eventually turn into Argia (“light”).

… And later some musicians started also, then Benito Lertxundi, and Laboa and all these, and that was a great inspiration. I think that above all Jorge Oteiza was fundamental there. Thanks to Jorge Oteiza our generation…, for the first time we saw, when we were 17, 18 years old, that we could have access to modernity without relinquishing our Basqueness. And we understood that for the first time, at least me, and I think that many, with Oteiza, I mean, the reinterpretation that he did a bit of all what was Basque culture … He used to tell me: “Fucken hell! We’re on a vibe that’s wicked! We have a fantastic cultural infrastructure, a para-culture, the pastorales from Zubeora, the songs…, all that, we have to take it and turn it around”, that is, it wasn’t to make folklore, but to recover [that] and orient it toward the future, right?, [Oteiza said] all this giving suggestions (Rafa Egiguren, interview, July 2006).

The 13th Apostle: The Basque Artist Jorge Oteiza

The figure of Oteiza, an important agent of the “mental” decolonisation of Euskal Herria after the Civil War, was often highlighted by participants in this research as a catalyst for the cultural movement that was initiated in the 1960s in the Basque Country and as an important influence over their generation and others to come. Jorge Oteiza (1908-2003), a charismatic multifaceted artist and philosopher, began his work as a sculptor within contemporary European avant-garde aesthetics during the time of the Spanish Republic. The cultural front of which he was part together with other avant-garde artists (very polemic within the conservative approach of Basque nationalism at the time) would be stopped in its tracks by the Civil War. In 1948, the sculptor returned to Euskal Herria determined to re-organise the cultural front, infusing life back into the
cultural scene, now enthused by “the revolutionary utopianism and experimental passion of Russian Constructivism”, as put by Zulaika (2003, 9).

Prior to the call to make the nation by Jorge Oteiza that Nestor Basterretxea and Fernando Larruquert featured in the movie *Ama Lur* in 1968 (also featuring Txalaparta), the sculptor and philosopher had published an essay that would start the Basque cultural revolution of the 1960s. In 1963, Oteiza’s *Quosque Tandem…! Essay of Aesthetical Interpretation of the Basque Soul* caused great impact among the youth. Oteiza, through what I would describe as an enthralled, intrepid and fearless poetical thinking in prose, offers in his work an ardent re-evaluation of Basque culture, a traditional yet new popular art, apt for the highest human realisation, as he presents it, appreciating it in itself, reclaiming it and inviting every other Basque to do the same and to continue creating within its spirit, for the recovery of what had been lost, from the arts (for it is art that is soul).

In *Quosque Tandem…!* the artist theorises Basque culture, decolonising it, reclaiming it from Mediterranean cultural domination (via Spain and France), returning to prehistoric, pre Indo-European roots, in which, as he claims, the “Basque man” is already whole, “reclaimed by art and in art”.

It is the time to react with our own style and to stop remaining silent or stuttering with an inconceivable creative and spiritual inferiority complex because of a lack of knowledge of our own worth, our own soul; a primitive soul in its origins, the first and highest existentially and culturally (Oteiza 1994 [1963], 112).

Basque culture and language were thus rescued from a mindset that deemed them outdated, and launched into a front of modernity well ahead of its time. In this hallmark publication, the artist and philosopher reaches back to the most ancient remnant of Basque art, represented by the Neolithic *cromlech* (stone circle), offering a groundbreaking, ardent and inspiring interpretation of Basque culture that strongly resonates with Zen. Oteiza, the sculptor of the void, considered his sculptural production finished in 1958 (after his sculpture series of “Disoccupation of the Sphere” and “Metaphysic Boxes”) when he finally found the goal of his artistic experimentation process, the arrival to the spiritual station that leads him to write *Quosque Tandem…!*

[The “change from an art as natural science to an art as spiritual science”] was facilitated in my personal experience by a reflection about the aesthetic energy in
the void of the statue as space clearing, which left me with a lone and isolated space in my hand. I ended up running out of statue, but commencing life (Oteiza 1994 [1963], 98).

It is this life that he would then infuse into a silenced society as he reached out to a new generation with questions. Prehistoric art has been created, as the artist puts it, by a whole “man” rather than one yet in the making. In this way the artist reclaims “the Basque man” from the very origins: “I am Pre Indo-European, I am eighteen millennia old, but I keep well” (Oteiza cited in Maraña 1999, 201). This primeval art is complete, Oteiza would maintain, and avant-garde (already modern). The artist found in such an art a philosophy of the void, where Basques ultimately invoke, i.e. through the void contained within the circle of the cromlech, the matrix (mother) void of the Universe (nocturnal sky) where God is encountered (or trapped):

…I can state, and state now: That art consists, in every epoch and place, of an integrating, re-tying, process, of man and his reality, which always comes from a nothingness which is nothingness, and concludes in another Nothingness which is Everything, an Absolute, as a limit response and a spiritual solution of the existence. The whole process of European Prehistoric art ends in the transcendent Nothingness of the Basque Neolithic cromlech empty space (Oteiza 1994 [1963]).

Oteiza called upon Basques to immerse themselves in the art of their people, and through the void it leads to, merge with the transcendent again. Euskara itself (not only persecuted at the time, but also suffering from a devaluation within sectors of Basque society) was included as part of this both ancient and contemporary art that he found reflected in other Basque cultural values: “We relate the creation of the cromlech with the formation of the most intimate features the Basque retains in his way of facing reality and life” (Oteiza 1994 [1963], 96-97).

The artist developed his aesthetical theory in different publications, including a sequel to Quosque Tandem…! that would not be published until 1984, after its banning
in 1966 by the Ministry of Information and Tourism: *Ejercicios espirituales en un tunnel. En busca y encuentro de nuestra identidad perdida* ("Spiritual exercises in a tunnel. In search and finding of our lost identity"). He also held a long struggle against an establishment he failed to engage in his cultural proposals (such as the creation of a Basque University of Art, or an International Institute of Comparative Aesthetics Research). In the last (5th) edition of *Quosque Tandem…!*, the author expressed his frustration with the Basque Nationalist Party, in power at the time (1994) in the Basque Autonomous Community, and with the Government of Nafarroa. In his “prologue to this already useless book in betrayed Basque culture”, Oteiza refers to the 13th apostle of the Basilica of Arantzazu [spatial arrangement as in the original]:

…the only one that is showing his back on the dado, with his severed head in his raised hands which call for justice to Heaven

is the most like me.

“The ideal emerges from the sick man, the sane man has no true ideal”, stated Oteiza, who referred to his revolutionary efforts to revert the Basque “man” back to his “style” and wholeness, as a conspiracy (Zulaika 2003, 58).

Oteiza’s advocacy of art as a “school of political awareness” (Zulaika 2003, 451-79) and his passionate calls for artists, anyone, to immediately start rebuilding the nation from the arts may not have been answered from the establishment, but were taken very seriously by a youth with questions. A cultural movement which would be referred to as the “Basque School of Contemporary Art” was initiated in the mid 1960s, coordinated and driven by the charismatic sculptor, poet, philosopher, gathering many artists and art groups from different fields: the theatre group Jarrai, the figurative arts group Gaur, and others:

Through Jorge, the sculptor, a Basque School of Contemporary Art was created. Jorge was the facilitator. There were mainly sculptors and artists above all, right?, then there was a group that was recovering traditional song and song forms, which was Ez Dok Amairu, and then we were there a little group, a dance group, which was the group Argia, that I directed (Juan Antonio Urbeltz, interview June 2006).
From the midst of these two last groups is from where the main rescuers of Txalaparta in the 1960s and 1970s emerged (notwithstanding the work of so many others who also engaged with this tradition, such as the dance group Goizaldi, from Donostia (Beltran 2009)).

In 1964, a short film, *Pelotari*, by Basterretxea and Larruquert, highlighted the Basque sport of *pelota*, to the soundtrack of Txalaparta, including also footage of a Txalaparta performance by the Zuaznabar brothers dressed with sheepskin jackets, dramatising the rural extraction of the tradition, showing a reaffirmation of Basque culture as distinctively Basque and praising the figure of the *pelotari* (*pelota* player) as a hero, at a time of harsh repression of Basques by Franco’s dictatorship. Also in this year ETA issued its Open Letter to Basque Intellectuals (*Carta abierta de ETA a los intelectuales vascos*), through their journal *Zutik*. The letter, written from a Maoist ideological perspective, presented the Spanish State as a colonising, imperialist entity, and Franco’s regime in particular as capitalist (Bruni 2001). In this letter the organisation explained its motives and goals, and asked all social agents to join in the struggle for national liberation (Casanova 2007):

…The second objective of this our first letter … is to open a sincere dialogue with you. … [this letter] wants to be a wake-up call, an alarm, we want to shake off your lethargy, too long by now, we want to wake you up. You cannot, you do not have the right to, remain blind and deaf, neutral, before the convulsions that trouble a people (politically, religiously, aesthetically, socially, culturally, in the end, existentially) in its struggle for its total liberation, for trying to BE again … (ETA cited in Bruni 2001, 50).

It is within this climate of struggle that revival work for the salvation of the language and many other cultural forms was undertaken by different artists, within a general scenario of commitment with the social and political situation of Euskal Herria, as was exemplified in the birth of what would be known as Euskal Kanta Berria (the New Basque Song), term used to refer to a new generation of socially and politically engaged singers and song writers (singing in their persecuted language, Euskara) influenced by North American singer and song writers as well as those from similar song movements such as the Latin American “Nueva Canción”, the French “Chanson”, and the Catalan “Nova Cançó”. Extensive (and ongoing) ethnographic work was
undertaken by young artists relying on their own wits, always in a self-taught manner, to recover and salvage dances, songs and instruments. One such tradition that was recovered and incorporated into new ways of doing, was Txalaparta. It was encountered directly through the old performers at a time when its extinction seemed imminent. Txalaparta was recovered in direct contact with them, learning from them, recording interviews and organising workshops to teach others to play. It is in this way that the Artze brothers (engaged with the avant-garde), and Juan Mari Beltran (following on the tradition of early 20th C. collectors and oriented toward a Western European musical and scientific canon), encountered Txalaparta and became drawn to it, dedicating to it, as many others would soon, a significant part of their lives.

Colonisation

Lotsa (shame)

Repression

Bildurra... (the fear)

-ezeztapen (denial)

...maitasuna (the love)

Baietza (affirmation)-

Resistance
The Birth of Txalaparta Zaharra

JosAnton Artze (b. 1939), colloquially Joxean, a well known Basque poet who writes experimental poetry in Euskara, is one of the mythic artists who engaged in the cultural revival of the 1960s and 70s in the Basque Country. Together with his brother Jexux, 6 years younger, they gave themselves to Txalaparta and made it theirs, soon initiating a process of innovation and experimentation, within avant-garde understandings, of what many would refer to as “Txalaparta Berria”, the new Txalaparta. Juan Mari Beltran soon joined the enterprise, moulding it into more orthodox western musical understandings, dedicating to it his whole life to date. With Txalaparta Berria, Txalaparta Zaharra (the old Txalaparta) was born: Romantic reflections and dreams of freedom with anarchist and Zen resonances; general Marxist understandings and aspirations. Legitimation for current practices, but more importantly, an anchoring in the world as Basque, these themes are all articulated in narratives and explanations about what the old Txalaparta was like, as well as what it now is –or what it is not, as will be shown in the next chapters.

The Artze Brothers

The Discovery

I interviewed JosAnton Artze in May 2003, in his house in Usurbil, the Gipuzkoan town where he is from. I felt it was a kind of an assault, given the current climate of persecution of things Basque, and Artze’s deep engagement with Basque language and culture, to discuss his involvement in Txalaparta in Castilian, but my knowledge of Euskara was far too basic. He did not mind, though he did warn me that, being used to thinking and writing in Basque, he might have some difficulty in articulating his thoughts. He was at the time preparing a speech he was to deliver in a few days at the Txalaparta Festa -the festival’s theme this year was a homage to his brother, Jexux, who had passed away a year ago.

During the interview, I try to be as little intrusive as possible. I try to adapt to his rhythm, calm, intuitive, reflective, very expressive. Txalaparta is poetry. Sometimes he speaks very softly, with just the bare volume for me to hear him. Sometimes he speaks as
if he was reciting a poem. I ask him about their first encounter with the tradition of Txalaparta, which I found was preceded by that of the language, as is the case with many of those I have spoken to in the course of this research:

There, well…, precisely the first thing: the awakening. The ttakun that we have inside. We all have a rhythm inside, and in life we must discover what is our rhythm. That’s it. All peoples of the world ask themselves that, don’t they?

I hear the soul of the poet entangled with the heavy fate of his people, whose heart beats together with theirs, whose poetry emerges precisely from such interface.

He continues:

And then there are some peculiarities. For some, a certain rhythm is more adequate, for others, another, isn’t it? And in our case, it may be the ttakun. I am going to tell you something about this that happened to me when I was eight years old. When I was eight years old, here in the village celebrations, there was one of these days between…, during the celebrations, one of these days in which there is nothing programmed, but all the shooting galleries, the candy, the cotton candy, and all that, is there. Then, though there is nothing programmed, there is a celebration atmosphere, people go there…, you know, they are there… And one of such days, in the square here, the stage for the little orchestra was still there …, they played a bass drum, an accordion and I don’t know what else, so it was there, it was there also. And then I saw two farmhouse men come, go up onto the stage, grab some baskets and some other thing, put a plank on top, and without giving any announcement or anything, they start playing: 

*Ttakun, ttakun*…

That caused me…

such an impression!

I felt such a thing inside…!

But like this, but cha! *like a fairy appearing in storytelling*, which I still can’t understand, because I have no music related memory of such kind from those times. It was such a thing…!

Something…, but like, like very intimate and very familiar! Something…! They played, and I stayed there mesmerized… Look, I didn’t know, I didn’t know what it was, nor, nor… nor what it was or anything… That happened. And then,
afterwards, I forgot about it ... And then when... after spending many years abroad, when I returned, and discovered my country, right?, which I discovered in London…”

María: When was that?

JosAnton: When I was about 23 years old. First of all I went to Paris, then to Stockholm, and then to London. I spent two years and there I discovered my country. And when I saw it, I discovered my country then, and at Franco times no one dared move here..., speaking Euskera was almost forbidden, and...

María: My Gosh! What do you mean you discovered your country? That it was when you went out that you realised…?

JosAnton: Yes.

María: …when you became a foreigner…?

JosAnton: Yes, yes. I discovered the language, first of all, because I had to write to..., in order to, but..., therefore in order to..., of course, to get out from here I went to..., in order to learn French... We learned a bit of French. Later in Sweden we learned a bit of Swedish -I was also working as a waiter there. Afterwards I went... Back then I believed that languages were..., that languages were richer or were more elevated depending on the quantity of people that could speak. “The more people that speaks it, the better it must be”, you know?, I had the quantitative aspect..., “then the more people that spoke…” From Stockholm we were thinking of going to China, to learn Chinese, imagine. Then we thought of going through Russia, and...

María: [Interrupting] And how many were you?

JosAnton: Two. Two. No, we were two. The painter Zumeta, Jose Luis Zumeta. And both of us went on a vespa [he proceeds to explain for me the make of a vespa] ... With that we did it. Then we went and that. And I was like that. And then, when I had to write to the “ama” [mother in Euskara], I said: “In which language shall I write to the ama”, because back then I even wrote poems in English! And then I realised that to the ama, I could only write to her in Euskera, of course. And that’s how I discovered. … And then you realise that quality is not in the quantity of people who can speak, but in the quality of who can speak it, that is where the richness of a language is, there it is, in the quality of those who speak it, of those who can speak it and how they do it, of course, what they are saying through it, right? And then I decided to stay here. And when I started to establish myself here again, then I started to get concerned with what was being done culturally in
Euskera. And then I started to contact other singers and other musicians… Then we created the group Ez Dok Amairu … And at that time, I am told “hey, they have done a Basque documentary…, whatever…” … And: “Oh really?”; “Yes, yes. It’s called Pelotari” “And where is it being shown?” “And they show it here in Lasarte” (in the nearby village). “Oh, really? Well, then I have to go and watch it.” Then, of course, I go to see what they have done in it, Pelotari. Then I went, I entered in the cinema, and the documentary starts, and it plays: “ttakun, ttakun…” I rem…! I remembered again! Seventeen years or so that I had not heard it! Seventeen years that I had not heard that… And: “This is it! What is this!” Then I remembered, but just like that! Look, I hadn’t…, during…, in, in… in that interval I hadn’t… nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing” [he ends in a whisper]. I had remembered none of that. And when I hear it, tak!, again, like that, but damn!, like it was the day I discovered it! Then immediately: “What is that?” “Well, it’s called Txalaparta.” “And who plays it?” “Well, the Zuaznabar brothers.” “And where do they live?” “In Lasarte.” “In Lasarte! And I don’t know them!” It was incredible! After they told us... you say: “Listen, but how come I haven’t known of this, I mean, we live here, practically at home, in the same village, and we have no knowledge of that.” “Well, playing in public is not allowed! We were afraid. It was banned.” “Banned!” I said to him (it was Pello [Zuaznabar] who told me this). “Banned? Oh, but you think…! But…” (I knew that Euskera, speaking Euskera, was banned, singing in Euskera and all that…, all right, that it was persecuted, but to play Txalaparta!) “But let’s see, so…, so…” “Oh, no, no, anything that was… that resembled Basque, no, no, no. Damn, we were afraid….” That’s why they hadn’t played in public! That’s why I didn’t know about it! Look at that, three kilometres away and not to know about it! And then, of course, when we found out, then we went to this, and then I said to my brother “Jexux, look, listen, this and that. I have discovered this. Listen, what about if…, plus it could be good in Ez Dok Amairu”, because in Ez Dok Amairu, one of the things that we were thinking of doing was to recover the old songs,
make them known, first of all learn them ourselves because we did not know them (JosAnton Artze, interview, May 2003).

\[
\text{\textit{Ttakun ttakun ttakun ttan ttakun...}}
\]

Discovery: The mother’s language

\[
\ldots\text{ttakun ttakun ttakun...}
\]

The mother Land

\[
\text{Txalaparta \ldots\text{tturrukutun!}}
\]

They learned to play with us in our house, but they were there for two years, coming almost everyday to my house, and they were taught by my father, sometimes my father and my uncle when he was there, and I (Joseba Zuaznabar, interview, May 2006).

JosAnton Artze: Then we went on the first day, and with a Grundig, with a magneto phone, we recorded, we were with them and recorded, and... we learned what \textit{ttakun} was... That’s what we did in a baserri that is near by, and they let us room in the attic and there we started the two of us. There, to beat it... We listened to this, to the magneto phone, and as we already knew how to do the ttakun and herrena..., ... a couple can learn the basics in an afternoon. And after that you have a lot left [to do], right?, ... afterwards there are things to learn, depending of whom you play with... you learn..., it is already another level already. It is already a level at which you start talking with the other through rhythm, to hold a rhythmic dialogue. Then that is already something different, then you start getting to know the other through what he plays. Then it is that already...! ... Afterwards it is then a matter of work, of love, of the affection that you put in it, right?, of sensibility... After that the terrain is wide, very wide. Very wide.

After explaining the importance of the \textit{ttakun} rhythm, linking it with the significance of the horse (discussed in chapter 3), he adds:
“There’s another beautiful thing there too.” He pauses briefly. “Txalaparta has four “a”s, you have noticed, haven’t you?”

“Txal - la - par - ta” I reply, pronouncing each syllable with intent, like it was a casting spell (one meant perhaps to do something to the mind (or the heart.))

“Txalaparta”, he adds. “And then, the apotheosis of Txalaparta, do you know what it is? That they arrive here:

\[ Ttakun \]
\[ kun, \]
\[ ttakun. \]
\[ Ttakun \]
\[ Ttakun \]
\[ kun \]
\[ ttakun \]
\[ kun kun \]
\[ ttakun. \]
\[ Ttakun kun \]

**Turrukutun!** [saying it fast]

That is the apotheosis. The old ones used to tell us that”. JosAnton elaborates further: “They used to say: ‘You have to get to that. That is, when you do *ttakun*, to get to *turrukutun*.’ And it is beautiful because [in] Txalaparta, ‘a’ is, say, the lowest phoneme, ‘a’, the ‘a’. And ‘turrukutun’ has four ‘u’s: *ttu-rru-ku-tun*. The ‘u’ is something open, and the ‘a’ is something closed and downward. *Turrukutun! [always saying this word very fast]*. It is to get to that. Say, in improvisation, this; in improvisation, [in] Txalaparta, to get to the apotheosis, to get to that, is to get to ‘turrukutun’. And the explanation that the old man gave me once, Miguel [Zuaznabar], one of the two brothers, was that between both strikes of the *ttakun* (where there is no space, right?), we had to get to fitting two more strikes.”

“To narrow space to the maximum so.” I reply, thinking of Zulaika’s reflections upon “eza” (the no) in relation to Basque myths.20

“Yeah, well, I think that symbolically this means to get to the impossible, which is: to fit something in where there is no space, because, of course, there is no space there. How to fit in there two more of these [plays a ttakun on the table]. It is impossible.

---

20 I had written about this in relation to Txalaparta for previous research undertaken for a Masters’ thesis.
Therefore, it has like something metaphorical, something like that, he used to say this, to get… ‘What is that?! But, do you arrive well to tturrukutun?’, and then: ‘look, in the ttakun, there in between the two strikes that I was telling you… put two more!’[JosAnton taps on the table, underscoring the last words].

“Txalaparta, tturrukutun. From ‘a’ to ‘u’.” I think aloud, imagining “Txalaparta” to be the first spaced, solemn ttakun beats that open up the piece.

“Yes. There’s something there…” Always speaking quietly, with the calm, paused voice of the poet who thinks the sacred: “Tturrukutun. It’s four. It’s four sticks. It’s four horse’ legs. It is horizontality beaten vertically…”

Most of what JosAnton and Jexux learned about Txalaparta, came from Miguel Zuaznabar:

This one gave more importance to all these things, right? What I told you, that the instrument has no name, and all that, that comes from Miguel. The other one used to tell like more anecdotal things, or… that it could be heard from, I don’t know, in 8 kilometres from a place to another, or things like that, right? But the, let’s say, more intimate things of what Txalaparta is, and tturrukutun and all that, that was Miguel who used to tell it … I have played with the Goikoetxea, we were with them, but we couldn’t talk much with them. Ourselves, my brother and me, we spoke more with the Zuaznabar brothers, right?, with the Zuaznabar, with them we were three or four afternoons [meaning “a few afternoons”], speaking with them, and recording what they said and all that. With the Goikoetxea we had less of a relationship (JosAnton Artze, interview, May 2003)

JosAnton and Jexux Artze soon devoted themselves to Txalaparta, adding more boards, experimenting with sounds and different effects and ways of playing. Yet, as
JosAnton argued during our interview, they always maintained the reference of the ttakun, a theme which will be discussed later. When both brothers played together, their style was very intuitive, often revealing some kind of internal free irregular rhythm, from which sometimes a regular structure seemed to want to emerge (perhaps Jexux Artze’s input). Txalaparta was always let free, improvised, and with a voice of its own (often a rhythm of its own) if other sounds (voice or instrumental music) were to be part of the performance.

The txalaparta is a primitive, ritual rhythm, still preserved, almost lost, somewhere in Gipuzkoa, which serves to announce in the countryside that cider-making is over in that particular place. With some planks isolated from the ground, horizontally, a chant is produced by means of percussion comprising of two voices, of two rhythmic lines (a regular one and a free one); more exactly, it is a (regular) disintegrated chant dominated by a counterpoint. It is not the tam-tam of culturally primitive peoples, nor the more modern combinations (only in appearance freer and less geometrical) of that kind of rhythm, in which there is a substantive play with repetitions by means of which an obsessing state is produced, confronting Nature, in performer and listener, which makes man enter into trance, it forces him to transform himself. The Basque, on the contrary, is an already transformed man (since Prehistory) and his rhythmic action is not against Nature, nor does he enter into his chant, he produces it. It is the very opposite of that coming out of oneself: it is a self-absorption, writes Oteiza in Quosque Tandem! (1994 [1963], 132). The sculptor rescues Txalaparta from exclusion, possibly addressing those that would whistle at the Zuaznabar’s first public performances at the time, counteracting a sense of aesthetics tainted by the evolutionist conservative nationalism that had prevailed since the creation of the Basque Nationalist Party and that a sector of the youth was now questioning. Oteiza herein argues for its “non primitive” (where now “primitive” means incomplete, outdated, backward) but rather advanced qualities in keeping, once again, with a man that is whole (“culturally and politically” (1984, 11)) and fully present already in the Neolithic (a man that is free and whose “style”, anarchistic, meandering “like a river”, creates or “guarantees”, as Oteiza put it, his freedom). These reflections by Oteiza, which he continues below, would be quoted in its entirety by the Artze brothers in the record.
sleeve of their first LP *Txalaparta '75 iraila* (Arza Anaiak 1975), produced in Italy by avant-garde composer Walter Marchetti:

It is not a tam-tam that of our txalaparta, it is a txu-khum, txu-khum (open and addressed to man, not to Nature) (addressed to man’s hearing) which one of the two voices describes as the fixed (anti-natural) place of a river, for the other voice to push, to displace, to obstruct, to deviate, to realise. This is why we will always find in our style a shifting and unstable sentiment, of something alive, unbound and free. Its structure is constant: it is always the same game of a man who carries the rule in his left hand and it is with the other free hand that he asserts himself, that he pronounces himself, that he plays with. In the txalaparta, the left hand is he who sings and establishes a rule, an extension, a measure, and the right hand (the counterpoint) is he who works for his freedom and returns it to Nature. It is the spiritual relationship between something enclosed and sacred (the cromlech) (the left hand) for his confidence and his free response (the right hand) (life) in Nature (Oteiza 1994 [1963], 132).

Oteiza further connects the “style” of the Basque man (his identity in his *doing*), which he finds in Txalaparta, with other Basque popular traditional cultural expressions, as distinct from Castilian and Latin (that is, Spain and the cultural sources it legitimises itself with). Beyond the academic validity of the interpretations contained in his discourse (inspired and inspiring speculations his artistic audacity portrays as statements of truth), his goal is to reclaim, assert and restore (a collective way of being within a collective way of doing). He does so in a contiguous paragraph that would also be added to the Artze brothers’ first LP (Arza Anaiak 1975): “*Si tratta dello stesso rapporto tra il frontòn, nel nostro gioco a palla...*”

Like a court, in our pelota game, with its left wall. Like when our peasant yokes the oxen first (the left hand) and then attaches the cart to the oxen (the song of the cart, on the right), the opposite of what the Castilian does (as Aranzadi observes), who first attaches the cart to the oxen and then yokes them. Like when the dead from Artikutza (the left hand) is always carried by the living (by the right hand) following Nature’s intention. And like when our traditional musician holds the txistu with his left hand. And like when we put on the beret: the Basque is the man with the beret in his left hand, and with his right hand extended, free and open, desoccupied, ready. The aesthetical and sacred reason has ended up on the
left. The heart, on the right. In the Latin style both hands are still occupied [busy] with the rule” (1994 [1963], 133).

“There are also some scenes that Oteiza came up with,” stated singer and song writer Benito Lertxundi, discussing the movie *Ama Lur* (1968), produced by Nestor Basterretxea and Fernando Larruquert:

For instance the coffin in the Lesaka mountains … That coffin carried by four men in black in snowed mountains, right? which has a symbolism, a meaning … He who has seen that film cannot understand it, right? but we know what he wanted to say, which is precisely that in a book by Xaho [Travel to Navarre During the Insurrection of the Basques (1830-1835)] it is shown how Zumalacarregi [a Carlist general] had the great opportunity, during the [first] Carlists Wars [which Xaho interpreted as a war of the Basques against the Spanish], he had the great opportunity of taking command of this country, and he could not understand it … And Xaho, who was an intellectual from Zuberoa, from Iparralde, who lived in Paris, realised, from a strategic point of view, he realised that it was the great opportunity. He came from Paris, according to Xaho’s book, and somehow organised a meeting with Zumalacarregi in the Lesaka mountains, he tells a little. Then Xaho speaks to him in a political language that Zumalacarregi did not understand. Then it is the failure, failure, failure of communication, right?, that incommunication won, once more. Then Oteiza creates that scene of the coffin, the great opportunity now dead, totally missed … The central idea is to portray somehow … the idiosyncrasy of a country, the situation, all the historical failures, historical defeats, to gather them together in a documentary (Benito Lertxundi, interview, July 2006)

The movie, produced through a collective popular fund, counted with Txalaparta soundtracks by the Artze brothers, in a sound context in which Basque traditional musics (with Basque traditional dance on occasion) alternate with the prominence of Jesus Guridi’s symphonic work inspired by Basque traditional tunes, “Diez Melodías Vascas” (“Ten Basque Tunes”, 1940). Txalaparta connects, in *Ama Lur*, Basque lands with its people, underscoring given images and script within the documentary: “Man, sea, Earth, fire, and the house of man.” Txalaparta through its soundtracks, and visually,
is part of a story line that ultimately alludes to the lost independence of the Basques, a theme that will be prominently linked with Txalaparta from then on (chapter 5).

**The Poet Txalapartari**

I asked JosAnton Artze about the reasons for “developing” the Txalaparta they had learned from the Zuaznabar brothers, and poetry became the means for explanation. The room became energised by experimental poems, exploration of sounds with phonetic compositions, exploration of other senses through different materials, created to move the reader to question the taken-for-granted, and to participate in the construction of something new:

**María:** And how did the need to develop that come to you?

**JosAnton:** Well, that is normal. When one is young one tries to develop it, right?, I mean, the old ones were happy with what they did, which they played once in a while, and with this in a year… they played it twice or three times, and they would stop then, but…

**María:** But I mean, the old ones would also have been young in their time and would have… but no, but they kept the ttakun just the same, as it seems…

**JosAnton:** Yes, but they didn’t either have, let’s say, artistic concerns, right? They were happy with it just as they had learned it, and go! They might have done some little things, but… When we received the material…, that is like, for instance, to manage to… I started writing poems. But everyone wrote the poems from…, I mean, all in a straight line, starting here *[top left of the page]*, and they wrote like this *[left to right]*. I mean, the usual way of writing regular poems is from left to right, but everyone starts in the same line *[with the same margin on the left]*. Well, then, precisely searching that, I don’t know, researching this *[he gets up to search for something on his shelves]*. Look, the first book I wrote, right? *(showing the book)*. Well this one also came with a record *[Isturitzetik
Tolosan Barru, published in 1969\textsuperscript{21} Look, all this… these were like experiments, right? [he browses through the pages explaining his experimentation] It was a way of searching…

María: Breaking a bit the rules of space, isn’t it?

JosAnton: Of course!, and after having asked yourself “why do we have to write in this way? Why does this have to start here!” “There is a space here that must be filled”. Then it was a matter of finding a place for each poem, I mean, how to write it, introducing different fonts… This was the first book I wrote precisely asking these questions: With what type of font? Because everyone writes in this way one has to write in this way? No. Then let’s see, let’s see how to do this. And then, searching for different forms of expression. This for instance [indicating one of the poems]. You see? This is a poem about one that does not reveal against anything, right?, confronted with all the series of injustices, he lowers his head, right? Then he has learned to be like this, and confronted by this, confronted by an injustice that was committed, he said nothing, and the second time, he becomes smaller [as the fonts decrease in the poem], smaller every time, smaller, smaller, until you become a little rat. And then, what do I do? In the same way that in the theme he himself increasingly decreases in size, I also decrease the fonts. And then, I arrived to this through making questions.

I could feel the energy of a people rising, something big emerging, life itself struggling to resuscitate:

This for instance, why did I write this?, why did I write this, this time? This is done like people usually write…, right?, this is about prison, and then, as people in prison are very used to write on the…

María: To paint on the walls…

JosAnton: …then I used the same language to write … And how did I get to this?! By making questions!: “And why this?! Why do we have to write in this way?! Where do we have to write?!”

\textsuperscript{21} The book cover features names and references to elements of Basque culture, pages are not numbered but rather named with a different Basque place each; the accompanying record featured poems and Txalaparta among other things
I asked JosAnton about his background, eager to understand better the motivations and the force that led him to engage with experimentation in poetry, in Txalaparta, with such an enthusiasm and sentiment:

Maria: And how, what drove you to all this? Do you have any antecedent, I don’t know, in your parents, that may be they were fond of poetry, or… I mean, how did this happen?

JosAnton: No, no, [I arrived] to this…! Let’s see, listen, to this, by making questions! No, no, no, no. No antecedents at all! No, no, no [as he searches his shelves for more books] The “aita” [father in Basque], the “aita” was a butcher, I was a butcher as well with…, both of us were butchers, both brothers. And then another thing… No! No! No! By asking questions! [Bringing another book: Bide bazterrean hi eta ni kantuari (at the sides of the road you and I singing)] Well, this is another…, this one was now a bit…, this was a bit the last straw, this one.

Maria: This one is like… its [made of] numbers!

JosAnton: This, you know?, I find this very funny. Some got angry and got pissed off.

Maria: They thought it was too much…

JosAnton: You know what this is? Every one has to write all the poems following the numbers, every one has to write. This is to force every one to choose the material with which they must write, if they want to do it with a pencil, with a feather pen, what colour, with what…

Inviting the reader into questioning the status quo, into action and into thinking about the means for action.

Maria: One writes the poem while linking the numbers together!

JosAnton: Exactly. And the poem appears at his will, otherwise it remains like this [a chaos -of numbers on a page- that only with one’s intervention will make sense… into poetry].

Maria: It is to make the reader write the poem.

JosAnton: Exactly, but besides that, to write! And besides, to write as however he likes! “In what colour?” It is already to question (…) But this was asking yourself questions, right? I mean, this thing of the paper, for example, right?, there is, in this last book I just showed you, there are four types of paper, of different textures. Why that? For people to be conscious that also the paper, the
supporter..., I mean, that it is not just a simple server, that it has its own personality.

Andoni Aleman (b. 1957), infographics and IT specialist, theatre actor and teacher, photographer and voice actor in Euskara. Among possibly other artistic endeavours, he was also a former txalapartari who played with Jexux Artze for many years:

...[A]nother one of the things that Jexux and Joxean contributed to the instrument also: uh… the dedication to improve the instrument. With some metal stands, made to order by a smith, which they used with a curving of the leather, and with some straps, and some tensors that allowed you loose the instrument, and at the same time uh… you played with the tension of the leather, with some devices to separate the planks… With great respect for the material that was used to make the txalaparta, with an exquisite care for the boards… And the instrument, apart from playing, it had also undergone its care process, its study process… I think that when you see people around the place who are playing with a chipped plank! And that when they beat it, it sounds “chof!”… -may be they use it as one sound element more, right?, but that is ugly! I mean, it is a plank… It can be very nice for a picture, right?, a chipped plank, and broken, and whatever!, “damn, but it is your instrument, damn!” Right? “Sand it a little bit…, look after it…, make sure it sounds…, and that it looks nice, besides, right?” And that, Jexux devoted a lot of time to it, and he devoted…, he had a concern for that instrument to be clean…, for it to be in good conditions (Andoni Aleman, interview, June 2006).

JosAnton Artze: Then instead of me telling him [the reader] “pay attention to the paper, [this one] is more rugged than the other one”, as they have to write, they will realise that here the ink goes here, that it doesn’t run in the same way than here. Why. Because here it is granulated. And here it has other curves that immediately… Then he realises “Oh!” And then “Oh, feck, look, this paper…” And then he will pay attention to the paper.

Maria: How amusing, so it was like presenting differences, the differences, to the reader, so he can appreciate what’s there!

JosAnton: Exactly, …otherwise, what is the paper? Then the paper… all are paper sheets. Well, no, all paper sheets are different! Right? All are different …And
with Txalaparta the same [searching]. And of course, as then we had to devote more time to it than the old ones, it is normal also that we might want to get more advantage out of what that was offering to us, right? But always keeping…, I mean, always having this present, because otherwise, if you get out of what truly…, the peculiarity of it, what is particular to Txalaparta, if you got out of it too much then you lost that reference, you disconnected from the whole thing, let’s say, right? [anchoring, rooting himself in Basque culture] I mean [you would get out] of all that wisdom that is contained there, and then, you would go out there… I mean, there was a fear of getting lost. In all this that I have done [pointing at the poetry books], I haven’t got out of the poetical aspect, right? …Because, of course, I have added records, I have added sound, I have done things for choirs even, to have them recited by a choir…, but I haven’t got out of the discipline… I mean, I haven’t got into the role of the musician, or the singer, or the craft artist, right?, I mean, the pictorial. I haven gone in there. If I have made some forms, I have used those forms poetically, not pictorially, I mean, without getting out of my terrain. Why. Because I am afraid that if I enter into the craft arena, or the musical one, I mean, I scatter myself in such a way that in the end you don’t grasp anything, right? Then I look at sound, I look at sound more through the phoneme. Of course, every word is sound also, I mean, it doesn’t only signify, it is also sound.

As JosAnton speaks, John Cage comes into my mind. Any sound is “music”. JosAnton Artze is, I feel, talking about his way of playing txalaparta: intuitive, free, with no repetitions, with no fixed measure, with a structure that can’t be easily apprehended, his own. He continues:

…I have never wanted to get out from the poetical field. What I have done, yes, to take the poetical field to all what it can be got to. But without entering into the others’ disciplines because then… that would be getting lost, it would be getting lost because… I start from here, but I know where to return … (Interview, May 2003).

When I was taught how to play, I was often advised by those txalapartariak who adhered to the ttakun of the old players that if I ever got lost while playing, to return to the ttakun. Joxean explained to me the importance of keeping the ttakun, something he argued that he and his brother always did, as I will discuss later.
I asked JosAnton what were his thoughts about the experimentation with different materials in Txalaparta by so many txalapartariak and he insisted Txalaparta was not the instrument, that is, it was not the material used, therefore he felt that experimenting with different materials (such as stone or iron, for instance) did not go “against” the tradition, though he did express an affinity for the wood which was a recurrent theme in participants’ discourse:

…[T]heoretically you can play on anything that sounds. We have also played on water … I mean, beating with the palms of the hands on the water. I mean, that can also be done. What happens? We have mainly played on wood because the wood is … like very close to man, you know?, to the human being. And then, as the world of wood is so big, so extensive, right?, that gives you as to…, you have for a whole life, let’s say, to go over, let’s say, all the space that the sonic world of wood offers you, right?

JosAnton Artze described his shock at the smaller size of the planks he had seen recently at the Txalaparta Festa in honour of his deceased brother and the events held recently over two weeks in his memory: “…I was puzzled, they were little planks like this, but like this [indicating a length of little more than a meter approximately], such little blocks… And the ones we were taught with were planks of two and a half meters, we used to play on long, wide and quite thick planks, a little like…, well, almost like we played on the whole tree, right?”

He spoke to me, before I set on the recorder at the start of the interview, of two young boys from Iruñea he met in the mountain, close to where the homage to his brother was taking place. He was taken by the fact they were playing amid nature, for themselves.

These lads who were playing there, that I told you earlier, they also had, like this, fairly short… well, these had [short planks] also because of practicality, to be able to transport it easily, but to make it so short… We used to play [planks] of two meters and a half because… We could have also carried three meters too, right?, but to transport it and that is often a bit difficult, right? … Of two and a half meters, it fits everywhere it fits. Even on top of a small car, on the trunk, if you put two and a half meters [there], they go well. I mean it is not either as to
have to find a measure that is feasible, right? And there, this of the search of the
wood is very important...

About a week earlier I had attended a theatre play at the University of Navarre with
some young txalapartariak from Iruña. One of them, Julen (22 years old at the time in
2003), was a member of the cast at one of the plays and Txalaparta, played by Sendoa
(21 years old) and Kemen (36 years old), was also incorporated at the end. When we
met, Julen and Sendoa spoke excitedly about a recent vacation. They had been at the
mountain in Gipuzkoa, along the coast, playing Txalaparta for themselves, for the love
of it, with no audience but nature. As they were playing in one occasion, a couple
approached them, and the man asked them whether he could play. “He played with a
bloody amazing sensibility,” claimed Julen, who was the one to play with him. “Bloke,
it was Artze!” he added. Both Sendoa and Julen were very touched by the experience
and the fact they had met such a personality of Txalaparta. They spoke of JosAnton
Artze with great admiration. Artze told them what wood was better to play: “we wrote it
all down.” He also advised them to play with thicker and longer makilak (sticks), and to
have them made of a softer wood so as not to destroy the planks, that they rather change
makilak periodically than spoil new boards and have to change those. “He told us to
find the wood that resonates with our soul” (fieldnotes, March 2003).

I told these boys a little: “it’s very important that you find the material that goes
with your soul, right? That you choose a material… The ideal would be that you
lived with the tree, first of all with the tree when it is standing, before cutting it
down, a little to live together when it was alive.” But that is to ask a lot already…
We have done it, right? Before cutting it down, a little to know it standing, how
was it before. Then cut it down, then split it, but not to split it with saws, but with
wedges, to respect the threads it has inside, because that is very important to
respect the sound (JosAnton Artze, interview, May 2003).

JosAnton Artze tells me of when he and his brother went to select a tree and got it cut
down, it was a special event that he remembers with affection and that both his brother
and he immortalised with photographs:

…that has to be cut down during May’s new moon … It is quite unusual because
normally trees are cut down in winter, when the sap is at the bottom, but this tree,
which is … “artza”, right?, alder. We were taught with that, the ones that taught
us played “artza.” This is the only tree that has to be cut down in Spring, when
the sap has already gone up. They say that if it is cut down during May’s new
moon… (everyone says it, right?) then the moth never touches it. …And we had
it in a creek against the current for three months, to remove all the sap that might
have remained … Let me see if I find…. I had the pictures of this…[He leaves
the room]. Look! Look! [with excitement, like someone who has found a treasure]
Look! Look Maria! Look Maria! Look Maria! Look, look: This one was.

He shows me a picture of the artza tree, and also the rest of the pictures that document
the process: the removal of the bark, the insertion of the wedges, showing how the wood
fibre is respected, as he explains:

…Maria, you see? Now, it has been split, and what is split then is…. it is given
now the shape of the plank a little, you see? Right? Now removing what remains
from here above … This is when it was standing, firm [commenting on the
pictures as he shows them to me], first it is done with axe, then with saw. Can you
see them! They hit it, and hit it, as if they were doing nothing! … We went with
all the respect and all that which it deserved, and like asking for forgiveness.
Well, choosing it and splitting it…. precisely for that, with people who knew how
to cut that, right? We went with people that would not cause damage there [in the
forest] … Doing it that way, that plank, when you are playing with it, for you that
is already something else, it has now its own characteristics, because you have
chosen it; in this way you have seen it when it was alive, how was it like a little,
and then, when you are playing, it is something else, because now, something that
was vertical then you are going to play it horizontal, it is like… it is now resting.
It is different. And then, the intimacy, to be intimate with the material you are
playing on is very important. It’s very important. … And then, of course, the
basic rhythm is there, the importance of why the basic rhythm has to be kept …

And JosAnton spoke of the importance of ttakun, of his people, of a (collective) way of
being, of the horse.
At a café in the mountain of Igeldo, overlooking the sea of Donostia, Mikel Laboa (1934-2008), an icon of the Euskal Kanta Berria (The Basque New Song movement), renowned singer and experimental artist, explains to me the new musical scene of protest song and awakening that was emerging in Euskal Herria in the 1960s. The group Ez Dok Amairu was formed under his drive, in a desire to replicate the concept of the Catalan group Els Setze Jutges, with help by the inspiring Jorge Oteiza. Laboa included Txalaparta in his work, and he was willing to share his understandings with me, despite his humble insistence he might not be able to tell me much of interest.

**Mikel:** …I lost the Euskera, because of the political situation, and I recovered it again. And it is then when I started to know a little all this movement, which was important for me. And above all there were songs that had been recorded in the north, from Iparralde … And I said “What am I doing, singing Atahualpa!” And I admired him, and I have sung with him, but I admired him a lot, and Violeta Parra, I didn’t have the pleasure of meeting her... And afterwards, then, I moved on to singing in Euskera (Interview, May 2006).

Benito Lertxundi (b. 1942), singer and song writer in Euskara, another important reference in the Basque musical scene since the 1960s, and former member of Ez Dok Amairu:

Well, the spirit, initially, there is the lacking, the lacking. The lacking that in this country forty years ago no one sung in a minstrel manner, with a guitar.

Lertxundi explained how some Basque students took on the Catalan Nova Cançó and set out to do something similar in Euskal Herria:

Then they started recruiting, to find out individually, to see if there was people who were spontaneously singing in Euskera. And there was, I was one of them. At that time I was taking part in a contest for new artists in San Sebastian, and the normal thing was to sing in Castilian, some sung in English… And I, I don’t know why... I liked Elvis Presley, and a British group, The Shadows, hu!, and those songs I listened to in the radio, I arranged them in Euskera. That is, I took the tune..., then I didn’t know what he was singing, then what I did was I wrote it

104
in Euskera, and when I sung in Euskera it always seemed to me more genuine than when I sung in Castilian (interview, July 2006).

Different singers, musicians, actors and actresses, painters… started meeting in the salon of the old Kursaal\(^{22}\) in order to plan the performances of the emerging group Ez Dok Amairu, as the Basque actress Arantxa Gurmen di (b. 1944), initial member of the group (within the group “Biurriak”), recalled:

I can remember how great it was to see the start of the New Basque Music in the years 1964-65 within the movement that took place in relation to Basque culture in general. Everything had to be made anew [renewed] and there was a lot to be done. Therefore, people from all fields engaged in the undertaking of the process: painters, sculptors, poets, musicians, actors, writers and others. In this context, the Catalan reference was very strong for us and we had good relationships and much collaboration. For instance, at the time I was a member of the Jarrai Antzerki Talde [the Jarrai theatre group] and we brought teachers from the Catalan Theatre School to give us courses. The group Jarrai was not only a theatre group, but it also engaged sometimes in the promotion of other cultural activities and so it brought to Donostia The Living Theatre (New York) and Raimon, Guillermina Mota or Francesc Pi de la Serra, among others from the [Catalan] New Song movement. (Personal e-mail communication, 2006).

…Well, once the Living Theatre came here, right? A theatre group. It came to San Sebastian. Judith Malina, Julian Beck… Anarchists and whatever. They broke some glass in a hotel because they [the hotel] didn’t want to serve them, they were seen as gipsies or whatever at that time (Rafa Egiguren, interview, July 2006).

And right then, well, I was recruited, I was called, to attend some meetings... And there a lot of people gathered, there was even a priest, an old priest, with grey hair, that sung cha-cha-chas a capella in Euskera … And then there also appeared a priest singing as well, singing protest song [Julen Lekuona], and then there was a triad of girls with an accordion singing… this, songs in Italian… and some little

\(^{22}\) The old Kursaal was palace which acted as a kind of cultural centre and included a large theatre among other rooms.
thing in Euskera, and so on. In summary, that is where it emerged this spirit of…

that thing that initially you don’t know what you have stepped into, nor do you

know where does all that take, you know? But there was something, there was…

well, strange. And meetings were organised, many issues used to be discussed…

well, about the political situation of the country… But that was like, like... like

very varied, all that was being mixed with the class struggle, the proletariat,

capitalism. Well, there was such a doctrinal hodgepodge among Marxism,

Maoism… (“pro-chinism” people called it back then), Trotskyism, plus this, plus

that… ... And, well, amid all that confusion, there, we start making our first

songs in Euskera, which as it was logical and normal, it was protest song ... As

well as I liked Elvis, I liked those British and American ballads, all in a sudden

we started to know about records by authors who sung protest song in America

[he names Bob Dylan and Joan Baez among others] ... With that, from there, we

wanted to introduce the world of dance, to also integrate the world of dance, and

the world of theatre was there also, there was a theatre group that was also around

all that. There was a group of painters and sculptors with Oteiza leading, who…

who was from here. Oteiza was from here [Orio, in Gipuzkoa]. From that house

[he points Oteiza’s house to me, near the river that flows beside us into the sea]

(Benito Lertxundi, interview, July 2006).

I think the great impulse was..., Jorge Oteiza was the engine. Here there was

people… painters, sculptors, the [Basque New] Song had started, there was

theatre people, from dance and so on. And Oteiza wrote a book, *Quosque Tandem*,

and that was like a catalyst, plus he was the total catalyst, he was totally… He is the one that... the alma mater I would say he was of all that

movement of the 1960s … And it is in the 1960s that the movement emerges. I

think it was, for me the engine was Jorge, ok?, Jorge. The *Quosque Tandem* was

regarded as the Bible. It was a book that gave a lot. Sometimes it had things that

well, today you look and say “damn!”, but well, the guy was... I knew him and

he was an extraordinary guy, of a moral [mental strength] and a... (Mikel Laboa,

interview, May 2006).

Art forces man to put his spiritual reserves into play and enrich them. We may

speak, aesthetics wise, of a spiritual healing. Art upsets the apparent order of the

outside world, it creates the need of a deeper understanding of oneself, it forces us
to put into play an intimate zone of our conscience whose revelation is a **sensibility** exercise … Man needs to increase his freedom and take possession of truth, of the ceaseless visual miracle that surrounds his life. Art is about this education because its goal is the spiritual salvation of man (1994 [1963], 151).

It is within this spirit, that Ez Dok Amairu, created in 1965, and described by Lertxundi as a “movement of a popular aesthetics artistic style” (interview, July 2006), engaged in the salvation of the Basque “spiritual bank” Oteiza theorises in *Quosque Tandem…!* Its members engaged in infusing life into existing songs that had been compiled by song collectors but had fallen out of practice, and into songs (and other traditions) that were in danger of extinction.

Well, there were loads of popular songs we didn’t know, and it was about recovering that a little, us to learn what that was a little, what was our traditional song bank like, and then to make that known to people. Then to make new songs also. Either everyone composed their lyrics and their music and sang that, or one wrote the poem, the other one composed the music for it and sang. And then there was another part, which was done by Mikel Laboa, which was a very important part, it was an experimental song as well. … And also instruments that were forgotten, such as the alboka, the tobera…, and Txalaparta, which were not known, [the objective was] to make them known. Then when we knew about this [Txalaparta], I said to Jexux: “Jexux, why don’t we learn, this would be good for Ez Dok Amairu as well”. Then we started to learn and this is how we got into this. And then we started to work that of the Txalaparta, and from what we learned ourselves, we started to develop what they [the old txalapartariak] taught us. They taught us a bit in this way [the old style]. What we did to this [the old style] was to develop that, what it was saying, but always having into account, having always present the *ttakun*. What *ttakun* is, and the *herrenak* (JosAnton Artze, interview, May 2003).

The group, imbued by that spirit of *ekintza*, of action, that some years earlier had moved some youth to create Euskadi Ta Askatasuna, wanted to distance itself from anything that bore the reminder of the conservative, “obsolete”, and stale nationalism that had portrayed Basque culture as a rigid, folkloric, museum object fit for a silenced society in its way to identity annihilation.
The “mutil dantzak” from Baztan, a circular dance (traditionally performed by men) in which all the group members (male and female) participated on the stage, opened and closed the concerts:

“How did you dance, with the traditional costume or so?” I asked Rafa Egiguren. “No, no. Casual,” he replied. “We did not like those aesthetics, I think we run away from it a little, right? No, casual, with T-shirts and the way people dressed in the street” (interview, July 2006).

Ez Dok Amairu was initially made up of a large number of artists (up to approximately 40, according to Gurmendi), of which a selected number would perform at a given concert, initially one after another. Some of the most well known members of the group would be the singer Mikel Laboa, Benito Lertxundi, Lourdes Iriondo, Xabier Lete, Julen Lekuona, Jose Angel Irigarai, Jose Mari Zabala, the painter Jose Luis Zumeta…, and the Artze brothers. Arantxa Gurmendi explains:

The first performance (in pre-premiere mode) was in Hernani on the 9th of January 1966. At the festival we were: Ballet Izarti, Bikondoa (accordion), Villar, Laboa, Lekuona, Trio Kemen, “Biurria” (me alone), and the movie Pelotari was screened. After seeing people’s response, our next challenge was in the theatre Victoria Eugenia, in Donostia on the 23rd of January. This time Benito, Lourdes, Lekuona, Kemen, Laboa, Bikondoa, the Zuaznabar brothers (txalaparta), and “Biurria” (me alone) were on the programme, and the movie Pelotari on the screen (electronic communication, July 2006).

…[A]nd on the green lands of Euskal Herria lives the enduring memory of those men, pelota players of other times who now belong to the history of the popular heroes of the Basque Country (concluding words of the film Pelotari, cited in Roldan Larreta 2010).

Pelotari, rooting the Basque game of Pelota in Basque culture (through the Zuaznabar brothers playing Txalaparta, for instance) and the Basque land (by merging scenes of the game with Basque landscape imagery), extols and elevates the figure of the pelotari (Basque ball player) to a category similar to that of the Irish hurler promoted by the Gaelic Athletic Association in Ireland.
“It was a great success and it became clear”, Arantxa Gurmendi adds in her e-mail, “the Basque New Song was running. These two festivals were known as Festival of the New Basque Song, it [the group] wasn’t yet called ‘Ez Dok Amairu’, this name was created in the meetings to identify the movement that was emerging. The name of ‘Ez Dok Amairu’ was released at the third festival held in Irun.”

The blacksmith Martin was beating a hot iron “dinbi-danba” [ding-dong]. The hot iron broke and hit him near his eye. Martin in anger said: “May the devil take me!” All in a sudden, the devil appeared.
-Here I am, come with me.
-I don’t need you at all.
...
-If you want to get out of my clutches, you will have to do something right now, you will have to tell me what are the twelve great misteries.

And the devil begun to ask, and Martin to answer:

- Martintxo, say the number one.
- Our Lord is the one, he will be our savour.
- Say the number two.
- The Roman altars, two; Our Lord is one, the one who will save us.

... 
- Say twelve.
- The twelfth Apostles…
- Martintxo, say thirteen.

- There is no thirteen!
- Yes there is thirteen!
- The cock sings on earth, the beautiful angels in Heaven, I leave my soul in our Holy Mother’s lap.

... 
- Esaik amabi.
- Amabi apostoluak...
- Martintxo: Esaik amairu.

- Ez dok amairu!
- Badok amairu!
- Oilarrak yoten yok munduan, aingeru ederrak zeruan, neure arimea lagatzen dausat
  Andra Mariari alitzoan.

When the devil heard the name of the Holy Mother, he run away screaming (Basque legend collected by Azkue, cited in Basque in Oronoz 2000, 40-41).

“There is no thirteen”, stated Oteiza, who came up with the name for the group from the previous legend, “we will break all cultural limits, we will break with the maleficence of the thirteen, and we will continue or own way” (Oteiza, cited in Douglas and Zulaika 2007, 430).
Mikel Laboa recalled the work undertaken by Ez Dok Amairu, rescuing the forgotten Basque songs, traditions about to disappear, the need to find the lost, and from there, move forward:

> Then we started to get together, to self-teach ourselves, yes… to get together, until the group was formed… The spirit was… above all it was to know our song, because we didn’t know it [with emphasis], our traditional song, and go forward, to continue forward, that is, to know what we didn’t know, because, of course, there is a tremendous vacuum from the Civil War up to the 1960s, there is a tremendous intellectual vacuum! All intellectuals have left, or have been killed! That is, then we don’t, we don’t know our tradition, it is banned… …And then for us it was…. …to discover, to discover a small world, ours, the country, but, but [which] was for us…., at that time, it was very beautiful, like the songs of the other side. Me, most of the songs I recorded at the start were from the other side, they were from Iparralde. “O Pello Pello”, “Haika Mutil”… The first record I did they [the songs] were all from the north down (Interview, May 2006).

> Iturri zaharretik From the old source
> edaten dut, I drink,
> ur berria edaten, new water I drink,
> beti berri den ura, the water is always new,
> betiko iturri zaharretik. from the source of always.

(JosAnton Artze in Achiary 1988)

Within the group that was the task, you know?, recovering what was before and to pull up… to go forward … And that was a bit our work, you know? … There was a tremendous vacuum, you know?, in the Civil War. A tremendous vacuum was created and we didn’t know our songs and our existence, in that sense, you know? …a lot of people, for instance, a lot of people followed us, the recitals, a lot, and it was with songs like this of this kind. Some seemed weird to them, right? [laughs] … and afterwards they [the songs] have had a tremendous success! That it is traditional song! All I have done is put the guitar and the voice! Right? However today, “Haika Mutil”… they are something like…, like an anthem almost, aren’t they? And all I have is no more than the guitar and the voice, right? But I mean, it was about recovering what was before, I think you
cannot take steps forward without knowing what comes before, that there have been things before, ... You have to know. **Then you have to go forward, you cannot remain there**, right? But you have to know. And we... We had lost... lots of years there, right? ... And it was a blow, Ez Dok Amairu was a strong blow. People was like..., of course, it was because there was a tremendous vacuum, and suddenly some to start with the guitars and that and singing, and songs from before, and others from now, and “Egun Ta Santi Mamiña” by Aresti [Basque socially engaged Marxist poet], and the music was by Arrizabalaga, a boy who lived in Catalonia, whom I got to know, he was from here but lived in Catalonia, and... that... well, “Egun Ta Santi Mamiña”, people don’t even know whose it is, I think (Mikel Laboa, interview, May 2006).

The group, which sang in Basque, and incorporated Txalaparta, became very popular and in constant demand, a reference amid the repression of Franco’s dictatorship:

It was an explosion, because this country, naturally, as I told you before, had absolutely nothing of that, and sociologically it seems people lived like a great necessity, right? That there was like a lot of thirst, or great hunger for something, for some movement of that kind [Ez Dok Amairu]. Besides, those were Franco times, and we, naturally, represented a bit the voice of the people. Between the fact that we had to recourse constantly to metaphor...; but well, but people understood, they already knew perfectly what we were talking about and all that, right? (Benito Lertxundi, interview, July 2006).

Mikel Laboa included in his songs, among other, texts by Bertolt Brecht and by the left wing poet Gabriel Aresti (whose poems were also sung by the Basque group Oskorri in the 1970s). Lourdes Iriondo sung the occasional poem by Mao Tse Tung to traditional tunes. Their song themes referred to the struggle against Franco’s dictatorship and the fight for freedom from Black America to Vietnam, as Benito Lertxundi explained. One of Laboa’s songs from 1971, “Gernika”, was inspired, as he stated, by Picasso’s painting about the disproportionate attack on the town by the Nationalist forces during the Civil War, and Joseba Elosegui’s self-immolation in September 1970 at a Pelota game attended by Franco in Donostia, in protest for the bombings he witnessed as a republican soldier in Gernika (Mikel Laboa (1934-2008) 2009).
My friend, even if you don’t think like me, I beg you to try to understand me.
(Elosegi 1977, 36)

Some members of Ez Dok Amairu were banned from performing in some Basque provinces and police charges were a common occurrence at concerts (as they were also in universities throughout the Spanish State at the time).

We had obstacles, for instance, there were, we were several singers that… - Lourdes, Lertxundi, and I? Who were we…? and two bertsolaris, we were banned in Gipuzkoa for five years without being able to sing. And in Bizkaia three years. As a group, Ez Dok Amairu, we used to perform a lot, but there were obstacles also every... the censorship was above all in the lyrics, and everything, they wanted to know everything, right? They even asked... Look, the one from the centre of Information and Tourism told me, look, the irrintzi, “let’s see”, they asked them “let’s see”, what it was, and they had to write “ai, ai, ai, ai, i, i, i, i...” , they had to write [laughs] to pass the censorship! Which is… it’s tremendous, isn’t it? … Here, bertsolaris were told to watch what they were going to say. “How are we going to say what they are going to say if it is improvised!” It was something that was improvised! “No, no, no, you have to write...” and so. …my first records I had to record them in Iparralde, because here I could not publish, right? …songs I did with Bertolt Brecht’s [lyrics], with Aresti’s …And here by doing tricks, doing… For instance, Artze had a poem… and he put dates that were fundamental dates here, he put… lots of dates [laughs] that had to do with that. But no, sometimes they passed, sometimes they didn’t pass… Yes. They have arrested us more than once (Mikel Laboa, May 2006).

I asked Benito Lertxundi how did the Spanish establishment react to Ez Dok Amairu:

I think they were… They were a bit puzzled because, of course, as they didn’t understand what we were singing… And suddenly they realised that that was a huge movement, and that it rose masses, and little by little they started getting it. We had to pass all our repertoire through [the Ministry of] Information and Tourism, right? … Later on, a bit later, at that stage out of tradition, then… a so called commandant Hidalgo, I remember perfectly, commandant, captain Hidalgo, captain Hidalgo, a Civil Guard, from Bizkaia, took it into his head to
show up at all the concerts that took place in Bizkaia with ten or twelve jeeps, filled up with Civil Guards, of course, and jup! They made such a…, the invaded the grounds… Picasso’s Gernika? Right? It was reissued! It was reissued in every concert: Beaten up, people on the ground, women, children, running, getting up… [onto the stage], well, there was such a mess… (…) There was a time that I left home with my guitar and, quietly, in silence, I said goodbye to the house, to my relatives, to everything, I said: “Well, about leaving, I leave, but return, I don’t know if I will return”. I did have feelings of that kind. It was unpredictable what could come up, right? We’d set off, we’d go to such and such place, but what might happen there…

Some participants told me the group, or members, performed often in Iparralde since they were banned in the south. Benito Lertxundi continued:

[In the year 1969 I was banned in Gipuzkoa and Bizkaia for a year and a half or so. With me I think Lourdes Iriondo was banned also and… I can’t remember… some one else, I don’t know if it was… Julen Lekunona, the priest that sung protest song. … I think we were two or three. And then, naturally… well, we used to perform in Navarre, in Iparralde… Our main square was always Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa, and there we were vetoed.

The group drew big crowds despite the censorship and persecution suffered:

…we were very popular, we had a lot of power in the country, in the sense that we were the minstrels of the times. We were a bit the spearhead, as much in the political as in the social, in the cultural… …It [Ez Dok Amairu] was the expression, the front-line expression of this country, you know? We were like the necessary nourishment of the country, you know?, at the level of… at the stage of “what do they say?”, “what do they say?” They used to say to us “What does God say?”, you know? That kind of thing, you know? (interview, July 2006).

“[T]he youth of the times received the latest through them [Ez Dok Amairu], the opinions and approaches on many hot topics; the lyrics were copied by hand; concerts became a type of communion, liturgies that led to the political and cultural awakening
of many of them…” (Aristi 2005, 5), “liturgies” that incorporated Txalaparta in a significant way, as is shown soon.

In 1970 Ez Dok Amairu presented the spectacle *Baga, Biga, Higa*, choreographed by JosAnton Artze. The name was inspired on some old Basque verses attributed to witches, incorporated into the musical arrangements.

Joxean Artze was a global artist at that time [early 1960s]. They too…, he had just arrived with Zumeta, they went to Norway, they were living there I don’t know if a year, or two years in Norway, and they came back like very fresh in ideas, very..., him above all, very pagan, very paganist, like very… And now he is super Catholic! … [He was] like very pagan, very against all the Catholic paraphernalia, and like claiming a lot more, I don’t know, the beliefs of the old ancestors! Not so much, but in the end like taking the *akelarres* [Basque witches’ rituals23], the things, all that, very “akelarrist.” (Rafa Egiguren, interview, July 2006).

In this choreography the group adopted a more experimental performance style combining drama, dance, song, poetry, Txalaparta and tobera, with images of birds by the painter Zumeta projected on the stage. The “*mutil dantza*” from Baztan (an ancient circular dance) opened and closed the concerts, which were structured in two parts separated by an intermission. The first session offered

...among other, ‘*Xoxoak galizten du mokoak*’ (traditional song), sound of txalaparta, ‘*O! Pello, Pello*’ (traditional song), sound of tobera, reciting from poets in the group, or singing songs like ‘*Txori txikia*’ (poem by J.A. Artze). In the second part, in the same line of the previous one, a part from listening to the sound of the *guimbarda* [mouth harp], they would perform works like ‘*Txoria

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23 The “*akelarre*”, Basque name for alleged witches’ rituals (“meeting of witches and wizards” as per Aulestia and White’s Basque-English dictionary), was partly invented by the Inquisition, and has been reclaimed as rituals belonging to a Basque pagan, or pre Christian, belief system.
txori’ (poem by J. A. Artze), the poem ‘Gizona lana eta makina’ (J.A. Artze) or ‘Baga biga higa’ (traditional song) (Aurtenetxe 2010).

Later they started to offer a more integral performance, which I think is the one called ‘Baga, Biga, Higa’, and then, Joxean Artze proposed me to take part there in that spectacle also, right? And I said no to him because I was already in..., I was already politicised, I felt there was no other option but to enter into politics and then I felt that..., and then from then on I followed an absolutely different path (Rafa Egiguren, interview, July 2006).

I’d like to say words of love, but today it is for me impossible (Lertxundi’s song ‘Gure bide galduak’ (our lost ways)).

“Baga, Biga, Higa” was conceived as a place of experience (sentikaria, perhaps better translated as a space of perception or feeling). The performance sought to engage the audience in a different, less passive, manner (Douglas and Zulaika 2007). It followed to some extent a line resembling that of other groups within the radical theatre of the 1960s and 70s in that it integrated in a single spectacle different performing arts on stage with the intention of conveying a political and social cause onto an audience, seeking to move viewers into a more proactive stance through an exposition to the aesthetics of different art forms (different forms of conveying ideas based on feeling, beyond and apart from explicit messages, in ways that sought to move deeply). This performance was to an extent improvisatory, and aligned with the experimental, avant-garde, aesthetics that also characterised Mikel Laboa’s artistic endeavour and Joxean Artze’s artistic work both in relation to Txalaparta with his brother Jexux, and in his own poetry. The overall spectacle was inspired in the “Pastoral” from Zuberoa (Iparralde), a Basque traditional form of popular theatre performed in Easter, outdoors, mostly sung, with dance as a central element, and performed with the participation of everyone belonging to the village that puts it together. The plays, stories told in versified dialogue, used to be about the life of figures such as saints and kings until 1953, when the poet Pierre Bordaçıarre introduced themes relating to the Basque Country.

This is not your usual concert. Today we are experimenting with new forms. Until now, the concert presented one singer after another. This is one way of doing a recital, and it is a valid one, we won’t deny that. We believe we have to
go deeper, and this is what we will attempt. Today we are in need of creating something that is based on the past, but that belongs to the future. We believe that nowadays, a group performance can be as interesting as one by a single performer alone. That is our performance’s guiding idea: a creation that emerges spontaneously and attempts to realize one’s personality within a collective work. We believe this is the best way. We have the txalaparta at the center, an old instrument, an expression of the contemporary working man, grounding for the work of the group. Having thus central the carnival of history –old songs, old musical instruments, our songs, poems, dances- we’d like to perform this spectacle of feeling realized by means of our full experience. And with the participation of everyone, we’d like to go on fulfilling and enriching history (Leaflet distributed at the Barcelona performance, cited in Douglas and Zulaika 2007, 432).
…[O]ur little altar was at that time, it was the Txalaparta. As it was a kind of monument…, we said “what is this of two supports and suddenly some planks there…” that was struck with two sticks, between two people, and there was a rotation of a jazzistical type, right?, between two individuals, a dialogue between two … I mean it was a little about improvising, creating rhythms, and sounds, and so on…, it was spoken about in “jazzistical” terms also. And, well, as it was a new thing for us… Well, in the spectacle that we were putting together little by little… for us the Txalaparta was like a kind of totem, or altar…, on the stage …. as a monumental element there, as a totem, which is there, a centre. An appropriate, strategic place was sought for it on the stage, it was illuminated with the basic means that we had at that time. It was illuminated to give, man, a certain significance to that. …we used to use it for calls, for instance, for the start of the performance, for the end of the performance, for a moment like this… of calls that are a bit magical, right? (Benito Lertxundi, interview, July 2006).
The logo Ez Dok Amairu adopted for their posters and records was a Txalaparta: An image based on Remigio Mendiburu’s sculpture of the same name.

**Figure 2.18: Ez Dok Amairu logo.** Source: Documentary *Txalaparta. Herri batet oihartzuna* (2005).

**Figure 2.19: Sculpture *Txalaparta* by Remigio Mendiburu.** Source: Cramp Records/Milano: *Txalaparta ’75 iraila* (1975).

**Benito Lertxundi:** We were during three or four years thinking, planning a performance, a concert, group ensemble, with a certain script, with certain..., with a certain argument continuity, searching a little, for instance, the songs we were going to sing together, and the poems that were going to be recited..., in summary searching a certain unifying thread, I don’t know, of a historical kind, but like a theatre argument, right?, a script. Then the spectacle started in a certain way, continued in a certain way already planned, like with a specific act, or a song, or a poem, or a dance, and it developed till the end, right? That was the spectacle that was called “Baga, Biga, Higa” … it was a small performance revolution at the time. Looking at it in hindsight it seems like something very simple, elementary, right? …. we can’t [couldn’t] do big things but well, we were a diverse group..., we make our own songs, things were written... And the individual intentionality, that individual intentionality, in some way collectivised, collectivised, it gave a meaning, I think a deep meaning, to the spectacle, right? And besides, often the..., they usually have like more..., how could I say it....
more of a depth imprint, those kinds of things, rather than counting on a lot of means; with a lot of means one can perfectly be superficial, to create an effect for the sake of an effect, cheap sensationalism… As we were lacking of that kind of possibilities, things were done like looking more inward, right?, within that austerity. Then, every element gained like a certain religiosity, that’s it a bit. And I tell you that there a bit because the txalaparta at that time was an element that drew attention: “and what is that?”, people used to ask, right? Of course, and besides, a part from that, when they [txalaparta players] would start playing, and the sound, and so on, was like so rustic, so rustic, so, so primitive, the sound, what it suggested… Of course! That, naturally, damn!, for us, there had to appear the people of the Palaeolithic there, making some jumps, some strange dances. That’s the impression it gave.

**María:** So it was like the invocation of some atavistic aspect may be, or so…

**Benito:** Yes, yes. That’s it. Yes. It answered, it answered to you, there was like an atavistic call in all of it, no doubt, no doubt.

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**Austere**

Simple

**Depth**

Prehistoric Religiosity

Rustic Altar

*Inward* Totem

**Atavistic –ancient– call**

...“answered”
We [the Zuaznabar] took part in Ez Dok Amairu’s first performances. Of course, I was working and my uncles also, of course; they [Ez Dok Amairu] used to have mid week performances, then afterwards the Artze brothers started with the ones of Ez Dok Amairu (Joseba Zuaznabar, interview, May 2006).

The Artze brothers began to take part in the performance as txalapartariak at the third concert of the group, in March 1966.

The Txalaparta, the Txalaparta, no matter how old it is, that it may be, I don’t know, that it may be, at that time it was an invention, it was a revolutionary invention, it was absolutely new. Any, any modernist thing, or any…, I don’t know how to tell you, engaged in something modernist, I mean I perfectly understand for someone to have a tentation like saying “I want to experiment with that!” I perfectly understand… because it is new. What’s old, what’s old, forgotten: back again, for whatever reason, like fallen from the skies, “and what is this”, well it is something old, but it may be something super new, and yet it is atavistically inside one, what comes out of there does something to one … The Txalaparta was something exotic, no matter how much from here it was. But when it is something unknown, that we don’t know, “and what is this, and so”, “no, no, it was played here two hundred, three hundred years ago”, they tell you; “yes, ok, we don’t know about it”. Then it is [was] an absolutely exotic phenomenon (Benito Lertxundi, interview, July 2006).
At the start when we put it, people used to laugh “ha, ha, ha.” I think they got nervous when they saw it, what was it…, it seemed so strange to them … Afterwards, of course, after about six months or so, a bit when it was known, well, not anymore then, [but] with such a respect and a thing…! (JosAnton Artze, interview, May 2003).

I asked Lertxundi was Txalaparta combined with music or song, he replied this was done in some song, in an “informal” way. “Informal? What do you mean?” I ask:

Not so rhythmic, not…, sometimes, I mean that, well, if the song has a tempo then not to follow that tempo with the Txalaparta, I think that…, I remember that the song was a bit free, and the Txalaparta was also free, it was like a kind of chaos, but well, that sonorous murmur is what was being sought, right?, to lead a bit to the ancestors, right?

“But I mean, what was being sought, if that was the case, with the Txalaparta improvisation, the song improvisation…,” I asked further.

A sonority, and together with that sonority, that thing that is a bit chaotic for the formal mind that moves in time with regular beats, and with like logical things, right? -songs have that, in our culture. Then, all in a sudden, to search for something that has no rhythmic nor sonorous relationship, and yet the mix is a murmur in space, and one says ‘where does this lead me to?’, right? You don’t even ask yourself, right?, because it is there. I don’t know, ‘I liked it!’ one says.

Rafa Egiguren took part in some performances with the group as txalapartari:

The first contact I had with the Txalaparta was that, I don’t know how, on our own initiative, I think we started…, we went where Jose Antonio Artze [JosAnton] and Jesus Artze, who died, and then, another boy from Lasarte and me, the two of us, and we were learning there, at their butcher shop … in Usurbil -a butcher shop that was in the square, and at the back room he had the planks and all that, and there, in the back room of the butcher shop, we learned the Txalaparta. … [Jexux] called me to see did I want to play with him, that he had
some Ez Dok Amairu performances, and then I took part in four or five … substituting Joxean Artze.

He recalled the environment of the times and other events where Txalaparta was incorporated by the youth:

[T]he first time they played together without yet being Ez Dok Amairu, they played in Hernani, and others had…., well, I did not participate then, but I went to listen … I have it recorded in tapes, because we also organised a cultural week there in that atmosphere. In Hernani we created some groups… Well, then already, when… -we [fellow ETA activists] were about 21 years old or so, …we had just entered in ETA, but our sensibility was essentially cultural, and then we tried…., and we organised classes of Euskera in companies, we managed to get money from companies; I don’t know what result came out of that later, but may be we mobilised, may be, of the people that started to learn at the time, 200 people! … And then we organised a mighty cultural week, and then there were conferences, Artze gave a conference about Txalaparta; … and Altuna spoke about *Euskera batua*, *betsolarism* was a theme also…., they [Ez Dok Amairu] sung… Gabriel Aresti spoke; he stirred up an awful trouble, because he started reciting a verse in Castilian: “Euskadi, my homeland, I can’t love you without…” I don’t know what, this and that, “without balls and without *fueros*”, and this and that, I remember: “with hammer strokes I shall compose you” and whatever, something like that, and there was like nationalist people that was already suspicious about red stuff [communism] and all this, and they came up to protest, and I remember that Gabriel was with his wife, his wife crying… an awful mess that was … Then, ourselves, afterwards [after Ez Dok Amairu was created] we also did there, I remember…, then some people had been released from prison … and we organised two “*guateques*” with Txalaparta!

**María:** Two “*guateques*” [1970’s youth indoor parties] with Txalaparta?

**Rafa:** Yes. The people like kind of hippy also [*laughing*], like Sgt Pepper, I mean [*laughing*], sitting on the floor and so, we played…., me, with this boy from Lasarte, I remember.

**María:** Was this in someone’s house or so?

**Rafa:** No, no, no, right? In a “*bajera*” [street level premises], such as here, belonging to the Santa Maria Church, there, the priests let us use it, or whatever … In some
annexe premises. And another [indoor party] at a mountaineering and cultural society there was in Lasarte, I remember also. And then a lot of people got together! May be… 40 people, or 30 people sitting there, and it was only… Well, we alternated that with Beatles songs, and things from the times, right? And then we played, and people got up [to play] as they felt like it, and of course, in the end, the txalaparta is a drum machine, because in some way you invent the rhythm yourself, isn’t it? I mean, you speed up or slow down as you please, or it advances through jumps in the rhythm, I mean, there’s no more to it [technique wise]. And then, people, I think we still didn’t smoke joints and that… [laughing].

Maria: I was just about to ask you [laughing].

Rafa: No, I don’t think so, I think it was more alcohol and that, right? I don’t think so, may be someone, but I don’t think yet… Not me at least, and I don’t think, I don’t know, I don’t remember…, it was not a normal thing, at least in the atmosphere [there]. And as people felt a bit uninhibited, they got up and danced, and they got up to [play] the txalaparta. And we did that twice, with people from Donostia above all, and also from Hernani.

I asked Rafa about the music played at those parties. He could not remember, except that none of it was Basque. The only Basque element (sound wise) was Txalaparta:

It was a bit, most probably, only unconscious, for what we wanted to do, it was what was compatible for us, we didn’t see other…, we didn’t see…, we probably didn’t see…

He elaborated no more. I did not insist either. It was stressed often to me by participants that their engagement with the movement for the salvation of the culture (whether in the past or in the present) was something spontaneous, and often they could not elaborate as to why certain things were done. They simply answered a call, as if taken by a wind of the times, and they acted consequently, as per what they perceived was expected from them in the given circumstances. They were needed, and they were there.

The End of Ez Dok Amairu. 1972

Benito Lertxundi: That was, naturally, a very, very powerful movement in the country, right?, very powerful. So much so that when the group Ez Dok Amairu
broke up, it was very traumatic in the country, right?, that was very traumatic. Well, people’s reaction was… it was unsurpassable at that time.

María: So it was very regretted…

Benito: Yes, yes, yes, of course. Yes, we all regretted it. I regretted it a lot. Some colleagues of mine also regretted it a lot, others… Well, it’s like two camps emerged, or two groupuscules emerged… But I think that more or less everyone, all of us regretted that it could not be accomplished…. I mean, to develop that more, right? We will never know what that could have led to, right?, but anyway.

During the 1970s the revolutionary sectors of society, who were self-educating themselves on political thought, started taking ideological positions within the left and in relation to the national question where colonisation was still a problem. This would manifest in internal splits not only in groups like ETA (or the IRA in Ireland, for instance), but also in those politically engaged groups within the cultural front in the Basque Country, such as Oskorri, or indeed Ez Dok Amairu, as Basque anthropologist Zulaika points out (2007).

…[A]nd later the [ETA] leadership were going a bit on a direction but the base did not understand that, and then, later, others took that direction [toward communism], and well, groups of different sensibilities emerged, right? Then some from “MK”, who would become later…, who emerged from the first split in ETA [1966], they went on to become Maoist; others -which is what happened to me- differentiated ourselves at the Sixth Conference [1970] and became Trotskyist [leaving ETA], and then all the spectrum of left wing possibilities emerged, right? And there also continued, stronger every time, more nationalist positions, which were those of official ETA, more or less, what was called “Fifth [ETA]” and that, and which is what has been here as a strong movement, right? Which now, again, is not what it was before anymore, and there are now changes in it and all that, right? (Rafa Egiguren, interview, July 2006).

After two years touring with “Baga, Biga, Higa”, when the full performance had just been recorded, an internal debate over its imminent publication emerged, not only stopping the project but leading to the break up of the group.
JosAnton Artze: Some lyrics of what was sung and that, some politicians were not interested in them, because they were a bit scandalous. And one in the group became one with those politicians. I think they wanted to boss the group about, you know? The group was independent. We had diverse opinions, you know?, and we had never had any problems. … And at the time we were about to publish the recording of all the spectacle we gave [Baga, Biga, Higa] … And it was even hard [to record it], because six pieces did not pass the censorship, and we managed, with the help of the Catalans, we managed to pass the six. And it was ready. We had even recorded clandestinely, because there was no recording studio here. And it was already about to be released, to be published already, everything ready, and one says “But that has to come out? Damn it…!” And it started there. That, and then other problems that… But anyway, it was this mainly. And from there it came a series of… the group dissolved …

JosAnton proceeded to explain some of the lyrics that caused controversy in the group:

There was a poem of mine that was “Gizona ta lana” [“Man and Work”]: “Lana lana…” It was a phonetic poem that afterwards was recited in a chorus … It was a little to convey the idea of the alienating work, right? And then the whole group recited [using a dark and monotonous, guttural voice, that reminds me of a machine, or a Buddhist chant]: “Lana, lana, lana…,” that is, everyone doing that, like a kind of close-knit group, then a woman would say that that couldn’t be. Buah! It was… boooo! Such an impact…! And then, the mechanical aspect of this [reciting the poem very fast, words leading to phonetically similar words, until nothing can be understood]:

Lana, lana, lana, gizona, makina ta lana, ta lana, makina ta gizona … [“work, work, work, man, machine and work. And work, machine and man…” JosAnton slows down, and words emerge clear]: makina, kina, kina, kina… And he ended

24 Existing record labels in the Basque Country were not deemed adequate (as Aristi states, they were either “Madrid subsidiaries” or multinationals). The Basque label Cinsa was created in 1961 to cover the “vacancy”, though they soon started recording through the Catalan label Edigsa. This eventually created discomfort among Ez Dok Amairu members since the Catalan studio changed their aesthetic style to suit the fashion (adding instruments and arrangements). As a result, members of the group created the record label Herri Gogoa in 1968, in order to maintain their independence. This label would also engage in the salvage of Basque traditional music, recording in different villages under the impulse of Juan Antonio Urbeltz (Aristi 2005).
up becoming a kind of machine, like this, poetically done. Then it says..., this then starts [increasing the tempo as the poem progresses]:

*Lana makina* [work, machine]
*makina ta lana*
*lana ta makina*
*makina talísima*
*gizona ta makina* [man and machine]
*makina ta lana talísima*
*Gizona makina ta lana*
*Lana gizona ta makina*

*Makina ta gizona*
*Gizona ta makina*
*Makina ta lana*

*Lana ta makina*
*Makina lana ...

*Eta berriz lana.* [And always work]

JosAnton put a recording so I could listen to it: I found it tremendously powerful and impacting –I could imagine the kind of reaction it could cause at a time marked by constant workers’ strikes and states of emergency during the last years of Franco’s regime. Artze continued:

This says that with so much work the man becomes a machine, and then what’s left?: “*Kina, kina*” [phonetic words with no meaning], then a crescendo is being made: “*kina, Kina, Kina*” until it becomes a scream. And this, it also made them complain that it was a…. nah...! It was a..., it was one of the things that don’t…., that happened and no, they aren’t anymore… [Somehow asking to leave the subject, as he lowers the voice into silence] (Interview, May 2003).

- You know, Nico, Basques don’t know yet why they go to war. Tatino, your first weapon provider, did understand. For anarchy! Anarchist society, just as our thinkers have dreamed of it, is actually here!, right in front of us, right here, in the land. The Fueros, what are they? The careful protection of the individual in
his municipality, and of the municipality in each of our provinces’ board. The State is thus reduced to nothing.

The old Nicolás filled the glass of his grand nephew to the brim, then his own.

- What separated me from Bakunin and the other anarchists was the machine. We were in total agreement against the State, but I was adding the machine. The damn railway, the modern factories, I don’t like any of that at all. We run the risk of killing fantasy, dreams, freedom; of transforming the individual into a screw (fictional character Nicolas Picandia, an old Carlist, in Legasse’s novel *Las carabinas de Gastibeltsa. Concierto barroco para harpa y txalaparta*²⁵, (1995 [1978], 100)).

He cleaned his glasses with a red cloth he took out of his pocket (Legasse 1995 [1978], 174).

**The Beltran Brothers**

Soon after the Artze brothers engaged in the recovery and development of Txalaparta, another couple joined in the endeavour of rebuilding the Basque foundations that were about to collapse, the Beltran brothers, Bixente and Juan Mari (b. 1947), and in particular the latter:

“[I]f you’ve noticed, of all autochthonous instruments, he has collected almost the last testimonies of many things” (Josu Goiri, interview June 2003).

**Koldo:** He is up to date on everything.

**Xabi:** He… pf!, is all an institution, damn it.

**Koldo:** Yes.

²⁵ The title translates as: “The Gastibeltsa Carabines. Baroque concert for harp and txalaparta” (a carabine is an old kind of rifle).
Xabi: He’s very knowledgeable. He knows a lot of things. Damn, if you’ve spoken with Juan Mari… pff!, he must have told you… That one is like an encyclopaedia! (Xabi and Koldo Sorzabalbere, interview, June 2006).

Juan Mari Beltran, musician and composer (mainly within so called “roots music”), music instrument maker and teacher of indigenous instruments, self-taught musicologist and endeavoured collector and promoter of Basque sound/music traditions and instruments, curator of the museum of instruments he has put together himself, and published author, has been a strong driving force behind the revival, construction and transmission of Txalaparta up to this date, undertaking many initiatives to ensure the tradition (or the instrument) is kept alive in the current musical scene of the Basque Country.

“He’s been, up to two or three years, as far as I know, he’s been working in Hernani’s music school, teaching four instruments: txistu, dulzaina, alboka and txalaparta, coordinating the rest…, he has driven the issue of Oiartzun [the museum and research centre Herri Musikaren Txoko], which is the only centre of its kind in Europe!, with a…, he doesn’t have all exhibited, but six hundred and something…, or one thousand instruments! No, no, I think it was six hundred and something…, a centre that is not only a museum, where he does…, it demands of his time in meetings and calls, right?, and…, and that he organizes contests and workshops and… And even though, while being in Hernani, while collaborating with music groups… (Eneko, b. early 1970s; interview, June 2006).

[Y]ou know what he used to do? He’d start [music] groups and then he’d leave; he’d leave it, and would start another group, and leave it … He doesn’t have an ambition of saying “Me!, me!, me!”’ like Kepa Junkera and others do … And this one doesn’t, this one bends over backwards (Eleder, b. 1966; interview, June 2006).
I initially wanted to focus mainly on the youth that spontaneously engages with Txalaparta, and I did so in my observant participation, yet often the “threads” of their discourse about Txalaparta kept tracing back to Juan Mari Beltran, testifying to the major role he has had in facilitating and teaching them beyond the walls of the Txalaparta Eskola of Hernani, and the importance of his contribution to the life of Txalaparta today. The Basque student of Euskara who put me in the tracks of contemporary Txalaparta, stated it clearly: “Juan Mari Beltran is the father of Txalaparta” (Amets, b. 1966; Interview 1998).

Many of the young txalapartariak I have met look up to him in admiration and with gratefulness for his tireless continued work for the development, promotion and transmission of the -living- tradition, and Txalaparta in particular. What they knew about Txalaparta was often repeated almost word for word after Beltran’s articles on it at the time of the interviews (fieldwork span: 1999-2006) and frequently Beltran’s stance was theirs. Often the main source of information about the practice of Txalaparta they were passionately engaged in was for them Juan Mari Beltran.

*Orhiko xoria Orhin bakean da bizitzen,*
*bere larre sasietan ez da hura unhatzen;*
*han zen sorthu, han handitu, han ari zen maithatzen,*
*han bere unen artean, gozoki da kantatzen.*

The bird of Orhi lives in peace in the Orhi mountain, 
his is never bored in its meadows and among its bushes; 
there he was born, there he grew up, there he loved, 
there among his offspring he joyful sings.

(Basque popular song, in Beltran 2006)

**Juan Mari Beltran:** I lived in Navarre until I was 15 years old, which is when my father leaves his work in the sea as a sailor … [W]e came to live to San Sebastian … from Etxarri, a little village from Navarre, Etxarri-Aranatz … In Etxarri-Aranatz I played … the clarinet in the music band, because I started when I was 7. And by my 11 years of age … in the music band I played the clarinet and in the txistularis’ band, the *txistu* and the *tamboril.* And when the family moves to San Sebastian … (it would probably be the years … 1966-67 … may be the end of 1965) … I got in contact fundamentally with the world around *txistu,* as a *txistulari* in the dance groups … (Interview, May 2006).
I entered in the dance group called Argia, …“by the hand” of a people who lived in the quarter where I lived, which was the quarter of Amara. And as a txistulari we did all what concerned the txistularis at that time, which was when it was Christmas, those outings that are done by quadrilles to sing and so…, ourselves playing the txistu…; and all the festivals there were in the different quarters, with the big heads [traditional festival masks] and…; all that we used to do. Then “by the hand” of the txistu teacher we also did what was the surrounding villages and that, and we played in all the quarters and that … (Interview, May 2006).

At our first meeting in February 1999, he recalled that when he played the txistu and tamboril with his brother through the streets, he found that people opened the way for them and celebrated them cheering and clapping. He then realised, he added, that it was not that they played “that good”, but that they represented a cause, and it was the cause what people in fact applauded. He told me he saved many demonstrations through performing: When the Civil Guards showed up, “Zas! Let’s play!,” they, txistulariak, would start playing immediately, the rest of protesters would start dancing, and the police would not charge against them, wondering whether they were facing a demonstration or rather some kind of festival. During that initial conversation, he often felt the need to assert Txalaparta, or other elements of Basque culture, were not as such rebellious, but were made so through their persecution. After the “official” interview, so to speak, he allowed me work in his office while he worked on an article he was writing, yet, passionate about the music and the tradition he was endeavoured to, he kept telling me about it despite he was busy, pulling out books and documents from the shelves, explaining the pictures he had on the walls (the old txalapartariak, Father Donostia and other collectors, from whom he had learned and to whom he looked up). All those to whom he owed what he knew, he wanted to have them on the wall, he said.

…And I had heard nothing of the Txalaparta until in this group [Argia], soon after we entered, Juan Antonio Urbeltz enters (Juan Mari Beltran, interview, May 2006).
Juan Antonio Urbeltz (b. 1940), dancer, independent self-taught ethnochoreologist, published author, and important reviver and theoriser of Basque dances since the 1960s (also original of Nafarroa, though based in Donostia (San Sebastián)) explained to me his work to date within the group Argia, at our interview in June 2006:

The group I think was founded in 1963, about that time … I helped them at the time of foundation … I would be about 22 years old, and some consultation they did about the dances we performed [in the dance group Goizaldi, of which he was a member at the time], well, I informed them. And then I remember that in the Victoria Eugenia, here in the Victoria Eugenia theatre, we were, Marian [his wife, also a former member of Ez Dok Amairu] and I were at the launch of Argia, in the year 1963 or so … the group danced for the first time, right? And we watched it. And then, in 1965, Marian and I were dancing here in a group … and we left that group, and then the Argia boys called me for… if I could help Argia … I did a work programme, and with that work programme I undertook a commitment that has been the commitment of my life until today, it is something, well, incredible! This happened more than 40 years ago, right? (Interview, June 2006).

Juan Mari Beltran: “And through him we got in contact with what was the new school… The New Basque School of Art, where without having the title of…, the title or the official appointment of director, it was directed by Oteiza, right?, he was the one that coordinated all that and that. I remember Oteiza started coming to our rehearsals… And I heard about the Txalaparta from him, because in a gathering he had organised in Lasarte, in a cider restaurant, he said that he had met the Zuaznabar brothers…, that we had to learn it, and so on… And then as a poet, there was in that new Basque school, there was JosAnton Artze. Then him with his brother, they took it upon themselves…., they were the first ones to get in contact with the old ones. And as we were there as well, and as we were musicians, and as we also had a projection toward the outside of showing, the dance group became, through Oteiza, it moved to taking another dimension which was the one of research, of knowing, of collecting, of valuing all these timeless values of music and dance, the searching for meanings and that… And I was concerned a little with the responsibility somehow of taking over the musical parts. Man, we are…, the alboka, and you start with the alboka: “We have to incorporate, into what is the dance spectacle, dances with alboka…”, or else
alboka tunes even if there is no dance with them, while the dancers change costumes because they are passing from dancing a dance from an area to another [dance] from another [area] … And the Txalaparta and so: And then, with JosAnton Artze and Jexux Artze and so, we got together, and with the old ones also [the Zuaznabar initially], but in general, more than anything, we rehearsed the four of us together, in Usurbil, in the butcher shop, in some premises they had behind what is the butcher shop. I remember that the pork sausages used to be hanging and so, drying and that, right? There we used to rehearse, the four of us. We were a long time … until I left to the military service, about three years we were there probably, from my 18 to 21 years of age (Interview, May 2006).

In 1967, the Beltran and Artze brothers prepared a performance together, *Txalaparta ahotsa eta txistu* (Txalaparta, voice and txistu) (Beltran 2009). Poems recited and authored by JosAnton were brought together with txistu music by Juan Mari Beltran and the sounds of Txalaparta, played by Jexux Artze and Bixente Beltran. Juan Mari’s military service put a halt to plans of recording the spectacle (Zabala 2009).

**Juan Mari Beltran:** And well… I would say that…, that neither when at that time, when that happened, I am conscious of much more than… I say: “Oh! How curious! Oh, how curious”, and you learn with them, they teach you how to play, they don’t teach you any set piece, I usually say that, that they have never taught us to play a set piece. Well, at least I haven’t learned that! (Interview, May 2006).

I often felt at interviews that participants were addressing in their speech other people that were not present. Beltran, in particular, felt very strongly about popular explanations of Txalaparta, and was and is endeavoured to fighting any narrative not explicitly supported by the testimony of the old txalapartariak.

**Juan Mari Beltran:** While in the dance group, and with the objective a little, somehow, of documenting and showing to people “this was played like this” and so on, of course, my brother and I, we used to…, we had the advantage that we were friends, we were from the same group of [friends] … we played in the same dance group, we worked in the business, and we lived in the same house, right? Then, I mean that we rehearsed seven days a week. With that what happened is that if you have an instrument like those, that you have not been taught any set piece but rather they have taught you how to play, what happened there is that in
a year or a year and something, what was sounding was now something different. And that is what we worked on later among the four of us with the Artze and that. And it can be said that we acquired a level of virtuosity that was not known in Txalaparta, but not because of a especial merit, but because we played 365…, well, may be 360. But every day of our lives … There is a picture around here from those years, and we are playing with three planks [he shows me a picture on the wall (fig. 2.23)] This picture, we are in the neighbourhood, and we must be 18, 19 years old, and we are playing with three boards … Dressed with the denim trousers, right?, like…. traditional trousers, … we wore those trousers to play the txistu, to play the dultzaina and to play Txalaparta, and to play alboka, right? … Argia at the time, we did lots of performances per year. “Lots,” I mean that not one hundred, but almost, per year, performances, right?, which means that in all our performances Txalaparta was present … It was a novelty at the time that later has become the norm, let’s say, in all the performances of dance groups in the Basque Country, because a dance group does not fill and hour and a half of dances alone. There are intermissions … and then there is where Txalaparta started appearing … And that picture that you have there is: the dancers are changing costumes in the dressing rooms of the pelota court, and in the meantime, we are playing five or ten minutes of Txalaparta. And I remember that we always used to have into account that we had to play that of always –“that of always” between inverted commas, right?, because there is nothing of always! [contrary to Oteiza or JosAnton Artze’s understandings]. …That form [of playing] that we had learned from the elders, and later then we continued a little with what had come up for us in a natural manner and…. by the inertia itself [that arises] from the commitment, right?, and because in that play they had proposed you, you didn’t only speed up now, but the tempos were ascending or descending, and other possibilities emerged for you … Us, my brother and me, we were capable the two of us alone
of spending an hour playing. Without getting bored. There. That. It was happening there.

Revival work and experimentation with the tradition, to allow it continue “in the now”, “to make it useful (for me)”, as Beltran stated to me in a previous encounter, was undertaken in a voluntarist manner, investing a great deal of time, effort and personal resources, for the love of it. I asked Juan Mari if they had external support for their work:

…things were a little for art’s sake there, and same as us were those who were doing theatre in Orain or the ones who were doing that of sculpture or painting or… (…) We used to arrange a “shared cashbox”, I mean cashbox of…, “cashbox”, I mean that what was charged was kept for the group and… And there was no need for much more! I mean that I went once a week where the Artze, but like I would have gone to enjoy any other thing and having to pay! I mean, like that, I mean…, for me it was, it was something gratifying, I mean that… He who goes to the gym pays to go to the gym generally, do you understand? Because he needs it, because he has a good time, because he thinks it is good for his health whether mental or physical… Us, I mean that it was our militancy as well, right? But not a militancy understood as militancy from the point of view of having to put up with something! But militancy in that it was something ours. You found yourself there, you didn’t know how you had got to that point, you were very comfortable and you felt that what you were doing was important…

Beltran explained that during that time more txalapartariak couples and groups emerged:

… There is a middle step there which is that…, when…, posterior, or after these platforms are offering –Ez Dok Amairu, and Argia, and that [also the dance group Goizaldi]- are offering Txalaparta, it is true that by then we aren’t only these two platforms. Txalaparta is beginning to be known and there is a lot of interest to know the Txalaparta of the old ones, and the old ones start to go out, which they had never done! … there is a lot of people who say “Chs! I want to listen to the old ones!” … And there was a movement there… But what is true is that there was a movement of…, more youth started going to them…, they [the youth] came
to us… Ourselves in Santa Barbara de Lasarte … we taught Txalaparta there…, we also taught… a bit like workshops of Txalaparta, like workshops of alboka, like workshops of dultzaina…, because that’s how we were, after having taken, then we gave… And well, what is true is that groups start to emerge, and all in a sudden you have to go two weekends to Pamplona [Iruña, where he delivered courses of Txalaparta through the dance group Ortzadar for the first time in 1988], or you have to go four weekends to Bilbao [where he delivered courses for the first time in 1990 through the Federation of Dancers of Bizkaia], to deliver workshops… They [the old txalapartariak] are also delivering, right? They are also delivering some workshops out there of what they used to play … And then, well, there was like a general interest within what was the world of Basque culture, and as an instrument… Well, we were searching for our roots, imagine that, “here we have the summum” and so on. Some think that [Txalaparta] is the most archaic and oldest and the most..., and possibly the most representative, and the most ours, and that it doesn’t exist anywhere else in the world, and so on (Juan Mari Beltran, interview, May 2006).

Juan Mari Beltran, in his search for “rigour” and grounding in facts, seemingly parallel to a pragmatic and iconoclastic personal perspective toward Basque culture, has endeavoured to reverse these beliefs of “uniqueness” by contextualising the tradition within a wider international and internationalist gaze, always fitting Txalaparta within Hornbostel-Sach’s instrument classification system in his publications, as well as situating it within a global world context of interlocking technique instruments that share some characteristics with Txalaparta. He proceeds:

Then there was a movement such that all in a sudden from two active couples, plus some non active other, it went to a lot more couples, and txalapartaris in lots of areas in the country. And many years pass there, like this, in that way, with ups and downs… There are interesting things. Mikel Laboa introduces in his concerts as a singer txalapartaris there. Ez Dok Amairu still counts with txalapartaris in their concerts…
Avant-Garde Txalaparta

The same year Ez Dok Amairu dissolved, in 1972, the Artze brothers took part as Txalaparta performers at an international gathering in Iruñea (Iruñeako Topaketetan) where they had the opportunity to meet musicians like John Cage, Steve Reich and Luis de Pablo among others within the avant-garde scene. This had a powerful influence in them (Zabala 2003):

In 1972 there was some Pamplona [Iruña] gatherings, a very curious phenomenon, fifteen days of music and exhibitions with many groups: John Cage, Steve Ray [sic.]… without censorship or anything. And there a fuss was made, with the presence of ETA, the communists that led the demonstrations, etc. And all this was promoted by a millionaire from Navarre, Luis Etano, who had good relationships with francoism, that’s why it could be done in all Pamplona. My brother and I played a lot at that event (JosAnton Artze in Antipas 1998, 25).

After the break up of the group, Mikel Laboa, Jose Maria Zabala, Jose Luis Zumeta and the Artze brothers remained together and created the audiovisual spectacle *Ikimilikiliklik*. The spectacle, also choreographed by JosAnton Artze, featured music, songs, Txalaparta, and images of Zumeta’s birds and Artze’s visual poems projected on the stage. The performance was offered from 1973 to 1978 in Euskal Herria, France (Paris) and Italy (Venice):

[T]here was slides [projection], there was poetry, there was... Txalaparta, there was music, my songs… and so. We used to do a spectacle that is called “Ikimilikiliklik” and which was, I think it was nice, it was interesting …, and I think it was a bit progressive, a bit… “progre” [left wing], you know?, nice, in that sense, of giving people a little the interesting ideas (Mikel Laboa, interview, May 2006).

In 1975 the Artze brothers recorded their first LP “Txalaparta’75 iraila” in Milan Ricordi studio. The record was produced by Walter Marchetti, Italian avant-garde dadaist composer (influenced by John Cage), pioneer of concrete music and co-founder of the ZAJ Group (1964). A year later they took part in the work *Zurezko Olerkia* (“Wooden Poem”, published in CD format in 2003) by Avant Garde Basque composer Luis de Pablo, within the contemporary music programme “Neue Musik fur Kinder” in
Bonn, Germany. This was the first work at which txalaparta was performed with other instruments (Antipas 1998). It was composed for four instruments made of wood: marimba, xylophone, cajon and txalaparta; the latter was completely free to improvise, and only time length restrictions were provided for it. These works would be followed by an artistic career characterised by experimental art and Zen understandings.

Mikel Laboa’s Compositions

I asked Laboa how did he get to know about Txalaparta:

Well, with these ones. With these ones. I had a very strong relationship with the Artze brothers, right? And later then with Jexux, the brother who died, the younger one! He used to be a lot with me in the concerts and that, right? And later then, then we took…, we even introduced in many records the Txalaparta with voice, with the guitar…

During our meeting, as I looked at his old grey green eyes, his beautiful rendering of the song “Haika Mutil” run in my mind like a soundtrack to our conversation: “Haika mutil, jeiki hadi, argia den mira hadi…” (“Get up boy, stand up, if there is light, look attentively…”). I remembered that occasion in which I got one of his CDs in Donostia, in 2004, and went back to the shop to return it, thinking it might have been spoiled. As the song progressed, it started becoming more and more distorted, like someone that could not continue anymore with a straight face perhaps, I felt when I understood; restrained tears poured into song, altering its course, may be. “Mikel Laboa has been able to capture in his song the sentiment of Euskal Herria”, Pilar Goikoetxea told me, adding that he was a very important reference in the country. I recall a txalapartari, Ander, whom I met through the Komite Internazionalistak, an organisation that I got to know partly due to the “snow ball” effect through which I got to know most people in Euskal Herria. Ander spoke to me passionately about Mikel Laboa, about Laboa’s experiments with his songs while he worked also as a children psychiatrist. He spoke about those lyrics where Laboa seemed to be talking, but in fact said nothing, as they were in a made up language, and also about those songs where Laboa introduced Txalaparta. At one point Ander looked down into the CD he had in his hands, remaining silent for a while, as if searching for some privacy, entirely overcome by emotion. Whatever Laboa managed to tap into with his powerful,
passionate and sincere voice and music, it was a realm, perhaps some open wound, that seemed widely shared. At the Internationalist Days organised by Askapena (internationalist organisation within the Basque Movement for National Liberation), in July 2006 (during a cease fire that had engendered great hopes of resolution among Basques), one of the songs by Laboa (with lyrics by Xabier Lete) was the soundtrack closing the last event: “Izarren hautsa” (Star dust). I was told that this song, of a powerful sentiment, was often played at events of the Independentist Left political coalition:

Once upon a time star dust became life seed, and from it we emerged … Man needs to dominate a hostile environment. He lives that fight and from it he extracts his truth. He searches eagerly for wisdom and light, and in that search he knows no rest. He finds his way through dark paths, and invents new laws risking his life …. From the same trunk from which we were born, other new branches will be born who will continue the struggle, who will become conscious owners of their future … (“Izarren hautsa” lyrics by Xabier Lete).

At one point in the interview, I asked Mikel if there was an intention of breaking the listener’s expectations with his experimental music, like the German philosopher Adorno, for instance, advocated: “It is not that you go to break purposefully…, I don’t know how to say…, perhaps it is your thoughts that are broken, right?, [and that is] what makes you move…” He didn’t finish his sentence, and moved on to a lighter subject.

Laboa spoke of the work in which he has introduced Txalaparta, such as Itsasoa eta Lehorra:

*Itsasoa eta Lehorra*, sea and land. I have one [piece] with Txalaparta, with Jexux Artze and these, and then, there is Txalaparta, in a “*lekeitio*”. My line of “*lekeitios*”, which is the one of most improvisation, the one of more metalinguage, and… I have three lines: the traditional, the one of current poets [where Laboa composes the music and sings], and then there is … the “lekeitios”, and the title is “*Lekeitios*”…. In “*Baga, Biga, Higa*”, *Lekeitio 2. “Orreaga”, Lekeitio 3. “Gernika”, Lekeitio 4, 5…, I don’t know, I got lost already, now…, now…. I don’t know [laughing], there are lots of “*lekeitios*” … it is a line of more… an experimental line, right?, that I have …
María: And what takes you to that experimental line, to that kind of music? …

Mikel: I don’t know, I started because of a strange thing. Well, us, when the Civil War, we went… (I was only two years old, but…) we went to Bizkaia, to the farm-houses there are between Lekeitio and Ispaster, Gardata … then Franco, when he entered [into power] and so on, we came here to San Sebastian again, right? And we used to go every year to Lekeitio, to Sardias … And I really liked the sound of the way of speaking in Bizkaia, from the coast. That accent that it has…, it is a dialect from Bizkaia, right? But… it struck me a lot … Then I started to improvise a little with “Baga, Biga, Higa”. I remember Julen Lekuona, who was from the group [Ez Dok Amairu], used to laugh also the first time I started doing these silly things of saying things like this “weesiesee…” [imitating speech like he does in his “lekeitio” compositions], and he laughed, “what is this one doing”, and so, and I started there with the “lekeitios”. I titled them “lekeitios” because of that, because of the form of language from there … It is that, a kind of meta-language…. He mentioned again his Lekeitio 7: Itsasoa eta Lehorra (Haizearen Orrazia) (Sea and Land (Wind Comb)), where Txalaparta features along his song and guitar:

It is Txillida’s Wind Comb. It is entitled “Haizearen Orrazia.” “Itsasoa eta Lehorra.” Yes, I mourned Eduardo, yes, Txillida, I cried for him when I recorded it (Interview, May 2006).

![Figure 2.24: Haizearen Orrazia (The Wind Comb) by Basque sculptor Eduardo Txillida (1977) at the La Concha bay. Donostia, Gipuzkoa (Euskal Herria). Source: bizkaie.biz](image)

**Xoria zaude ixilik, ez egin nigarrrik;**
**zer profeiti dükezü hola aflijitürik?**
**nik eramanen züüt, xedera laxatürik,**
**ohiko bortütit,**
**ororen gaiñetik.**

Stay quiet, little bird, don’t cry;
what advantage do you get from upsetting me?
I will take you, letting your tie go,  
over the mountain itself  
above every thing.

(*Itsasoa eta Lehorra*, in Laboa 1998)

I asked Laboa about Txalaparta, how did he and the Artze brothers (or Jexux with other txalapartariak) interpret it in their performances:

…I always see it more open. I don’t know, right? Something open, like an open, free, sound … But it was to adapt yourself [to it] a little, right? … Me to adapt to it, with the guitar, to the sound of Txalaparta. One to adapt to it oneself, because otherwise it starts…, I don’t know how to tell you … the voice, and all… freer. They did also nice things between the piano and the Txalaparta, Iñaki Xalbador with Jexux Artze (interview, May 2006).

Laboa was tired, old, he couldn’t hear very well, yet there was something about him very raw, I could not say what. Humble, unassuming, yet, perhaps because of that, capable of radiating a powerful sentiment, something that surrounded him, like his song yet quietly, and that became silently contagious. He made sure I could get two of his CDs on his store account at my return a month later, and he gave me a lift into the city. Suddenly I was overcome by a river of emotion, I had to leave Donostia soon, Euskal Herria, and I was missing it already; the sea at our left on the road, the transparent blue sky, the memories of its green hills and the people I had met. I don’t know what it was. My eyes welled up and my voice got stuck as we were talking: “Oh! I’ll miss this!”, “Will you?” I immediately turned my face to my car window just as he was turning to look at me. When he dropped me, he got out of the car “I want to give you a proper farewell” and gave me a hug. He passed away in December 2008.

Andoni Aleman: [J]ust as it happens with the Txalaparta, that from very basic norms, and without excessively out of control philosophical approaches, uh… Mikel, I think, and it is my opinion, right?, that the approach is the same, that is, Mikel is **music in its pure state**.

María: What is music in its pure state, what do you mean?

Andoni: He is **gut**. He is gut. And he is **sentiment**. And from there, from being gut, and from being sentiment, from being **sincerity**, and from being a character who
is exactly the same outside of the stage than on it… (the stage is an amplifier of what Mikel does), and as he is such a truthful person, and so sincere, so…, so outside of poses and pretence, the stage amplifies all that sincerity, and then the result is an incredible image. Because he is so sincere. And all that of finding complex theories to it, I think, in regards to Mikel… I rather explain it from… very simple feelings.

After the recorded interview I had with Rafa Egiguren in July 2006 was finished, we had again another beer, chatted a bit longer and he invited me to some pintxoak (finger food) at a different bar, where we spoke some more. We discussed Txalaparta in Ez Dok Amairu; Joxean Artze’s free style; Txalaparta in Laboa’s experimental compositions, free; Txalaparta and the Western musical cannon, where it enters into a regular beat becoming a rhythmic base, subject to strict rules, underscoring other instruments and the melody. As I was trying to make sense of all this, Rafa stated he felt such elements as the irrintzi, Laboa’s metalanguage (“babbling”) in his “lekeitios”, and Txalaparta, were like para-musical elements. He elaborated what he meant in relation to what he called “babbling” and the irrintzi: “The prime matter from which later language is created. Something very primeval. Something primitive”. He claimed the same was the case for Txalaparta. He added the irrintzi for him was like lightning, and Txalaparta, “the horse”, like the thunder of a storm (fieldnotes, July 2006). In Basque oral lore, Andra Mari, Earth goddess of the Basques, was said to cross the skies as a horse, or on a cart carried by horses, carrying with her -or embodying- dark storm clouds.

Further Promotion and Popularisation of Txalaparta

Franco’s death in 1975 was followed by the so called “transition to democracy”. What seemed for some political analysts like an unavoidable transition into a communist state did not happen, leading those sectors of society that wished for it to disappointment. Furthermore, as highlighted by the Basque Independentist Left among others, the basic power structures that supported the dictatorship within Franco’s repressive apparatus did not change nor did the state security forces (who were considered occupation forces by Basque independentists) leave the country. In April
1978 the Basque Independentist Left political coalition, Herri Batasuna, was formed as a response to Spain’s refusal to address the Basque question (except in its repression measures) and to the imminent referendum for the newly drafted Spanish Constitution, which would be rejected by a majority of Basques within the Basque Autonomous Community (Gipuzkoa, Bizkaia and Araba).

The 1980s would be marked by the activity of state sponsored paramilitary forces (the so called “dirty war”), and, among other policies, by the infamous “Plan Zen,” a police plan implemented by the Spanish Minister of Interior that was designed to eliminate the Basque Independentist Left movement by any means, establishing any individual related to the movement as a legitimate target. This was coupled by an increase of Basque armed resistance targeting police and military. During this decade Txalaparta starts being incorporated consistently into the political events of the Basque Independentist Left political formation and its popular base (chapter 5), which has prevailed until recently, coexisting with other music industry dynamics since the mid to late 1990s. Txalaparta started becoming very popular among the youth, which would progressively take it into the streets and squares (during neighbourhood and village festivals for instance), and form associations and groups dedicated to its practice and promotion (according to Beltran, this scenario where Txalaparta starts to proliferate develops already between 1965 and 1975 (Beltran 2009, 102-3)). This phenomenon will go on the increase by the late 1980s and during the 1990s.

Within this climate, further promotion of Txalaparta, from a different stance, leads to decisive developments:

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26 ZEN stood for “Zona Especial Norte” (Especial North Zone), which was used as a way of referring to the fourth southern provinces of the Basque Country, including when possible the North as well (a delicate matter in terms of diplomatic relations with the French State.) The ZEN plan devoted special attention to psychological warfare and propaganda through the manipulation of the media, outlining a campaign of disinformation (Núñez 1997).

27 Juan Mari Beltran produced a documentary, released in 1985, on Basque musical instruments, Euskal Herriko Soinu Tresnak (Basque instruments of Euskal Herria), featuring footage of his ethnographic recordings and interviews. The documentary opens and closes with Txalaparta, its sounds superimposed on a Basque landscape, perhaps claiming it by means of Txalaparta as Basque, infusing into it the iconic values ascribed to Txalaparta as a marker of difference. If the Artze brother’s participation as txalapartariak in documentary films seemed to fit into the theme of the struggle in a way or another, Beltran will always frame the political in a more nuanced manner within the educational purpose of his audiovisual work (1985, 2009).
Juan Mari Beltran: In the year... 1985 I was notified... [he lowers the volume of his voice significantly, like he is talking of something treasured], well, we, for instance, had already... Oskorri had already used Txalaparta also in some record..., ourselves as the group “Azala” had already incorporated the Txalaparta as well... That is, I mean that it starts to be found with these things a little, right?, within what is music on the one hand and so on. And in the year 1985 I was notified: “Hey, Joxan, there is a call for a position for Hernani, for..., the council wants to start a music conservatory, but it wants to offer Basque popular music instruments,” well instruments of..., a little particular, like the txistu, and... (the txistu was already in conservatories already), but besides the txistu, the dultzaina, the trikitixa..., the alboka...- “they want Txalaparta” [at this point, his voice is only a whisper].

Wind and rain escorted Spring's departure,
     Flying snow welcomes Spring's return.
On the ice-clad rock rising high and sheer
     A flower blooms sweet and fair.
Sweet and fair, she craves not Spring for herself alone,
     to be the harbinger of Spring she is content.
When the mountain flowers are in full bloom
     she will smile mingling in their midst.

“Ode to the Plum Blossom”. Mao Tse Tung

They made a call to take teachers, and I was working at the time teaching Basque music in the ikastola of Intxaurrondo [in Donostia] where I was also delivering Txalaparta within my music programme for the boys and the girls [“children” in Castilian is conventionally put in male form only, yet Beltran makes here a point of saying it in male and female form –his voice has raised now to a normal conversation volume]. ... And this [the position in Hernani] seemed to me very interesting as an experience, and I applied, and I got the position for the thing of Hernani in Txalaparta, alboka, dultzaina and txistu. Today we do it [deliver the classes] between two of us but before it was me who did all that.
His dedication to the Txalaparta Eskola (School of Txalaparta) in Hernani is also exemplified by the fact that, as he states in his most recent publication, all his groups and Txalaparta couples since 1985 have been formed with students from the school: “Javi Morcillo, Karlos Torres, Juanma Vicente, Iñigo Monreal, Felipe Ugarte, Arantxa Ansa, Ander Barrenetxea, Aitor Beltran, Ixiar Jauregi…” (Beltran 2009, 164).

At our interview in May 2006, Beltran elaborated further on the year 1985, when a new repertoire for Txalaparta emerged at the spring of the music conservatory created by the council of Hernani (Independentist Left at the time):

…For me it was very clear: “first we are going to learn that of the old ones and so”. But what happened? That from the eight [initial students] there were two [that were] very advanced and in two months we had already surpassed all what the old ones played and more. Then, what went on to happen there is that another type of rhythmic repertory and so on was needed, and then that is when I, chs! [taught] not the traditional stuff, but what we are now playing in other kind of rhythms, what was the rhythm of four, the rhythm of three, the rhythm of… I mean, of subdivision of four, of subdivision of three…, and well, then we started to work a little on other things … The school…, there was a very good atmosphere with the years, and so on, and: “well, we have to play”, already in the first year, “…there is a festival in x neighbourhood, let’s go to play”. We started to take the school out of the school walls somehow. We wanted a little to let people know also what is being done and so on, of course.”

**Txalaparta Festa**

In 1987 the first Txalaparta Festa took place for two days, remaining the main all Basque Country festival dedicated to Txalaparta today. The festival is organised by the

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Figure 2.25: Pello Zuaznabar and Ramon Goikoetxea at the 3rd Txalaparta Festa in 1989. Source: Image extracted from the video *Txalaparta Festa 6 Urtetan* (Ttakun ttakun txalaparta taldea 1992)
Txa1aparta Eskola of the Public Music School of Hernani, and the school’s Txa1aparta group Ttakun Ttan Ttakun. Nonetheless, participants identified Beltran as the organiser, and so did I, for which Juan Mari immediately corrected me at our interview in May 2006. Participants often indicated to me it was Beltran who contacted them to arrange the performances for the festival (and often spoke as if Beltran was in fact the organiser, assisted by his students and txa1aparta co-performers). This salient involvement and tireless dedication was an aspect that contributed to the admiration felt for him. A txa1apartari felt that in fact Beltran took on too much and that he could perhaps delegate some more: “you see him from talking to the performers and so on, to serving the cider and putting on the dinner plates” (interview, June 2003). Indeed, I purchased a t-shirt with a print of the festival from him in one occasion, as he was at that moment in charge of the selling stall, and on another he handed me a glass of cider at the drinks counter. The festival is one of the main referents and meeting events for txa1apartariak from all over Euskal Herria, which is also actively encouraged by the organisers, ensuring the concert programme includes Txa1aparta performers from all Basque provinces (excepting Iparralde, which may be represented by performers from just one of its provinces since, as Beltran and other participants explained to me, the presence of Txa1aparta is not strong enough in that part of the country as to allow for a performance per northern province).

So national a format is also uh… intentional, right?, here, when we organise the Sestao Txa1aparta Eguna [Day of Txa1aparta of Sestao, in Bizkaia] we try to bring a group per herrialde [province], plus ourselves as hosts… to give it that national format, to bring Navarre and to bring Iparralde. And we bring Iparralde as a unit rather than as three herrialdes because there aren’t enough groups, otherwise we would bring a group from each herrialde, and [in total] we would bring seven invited groups plus ourselves. It is a format from Hernani [Txa1aparta Festa] that we also liked… (E. Sestao Tx, interview, June 2006).

At times some txa1apartariak expressed a disappointment with the performances offered at the festival, or some of them. A participant put what was perceived by some as uninteresting as a result of the criteria for selecting Txa1aparta groups for the festival, where representation of an all Basque Country by means of Txa1aparta performance had priority over the perceived quality of the selected group or the amount of preparation the group was prepared to dedicate to its stage performance:
…someone is brought from each herrialde even though at a given time there may be in an herrialde better txalapartaris than somewhere else in some year. I mean, that is the way it is, I mean, in the Txalaparta Festa the best txalapartaris have never been [represented], “[not] always”, I mean! It is not like “who are a little the ones that can offer something powerful and so forth” … the objective is not to present four very good performances here and that it succeeds… No, no, no. The objective was another: to maintain a celebration among everybody. That has been something very clear from Juan Mari already from the start, and besides I think it has its value. I do like the idea … (M.U., interview, May 2006).

This performance and embodiment of the nation, as evidenced by the programme of Txalaparta Festa, is a trait of many other kind of events and domains of Basque culture, and the organising groups of other Txalaparta festivals in the country try to follow this line as well. The official language of the Txalaparta Festa is Euskara.

**Juan Mari Beltran:** Something that I had already before the school was created was an awareness that there was a great disconnection, I mean, that no relationship existed among the txalapartaris of the different areas. I had a relationship with Jexux, with Jexux Artze…, since when he stopped playing with Joxean he called me and we practiced for a while, rehearse… [from 1986 up to two years approximately (Beltran 2009)] … And me later, look, the thing of Hernani happened, and it happened that I was busy with Txanbela [a music group Beltran created], and there were other issues that I was preparing for the Donosti conservatory, and so on, and I had to… I told him “look, I can’t continue, and…”, and he started with other people [Andoni Aleman, Klara Badiola, Joseba Urzelai…] And, uh… “Damn, there are txalapartaris, where are there txalapartaris? What are they doing?” That [question] was there. “Damn, we should organise some gathering”, that, I am talking of..., the first course [of the just created Music Public School of Hernani, which was given the category of conservatory at the start] had not finished yet. But I already raised that issue, right? “Damn, we should…””, “Damn, but if we did something, and so on”. The relationship with the council was interesting and they were quite open to the proposals.
Herri Batasuna, the most voted political option in Hernani since its creation in 1978, had the majority of sits in the council of the town at the time. Sensitive to the desire to preserve / reconstruct a Basque identity and to the popular culture of the people (on which it was/is steeped), they were able to respond to Beltran’s vision:

And at the start of the second year, then, in some way, we took again that idea that we had considered the previous year. That is…, 1985, 86…, 1986, in October, when the course starts, we resumed the idea, we raised some of it in the council: “well, how much do you need”, “well, such and such…”, and we started to organise what became Txalaparta Festa (Juan Mari Beltran, interview, May 2006).

The most important festival dedicated to Txalaparta was in the making.

“Damn, if that gathering served also…” (that [thought] was there already) “…served also a little not only to get to know each other but to discuss and to…”
And I felt that it was very important that what I had had of listening to the old ones and of being with the old ones and receiving directly from them…, that rather than me telling it, they should tell it.
A discussion roundtable was organised with Pello Zuaznabar, Jexux Artze, and Juan Mari Beltran on a Thursday, and the concert took place on the Friday with the Sorzabalbere from Irun, Erlantz Auzmendi and other txalapartariak known to Beltran at the time, “and of course, the old ones” (Beltran, interview May 2006). The old players performed at the different festivals for as many years as they could, and their families are always the first to perform, establishing a continuity with the younger generations of txalapartariak. The concert was preceded by a public dinner, thus establishing also a continuation with the model of the old cider-making celebrations. If Txalaparta was communal marriage making in the past, so it has been annually in Hernani (cider area) since the festival was first organised. The format that was eventually adopted and which has generally persisted structures the festival across three days in May: A Thursday is generally dedicated to research oriented events (discussions based on analytical or experimental research, exhibitions, etc.), the following Friday showcases a special indoors performance, commissioned and curated for the festival, which generally takes place in the Biteri cultural centre in Hernani. An event that has been incorporated since 1997 in the Friday night, testifying to a new expansion of Txalaparta, is the Txalaparta Party Aparta, envisaged by Harkaitz Martinez (from the bikote Oreka Tx) and Iñigo Monreal (from Ttakun Ttan Ttakun Txalaparta Taldea), in which Txalaparta is combined with Techno in one of the local pubs and where any txalapartariak may participate. On Saturday morning, a small band of young musicians from the music school tour the town performing on Basque traditional instruments (a workshop for committed txalapartariak to come together and discuss their current work in relation to Txalaparta was also organised in 2004), and finally in the evening the outdoor concert starts after a popular meal anyone can join in providing they have purchased their meal ticket in advance and seats remain. Several txalapartas are placed on the festival grounds, usually in the

Figure 2.26: Txalaparta Party Aparta (Txalaparta Festa), Txalapartariak Iñigo Monreal and Sergio Lamuedra. The improvised session lends itself to dance. Source: Fieldwork, May 2006.
largest square of the town, the Plaza de los Tilos, inviting spontaneous performances by attendants (“free sessions”), in tune with the participative spirit of the festival. A small market, manned by txalaparta students from the school (or Beltran himself) is put up where material related to Txalaparta (such as music and video recordings, books, t-shirts and makilak), and cider is served all along the festival. The festival has also been documented by the Txalaparta Eskola of Hernani since the start with the media that was available to them, with the purpose of preserving and disseminating the work presented, and most of the festival editions are preserved in video.

The high levels of experimentation that have taken place to date in relation to Txalaparta (where it has been combined with different types of performing arts, music styles, and instruments) are evidenced by the audiovisual recordings that document the Txalaparta Festa:

That has been innovation! Damn it! I mean: Materials, all have been already tried! Rhythms… all! [Txalaparta] has been mixed with all kinds of arts, whether dances, theatre, storytelling, uh… everything! Everything! I mean, I think we have done everything here, all what has been done to date in the Txalaparta has been done here in Hernani some time too. Even the other day [at the recent Txalaparta Festa] Juan Mari said, and he is quite right, that many of those things have been done specifically, exclusively, for the Txalaparta Festa: Works that have meant hours of effort, of rehearsals, of preparations, of cast, of props, of scenography and so on and so forth, just for one day, for the Txalaparta Festa (I. M., interview, May 2006).

Erlantz Auzmendi explained that Beltran had been a great incentive, through the Hernani festival, for txalapartariak to experiment and to improve their levels of performance and mastery of Txalaparta: “If you don’t innovate you don’t survive nor do you develop. That of Hernani means a creative satisfaction, a challenge … To present there every year is not to do the same, for me, and that is an incentive to search” (interview, November 2003).

The event seems to attract, above all, txalapartariak, a specialised audience of connoisseurs. Beltran calculated an approximate figure of 400 attendants at the festival in May 2006, perhaps 600 at a given point (of which 141 joined the outdoor dinner), and added that “we have reached in the Tilos [square] some year…, we may have
reached up to 1,000 people!” Groups established in the late 1990s and the last decade in other provinces of the Spanish State, outside of Euskal Herria, are also regular attendants. The atmosphere at the Txalaparta Festa is casual and informal, like that of a rock concert, for instance. As the audience arrives at the start of the Saturday concert, before the public meal, or afterwards, we may meet the young txalapartariak from Sestao Tx (Bizkaia) gathering around one of the txalapartas available, perhaps watching members of Jo Tta Kun, from Iruña. We may find Harkaitz, from Oreka Tx, playing at another txalaparta further beyond with Iñigo Monreal, who often performs with Juan Mari Beltran. Perhaps the Ugarte brothers are nearby, or Tomas San Miguel, renowned musician who incorporated Txalaparta into his compositions with Gerla Beti (the couple formed in the 1980s by renowned txalapartari Erlantz Auzmendi and Ruben Calleja). We may come across txalapartariak from Jo ala Jo, whose presentation of Kirikoketa we may have attended that morning. Watching some other free session of Txalaparta, we may identify Josu Goiri in the crowd, greeting us with a smile. Paxkal Indo, former member of the rock band Txakun, from Iparralde, may be perhaps talking to Koldo Sorzabalbere, from Irun. We may meet Jokin and Gaizka, Berezi, Kemen… and talk about the ttakun, their commitment, what Txalaparta is for them, and what it is not…

**Conclusion**

Through this chapter, we have encountered Txalaparta, that which was performed in the context of the cider-making baserrri, by two performers, ttakun and herren (order and disorder, as Beltran explains both roles (Beltran 1998)), beating a wooden plank in an interlocking fashion. The ttakun player (or “tukutun”) performed a continuous succession of ttakun beats, two immediate strikes, with the stress in the second, like a heart beat, marking the rhythm, as the descendants of the old players indicated. The herren (or “urgun”) would then strike once (herren), twice (ttakun), or would not strike, in his performing space, after every beat of the ttakun player, trying to disorder the latter within a kind of challenge. The piece, which progressed, in general terms, from a slow tempo and low volume to a climatic moment that concluded the piece, commenced with the ttakun player performing on his own some ttakun beats, and ended with both players joining together in a regular interlocking, both performing ttakun, until a stage was reached, a kind of resolution, where, as JosAnton Artze
explained the old Zuaznabar players taught them, no room was left for an extra *ttakun*: *Tuurrukutun!*

Awakening, discovery of the mother language and consequently, the mother land: such was the experience of JosAnton Artze; an awakening that was a remembrance. Thus we have also learned of how the youth of the 1960s and 1970s encountered such Tzialaparta (or recall that encounter) during Franco’s dictatorship, when its disappearance was feared and its rescue (together with other traditions and Basque language) was felt as a matter of urgency, and swiftly undertaken from the stance of a socially and politically engaged art (the group Ez Dok Amairu and artists connected to it in a way or another) or socially and politically motivated work not so obviously presented as such (Argia and players connected to it). Both groups were part of the so called Basque School of Contemporary Art, a movement created around the immense figure of the Basque artist and philosopher Jorge Oteiza (immense for the crucial role he played in energising generations toward “mental” decolonisation). Oteiza will be a major presence from now on throughout this dissertation, forming part of the “emic” hermeneutic on which I have based my own interpretations, for he has been a major presence, directly or indirectly, in the experience of participating *txalapartariak*. Oteiza advocated, in his influential book *Quosque Tandem!* (1963) and later publications, and also in the influential documentary film *Ama Lur* (1968), the recovery of an existential wholeness (a Basque one) by means of art (Basque expressive culture and a philosophy he found articulated in it), for he identified in it a sensibility, artistic and religious at once, inherent to the creation of culture (put in other words), and thus capable of “creating nation” again, recovering it from annihilation and apathy. Thus, Oteiza presents “identity” in terms of sensibility, addressing *being* and a kind of creative force behind it, one closely linked to sentiment, manifest in *behaviour*, in *doing*. At the same time, the artist also connected the present with a remote past, Prehistory, not to set the former back, but rather energising it with a timeless ancestry that he identified as contemporary. Those who engaged with Tzialaparta in the 1960s and who may be identified as major forces of its “revival,” or re-making, such as the Artze brothers, or Juan Mari Beltran, imbued by that creativity and such energy, shaped Tzialaparta within different understandings that have been outlined in this chapter, or hinted, and which continue, more explicitly, in the next chapters of this dissertation, informing an overarching interpretation. Avant-Garde approaches to sound, expressive culture and existence; educational perspectives that seek the more familiar idioms;
poets, *doers*, makers of community and nation; the themes and individuals this chapter has featured continue through (and inform) the main narratives that have been developed in relation to Txalaparta, presented in the next chapter, and also the kind of community that seems to articulate in relation to this sound making tradition, and which seems to materialise in the festival Txalaparta Festa, already introduced in this section.
Chapter 3. Narratives

Introduction

This section of the dissertation is concerned in a more explicit manner with those understandings of Txalapartar that I have found most salient in participant’s discourse and practice, as well as widely shared, and therefore relevant in terms of representativity of “the” community of practice I have engaged with in this research. I have chosen to ignore here the few approaches I have encountered stemming from (as it happens, non-performing) individuals’ idiosyncrasies with no influence or bearing on txalapartariak or people who engage with Txalaparta as listeners in some way or another. The narratives considered in this section are presented in the written work of Josu Goiri, Juan Mari Beltran, or Gregory Antipas, and the documentary Txalaparta, El Eco de un Pueblo (Tejedor 2005) –as well as within the storyline of the earlier documentary film Euskal Herri Musika (Larruquert 1978), and are also explicitly presented in the discourse of participating txalapartariak (besides Goiri and Beltran). These narratives sometimes overlap, and those who ascribe to one or another more clearly do not necessarily reject the others (though sometimes this is the case, as I point out in due course): this highlights the different interpretive communities encountered, often overlapping, within what I initially conceptualised as one.

The three main different understandings of Txalapartar that are explicitly presented by participants are not treated here on the basis of whether they are “true” or not, or whether they are “plausible” or not (as they are usually presented by the aforementioned sources). Rather, I have chosen to engage with such discourses in terms of what I understand they disclose or “construct”, that is, in terms of “performance”, in the sense advocated by the broad spectrum approach formulated by theatre director and scholar Richard Schechner, among others, within the area of performance studies that he pioneered in the 1980s as a result of his collaborations with anthropologist Victor Turner. Within this approach, “performance” refers to any behaviour (including discourse) that is explicit or implicitly displayed for someone (or in other words, any behaviour that is meant to influence others). Thus, not only actions and events that pertain to the performing arts, but those within a wider scope, whatever their kind, are susceptible of being framed “as” performance (including material culture as processes, with regards to the influence objects exert on those exposed to them). Schechner’s
approach is informed by converging currents of thinking from fields such as sociology and linguistics, social anthropology and theatre, as well as cultural studies, philosophy, feminism and queer studies, postcolonial studies and the avant-garde among others. Specially influential has been the analysis of social interaction in everyday life in terms of theatrical performance developed by Erving Goffman in the 1950s and 60s; Austin’s work on performative utterances; Victor Turner’s study of the intersection of ritual and larger social processes within their dramatic dimension; and Schechner’s own practice and experience within theatre. The main contribution by these and other scholars within performance studies, as elaborated by Richard Schechner, is a change of focus in the research inquiry, where questions of origin, “truth” or meaning in relation to social phenomena are turned into a concern for action and process: what matters is what people do, the kind of realities that are being constructed in the process of “doing”, the “stuff” of life in the making.

Discourses, events, cultural and social manifestations within a wide range may be framed “as” performance in this sense of displayed behaviour and the question of what is it that such behaviour actually does. Within this approach, social discourse does not simply disclose individuals’ perceptions and meanings, that is, individuals’ interpretations of the world they live in, but it also constructs, or seeks to construct (to preserve or modify), such worlds. Social discourse is thus performative. The concept of “performative,” within the broad spectrum approach, is not only an adjective that “inflects what it modifies with performance-like qualities” (Schechner 2002, 110). It is also a noun originally coined by British philosopher J. L. Austin in 1955 to refer to words or sentences that do not simply mean, but do (perform) something when uttered (in the specific context for which they are designed), bringing forth a transformation (i.e.: “I declare you husband and wife” is an example of an utterance by virtue of which a bride and groom are transformed in a marriage ceremony into individuals with a new social status). I refer to elements pertaining to the theatrical process of display, in the more traditional sense of the performing arts, by means of Diana Taylor’s proposed adjective of “performatic” to avoid confusion with the term “performative” as used in the broad spectrum approach to performance (Madrid 2009, 3).

Among the different kinds of performances Schechner explicitly identifies within his approach, this dissertation is indeed concerned with those that pertain to the performing arts, but also with ritual, play and everyday life performances. Such
performance arenas may overlap and often do. Discourses reflected upon in this dissertation are performances that perhaps originate in everyday life and, within a kind of ritualising (as is explained in chapter five), slip into the performing arts to further influence the former, or as performances that are perhaps created and enacted in works of art (from the ephemeral enactment to the long lasting material ones) and on stages (from a concert stage to the stage of a political rally, from a cinema screen to a published book) to shape conceptions of reality, or both – where they come from is not ultimately the concern in this exploration. The anxieties of life amid an armed conflict; contested borders and identities; individuals and small groups up against nation-states and other individuals and groups (perhaps colonisation starts at home); memories of lost sovereignty and shared dreams of what was and could be; a zest to serve life that takes some through death; a sensing of something essential, important, and a real need to define it so it may be protected, at all costs: it is play, it is art, it is ritual and it belongs to the everyday life of those involved. I will concern myself more specifically with ritual performance, or rather, “ritualising”, in the last chapter.

Acknowledging the criticism that has been directed to the broad spectrum approach to performance (and to Erving Goffman’s work previously) in terms of its ascription of excessive intention to social actors, I wish to highlight that I am conscious of a degree of spontaneity in the processes this dissertation engages with. Participants often pointed out (especially those who engaged with the revival in the 1960s and 70s) that they simply went “with the flow” or acted as if their kinds of actions were expected from them. They often stated they didn’t think twice about engaging with the wider movement for the salvation of the culture they participated in nor about the impulse to join in. “Intention” seemed to unfold with events and from largely spontaneous collective actions. Thus, in my use of Schechner’s approach to performance, I do not seek to engage with discussions on degrees of intention, nor awareness or self-consciousness, even though this may be a significant part of leading definitions of performance within such approach (Carlson 2004). Equally, relevant performatic elements that were part of certain stage acts, whether strictly in the arena of the performing arts (such as Txalaparta Festa) or in political rallies, were presented to me as non intentional by players or organisers, yet audience members who have participated in this research did interact with such elements in a way that made them performative, regardless of the intention put into such stage acts/performances. With this I wish to emphasise once more that, for the purpose of this interpretation, I do not consider performance (in the broad spectrum approach) to be necessarily intentional nor
performers (or social actors, borrowing on Erving Goffman’s terminology) to be necessarily self-conscious, for their actions to be open to interpretation “as” performances, so long as they exert an influence on others. In other words, as Schechner and other scholars within performance studies have highlighted, performances are open to multiple interpretations, regardless of the intention put in them by their active creators.

Though I focus on the three main narratives that seek to make sense of Txalaparta, and those performances which I interpret these narratives disclose and construct, there are other understandings in regards to what Txalaparta is considered to be which emerge in the work intertwined with the three main narratives presented here. The different sections in this chapter present different threads, which are finally taken up and woven together in the final interpretation pertaining to this section (in the next chapter).
“Txalaparta means horse trot” explained JosAnton Artze at our interview in May 2003:

The horse has an enormous importance in our mythology. That can be seen in the cave paintings. You can see it in Santimamiñe, in Altxerri, in Lascaux… [caves in the Basque Country, North and South], well, the horse can be seen represented on the walls, right? It appears in the dances, in many places. It appears in the whole country, starting from Xuberoa, where there is the zamalzain [dancer representing a horse]. In the Xuberoa valleys there is the zamalzain, besides dressed as a horse. The zaldiko-maldiko in Pamplona -you already know that horse in euskera is zaldi [I nod affirmatively], yes, you know- the zaldiko-maldiko in Pamplona. In the Lanz carnival it appears as well, in Navarre the horse appears, zaldi appears. In the dances from Luzaide, Valcarlos, there it can also be found. In the ezpatadantza from Berriz, in Bizkaia, the horse does not appear in the costume but the horse steps do …, they perform a kind of Txalaparta. They have a step which is… [he dances it: the trotie step from the Garay and Berriz ezpatadantza, in Bizkaia, as Urbeltz explained to me and demonstrated at our interview in June 2006], which is like the ttakun, right? Therefore, that, it can also be seen, in the dances, the importance the horse has had. Then, a part from that…
Do you already know what the irrintzi is? (JosAnton Artze, interview, May 2003).

A kind of yodelling yell, the *irrintzi* is a Basque cry uttered to express excitement and joy at popular events, including Txalaparta performances in the past and present. It may also be a sign of defiance and challenge, and has also been described as a war cry. There are competitions of *irrintziak*, and they may be heard from celebrations to funerals for those who dedicated or sacrificed their lives in the struggle. *Irrintzi* also means “horse neigh”.

“It was the year 1967 or so” Juan Antonio Urbeltz explained to me, “and there was a meeting of the Basque School of Contemporary Art. There was JosAnton Artze, and, I don’t know, maybe his brother as well…. anyway, there were several people, and they [Artze brothers] played the Txalaparta…” Urbeltz interrupts himself to offer a background to the story: “…I had read Frazer’s *The Golden Bough*, I was very interested in tradition. This book, *The Golden Bough*, was fascinating to me, right?, the book. Well, and uh…, I had also read at the time … I had read Mircea Eliade’s *Shamanism* … and here [showing Eliade’s book] the horse features many times … for instance, within the Siberian shamanism the horse features… And reading it, I asked my *aita* [“father” in Basque] -Well, I spoke with Jorge de Oteiza also about this, and I said “I think that the Txalaparta is a funerary drum, right?””, I said to Jorge. “I think that this is a funerary drum”. [Imitating Oteiza]: “Hey!” -well, he was a man of a very aroused curiosity, Jorge, and very vehement- he said: “Hey, Urbeltz, this you’re telling me!”, and so forth, “well, yes” [replying to Oteiza]. And I had spoken to my father, and I asked him [his father]… -my *aita* was from the Erro valley, from Linzoain in fact [Nafarroa]-, and I ask him and that: “Listen, what is Txalaparta for you?” –“ch”, “chalaparta” [emphasising how he pronounced the word for his father]-, and he says “No, ‘zalaparta’” … He told me: “with zed, ‘zalaparta’. Zalaparta…, zalaparta is, for us: ‘from horse trot to gallop’”. Stop. Now I know what it is.”

In a Yakut myth the “devil” inverts his drum, sits down on it, pierces it three times with his stick, and the drum turns into a three-legged mare that carries him into the east (Eliade 1989, 467).
Ttakun, ttakun, ttakun ttan ttakun, ttakun ttan ttakun ttan ttakun ttan ttakun ttan ttakun... The Txalaparta is that. What was the problem? The problem was that in Gipuzkoa, in colloquial language, “txalaparta” means “noise”, “hubbub”, related to children. But they didn’t have… My father didn’t speak to me of noise, nor hubbub, nor nothing! “Zalaparta”, he told me straight away, “this is horse trot-gallop” (Urbeltz, interview June 2006).

Urbelz then elaborated on the rich culture and knowledge of horses they used to have in the Orreaga valley (Roncesvalles) where his father was from (the Erro valley is part of Orreaga). He was addressing, I felt, many more people than those present in the room (his wife Mariam –dancer and former member of Ez Dok Amairu, and me).

The meaning of the word “txalaparta” was a debated issue among those I interviewed and spoke to during fieldwork. Though Juan Mari Beltran used to state this meaning (horse trot) for the term in his earlier writings (as well as “noise”, in the form of “zalaparta”) (1988, 429), he has now distanced himself from it, arguing instead in favour of “the sound of wood” (2004, 222) or “noise” relying on dictionary entries exclusively –of which he quotes one where the meaning for “txalapartan” is gallop (2009, 57). Even though players would often mention to me both possibilities in a desire to be open minded about it, they tended to favour one or the other available meaning depending on the narrative they were most fond of at the time (often players would have embraced different narratives in their learning process). Joseba Zuaznabar, for whom adjusting to the tradition as he inherited it, without diversion of any kind (at least now that his elders did not live anymore) was paramount, shared with me his understanding that the meaning of “noise” associated with “zalaparta” (a term reflected upon as the origin of “txalaparta” by participants attached to the horse narrative) was related to the noise made by horses on the cobblestone streets (even though he claimed with dismay that his father and uncle had never mentioned the horse to him in relation to Txalaparta and that he believed both terms to be unrelated). Older participants, those who engaged with Txalaparta in the late 60’s, 70’s and 80’s (excepting Juan Mari Beltran) ascribed to the narrative of the horse (also a group of anarchist leanings that initiated its engagement with Txalaparta in the late 1990’s –taught and influenced by Erlantz Auzmendi). Those players who were akin to Juan Mari Beltran’s thesis (generally younger, as it seemed to me), were equally very critical of romanticised images of
Txalaparta, mirroring and quoting Beltran’s iconoclastic and supposedly “no-nonsense” more materialistic reflections.

Juan Antonio Urbeltz continued his account of the meeting where he broke the news:

Then, the meeting took place and I told them. Then JosAnton started: “We have discovered our God!”, and I don’t know what else, like this…

He elaborated further on the hypothesis he developed from reading Eliade’s influential book, the same copy that would also later inform Oteiza’s understanding:

Juan Antonio: …Then I thought “this is a funerary drum that, through the sound of the zalaparta, takes the soul of the deceased to the other world; it helps the transit”, because the horse, like the pigeon, is a psychopomp animal, that is, it is an animal that because of his capacity to travel and fly, it is linked [with transit]. That’s why there are horse sacrifices…, they are found in many cultures of the old Europe (…) …in [relation to] that transformation process which is the transit from life to death, there is also a transformation process in the apple and the lime [the latter in relation to the tobera].

María: But why “funerary drum”? I mean, what made you think of a “funerary drum” and not in some other passage, right?, rite of passage.

Juan Antonio: Well, it was…, I understood it as a funerary drum because I had also read another little thing which was the word “gaizto”.

María: “Gaizto”, which means “bad”, doesn’t it?

Juan Antonio: “Bad”, yes. But… -and I haven’t been able to find again where did I read it, right?, and I have been…, almost… damn!, almost forty years with this and I haven’t seen it again!- “Gaizto: Cain’s soul, horse’s soul”. And in talking to Jorge I said to him: “This, ‘Cain’s soul, horse’s soul’; this must have some interesting metaphoric content because, of course, ‘Cain’s soul’ I understand – ‘Cain’s soul’: ‘gaizto’ [“bad”]: Cain’s soul!-, but why horse’s soul? [Pause, this is important] Why the horse’s soul? I understand, that of “Cain’s soul”. I understand it! You extract it from the Biblical event and there is no problem: “Cain’s soul”, yes, of course, “gaizto”, “Cain’s soul”. And horse’s soul? What does the horse got to do with all this? What does the horse got to do with evil? And I said “it can’t be, it has to be the other way around, the horse must be a beneficial element here, it must be the psychopomp animal that transports the soul of the deceased to the beyond”, which was something that was…, well,
which is something that is recurrent in the… [taps on Eliade’s book, slipping it into the grammar of his speech]. … Then I gave it that interpretation, right?, as a drum, as a funerary drum.”

Mircea Eliade, in a worldwide encompassing cross-cultural account of the phenomenon of shamanism, analysed its seemingly recurrent features, and among them, the place of the horse in its supporting mythology and rituals:

Psychopomp and funerary animal, the horse facilitated trance, the ecstatic flight of the soul to forbidden regions. The symbolic “ride” expressed leaving the body, the shaman’s “mystical death” (1989, 470).

“The soul of the dead to the other world, why?”, states Urbeltz. “It’s that it appears very often, right?, in the old Europe, in the old Eurasia, and at that time I was also interested -and I’m still very much, but Jorge was also greatly interested-, in the ancient world. I mean, in order to explain contemporary art he [Jorge Oteiza] used to refer permanently to the language, he used to refer to a kind of images, and so on, and of course, in that sense, boh!, it was very interesting!” (interview, June 2006).

For years, I have been working on the correspondences between our linguistic prehistory and our artistic prehistory. I have come to the conclusion that the horse is our prehistoric totem. Its image presides all our prehistoric walls. Zaldi, the Basque name for horse, is pre-Indo-European, and its root, zai, zain, means “protection”. There is an alliance with the horse in our primitive mentality, and the irrintzi (war cry) is the sacred cry of this man-horse, of this magic man, artist, priest, and politician. The horse is the protective symbol and the religious totem, the saviour, the Christ of our prehistory (Oteiza cited in Zulaika 2003, 440).

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“...The man was marvellous! Of course, this one was…! He was…, he was marvellous. He was marvellous,” stated...
Urbeltz, at the highest point of a recalling in which Jorge Oteiza had now become fully present in the room. We started our conversation talking about our families, sharing in our common origins over an ancestral geography, as Juan Antonio Urbeltz introduced me, over a detailed map, to the land of some of my unknown family from Iruña -as I found eventually during fieldwork-, original from the Erronkari Valley (Nafarroa). He shared his own family origins with me, describing places, and the customs of the peoples from those places, of peoples that were our own. After a fascinating succession of images of customs, dances, masks and metaphors, looking at forgotten ancestors with an enthralled gaze, trying perhaps to get a glance of the unfathomable origins of humanity, we moved on to events of rediscovery, and of course, to Oteiza:

I think that if we have ever known genius, for sure one was him. There is some other one, but this one was absolutely brilliant (…) He was roughly of the age of my father, from the same year than my aita, yes, and… with Jorge Oteiza. Then, with him we established from that time an excellent relationship, and we mused about Txalaparta, but it remained in this, right?, in this interpretation, and from there, from that meeting, then it spread on and there is a lot of people that repeat it and so on (interview, June 2006).

Erlantz Auzmendi, supporting himself on this narrative, which was the explanation that was meaningful to him (and to those he in turn taught and influenced), explained that Txalaparta in funerals was supposed to invoke the horse (the pottoka specifically, the Basque native horse) that would lead the soul of the dead to the other world. “Our main totem is the zaldiko, the horse”, he explained, “totems often coincided with what was eaten, what was hunted”, offering his understanding of certain Basque dance steps “The horse, when you are hunting it, rises, so you imitate the horse legs with your legs.” He added that the pulse of Txalaparta Zaharra imitates the steps of the pottoka (a kind of pony) and that if the pulse was changed to a different tempo, it

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1The significance of the horse in relation to the dance presented by participants such as Erlantz Auzmendi, has also made its way into official publications such as Pottoka. El poni del País Vasco (Pottoka. The Basque Country’s pony), published by the Department of Agriculture of the Diputacion Foral de Bizkaia, dedicated to this horse breed, which explains that the Ostikoa (“horse kick”) step of the dantzari-dantz (set of dances from Bizkaia), which is preceded by the Zapasalto (trot) step, “evokes the beautiful movements of a prancing horse” (Bizkaiko Foru Aldundia. Nekazaritza Saila 1997, 43). This publication mentions Txalaparta also, as “our ritual-magic drum”: “‘Zalapartataka’ is a term that still survives in some Euskera dialects, to refer to the moment in which a horse changes from trot to gallop (Galapan or Galapaka)” (1997, 45). This publication, which compares the progress of Txalaparta Zaharra to that of the horse trot to gallop, suggests that Txalaparta was a magic invocation for protection, since, the author states, the horse was a “Mother-Protector-God”.

162
would not be the *pottoka* any more, but a bigger horse (it would not be Basque, in other words.) “The ttakun is the back legs and the herrena is the front legs” added one of Erlantz’ students, in my first encounter with his group in February 1999.

**Euskal Herri Musika**

The understanding of Txalaparta as the evocation of the transition from the trot to the gallop of the horse, reflected upon as the totem of the Basques since antiquity, was further illustrated in *Euskal Herri Musika*. This documentary film, directed by Fernando Larruquert in 1978 (scripted by José Angel Rebolledo and Javier Aguirresarobe as well as Larruquert) was shown in 1980 for the first time. The documentary displays popular music and dance traditions of the Basque Country across state boundaries (where “popular music” refers to “music made by the people” with a stress on traditional rural Basque culture). *Euskal Herri Musika* is another example of the audiovisual poetic style initiated by the film *Ama Lur* in 1968, with the use of sound and visual metaphors that allude to the lost sovereignty (the Kingdom of Navarre), and other elements relevant to the struggle, in a manner consistent with Oteiza’s philosophy and impassionate style. Special attention is paid to visual and sound textures through close-ups of men and women’s faces, nature and things Basque, as well as through the sounds of the featured (traditional) activities these men and women engaged with in their everyday life and celebrations.

Like *Ama Lur*, the documentary opens with a panoramic view of a Basque mountainous landscape in the mist. After some words of introduction by the sponsors, the Bilbao Vizcaya Bank (BBV3), the soundtrack of a lament song performed by Jean Michel Bedexagar follows (only its first strophe, the second will close the film):

*Arranoak bortietan gora dabiltza hegaletan,*

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3 Carlos Roldan states that *Euskal Herri Musika* was meant to be part of a series of six documentary films on Basque popular culture sponsored by the Banco Bilbao Vizcaya, but changes in the bank leadership meant the end of this project (Roldan 1997).
Ni ere beste ordiz, anderekin kanberetan,  
Orai, aldiiz, ardura nigarra dizitz begietan.

The eagles soar over the mountains,  
I once did too, with women in their rooms,  
Now, however, I often have tears in my eyes.

It is the role of the capuchin F. Jorge de Riezu, to introduce “that spiritual treasure of the Basque people which is popular song” (F. Riezu in Larruquert 1978), offering a brief historical account of song collectors. Of the three speakers in the documentary, he is the only one to speak in Castilian (the other two speakers are the Jesuit Manuel Lekuona, an authority on bertsolaritz –Basque sung verse improvisation-, who introduces such tradition in the company of the renowned bertsolariak Yon Lopategi and José Miguel Iztueta (Lazkao Txiki)\(^4\), and F. Barandiaran, important Basque ethnographer and archaeologist who introduces what was considered the oldest known instrument in the world at the time: the “txistu from Ithuritz”, found in the north of the Basque Country\(^5\), and the oldest instrument of its kind in the world: “the korneta from Atxeta” found in Bizkaia in 1959). As F. Riezu discusses popular song in terms of the length of time someone’s song is subjected to change, the interior of a cavern is shown, its stalactites emerging from the darkness:

\(^4\) The spelling of the names featured here follows the spelling in the film.

\(^5\) The “txistu from Ithuritz” is the name given to the archaeological finding of a bird bone section with three holes (like the txistu flute) dating back to the year 20,000 BCC, discovered in 1921 in the cave of Ithuritz (Lapurdi, North of the Basque Country) along human utensils and cave paintings. This piece, the oldest trace of a flute-like musical instrument in the world until the mid 1990s, soon became the object of much fascination and a symbol of Basque ancestry immediately linked to the txistu within the modern trend of Basque nationalism emergent at the time (this archaeological piece is still a powerful symbol of ancestry today). Nettl points out the finding in 1995 of another bone flute in Slovenia, of c. 40,000 years old (Nettl 2005), which also exhibits 3 holes –one of them (perhaps another additional one also) seemingly broken (referencing Kunej’s article in Turk, I. (ed.) Mousterian “Bone Flute” and Other Finds from Divje Babe I Cave Site in Slovenia, Ljubljana: Založba). This older flute (whose flute nature is contested by some researchers) is seemingly made out of a bear femur.
“However, it may be necessary to go further back and try to imagine how song might have been in the caves of our ancestors” (F. Rieu in Larruquert 1978). As soon as these words are over, rock paintings of horses are shown to a soundtrack of irregular horse steps and snorts (fig. 3.1). This is followed by a long irrintzi, the wild Basque cry that imitates a horse neigh. A regular rhythm of Txalaparta is then introduced. The horse steps merge with it into a gallop and soon fade away, until only Txalaparta is left illustrating (or bringing to life?) the Stone Age paintings. The performers of those sounds are soon revealed in the next scene: Ramon Goikoeztea and Iñigo Urreaga playing in the woods, on one plank which could be about two meters long, placed over two upturned baskets, with corn leaves for insulation (fig. 3.4). Iñigo Urreaga performs the role of Tinak, Ramon Goikoetxea is the Herren. The camera later wanders away into the forest to the Txalaparta soundtrack, and a horse neigh can be heard as it approaches the horse turned into man (or the man turned into horse): the zamalzain, the hobby horse dancer of the maskaradak of Zuberoa. “The boss, the shaman” (as Erlantz Auzmendi, referred to this character at our interview in November 2003), dances alone some of the godalet-dantza steps as the Txalaparta piece reaches turrukutun.

The horse seems to have been respected and excluded from labour in our country. Fellow animal, man-animal, sacramental identification that would also explain for us the irrintzi as a religious expressive cry of this original identification of our Horse-man Prehistoric priest (Oteiza 1984, 353).

In tracing origins back to a primeval past, the documentary took us into the interior of the Earth, and from it, Txalaparta emerged:

…the first time I heard Txalaparta, the rhythm caught my attention, what it transmitted of archaic; I don’t know, it is like the beating of the Earth (Oroitz, b. 1971, interview, June 2006).
The sense of continuity from Earth and Prehistory to the present, established soon at the start of the film through a Txalaparta that seems to bring horse cave paintings into life (the zamalzain?), is then turned into religious devotion: a soundtrack of church bells is introduced as the camera wanders away from the zamalzain to offer images of a village church (then followed by images of other Basque rural chapels). Silence then: we are in church. The initial cave, the interior of the Earth, is now the interior of a church, as we are taken into the intimate penumbra of religious fervour, in a manner that resonates with Oteiza’s reflections in Ama Lur: “…our artistic sentiment and our religious sentiment are one and the same within our traditional personality and sensibility, because both have had the same origin in the creative sensitivity of art …” A few people are seated in the pews, an old woman lights some candles (for the dead?), soon the soundtrack of Ama Birjiña (a religious song of devotion to the Ama Birjiña, Virgin Mother) sung by a choir and a female leading voice; in the dark, only the crucifix is lit. After the song is over, the sacrificed Jesus remains in the screen for a few seconds in silence, and in silence we are taken outdoors: A close up of the ground as it rains. The camera lifts up and we find out the ground was a grave. We are shown a cemetery. Still in silence. The soul needs it. It is taking something in. Another song starts: “Sei Edo Zazpi” (“Six or Seven”), by a choir as we are shown more of the cemetery (six or seven are the provinces of one nation, Euskal Herria). The outdoor statue of a virgin looking at her son becomes the focus.

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\begin{align*}
\text{Sei edo zazpi umeren amak} \\
\text{bat iltzeaz du negarra.} \\
\text{¡Maria Santisimak bat izan} \\
\text{eta hura gugatik il bearra!} \\
\text{Yende umanuok, adi dezagun} \\
\text{Ama Santaren nigarra.}
\end{align*}
\]

The mother of six or seven children cries because one has died.
Holy Mary had only one and he had to die for us!
Human people, let’s pay attention to the crying of the Holy Mother

(Lyrics of the Basque traditional song “Sei edo zazpi”).
Soon, the tombstone shown is the disk-shaped funerary stela of Bereterretxe, the character of the 15th c. epic song “Bereterretxe Khantoria”6 (“possibly the most beautiful song we have” (JosAnton Artze, interview, May 2003)), which narrates his murder by the major of Maule on behalf of the Lerín Count (one of whose descendants, the third Lerín Count, also happened to help Castile conquer the former Kingdom of Navarre). This image leads to the pietà on the façade of the Basilica of Arantzazu, sculpted by Oteiza in 1968 in remembrance of the ETA leader Txabi Etxebarrieta killed earlier that year. The mother is now looking up to heaven with her sacrificed son at her feet:

...7th of June, sacrificed at Benta-Aundi, the first of our ultimate Resistance… When I go up on the 1st of November I have already decided what I will place on top of the Wall. The dead Son, at the Mother’s feet, who will be looking up, crying to Heaven, talking, I don’t know… (Oteiza in Pelay 1978, 516).

When [Oteiza] delivered the last hammer stroke on his small chisel, he remained silent for a long while, religiously watching the image that had just emerged. The lenses of his glasses were sprinkled with plaster and the prolonged ash of his cigarette was incredibly bent without yet falling. Suddenly, he touched with tenderness the small virgin visage that was emerging in the shape of a heart, and kissed it with infinite respect (Pelay 1978. 516).

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6 Among the different spellings for this surname, one other widely used is Berterretxe (which is the only one used in the Auñamendi Eusko Entziklopedia, for instance). Berterretxe’s song is referred to as “Ahaltzak ez du bihotzik” in Salaberry’s song collection.
The pietà in the documentary is followed by a sculptural representation on a tomb depicting the descent from the cross; the camera shows it from the bottom up and stops at the bird on top: the Holy Spirit. Hope. Resurrection. Freedom.

Next, an old smith works on a crucifix to the soundtrack of a traditional Basque song, “Ituringo arotza”:

Ituringo arotza, Erramun Joakin,
hazerre omen zaude zeren degun joakin. we know you are angry:
Santuek ez laitekez fiatu zurekin; Saints cannot trust you anymore:
San Kristobal urtuta joaliak egin you have melted St. Christopher’s cross.

…
Kobrezko Santurikak inon bazarete, Wherever you are, coper saints
egoten al zarete hemendik aparte; stay away from this place;
baldin arrotz horiek jakiten badute, if the smiths find you
gariek egiteko urtuko zaituzte. to make cowbells they will melt you.

The documentary seems to establish a clear difference between religious passion on the one hand, which appears to allude to the existential passion of sacrifice for the salvation of the community, and traditional catholic morality on the other. The latter is gently challenged by some scenes in the movie, revealing the left wing leanings of those involved in its making: i.e. the smith’s song or a scene where a group of boys and girls engage in the task of peeling the corn amid an atmosphere of fun and joy, singing, flirting and the occasional kissing (fig. 3.11). I will come back to this scene in the next section, for Beltran, one of the musicians that feature in the film, refers to this kind of event to explain his understanding of Txalaparta. The film also contains a reference to the widely held belief in Txalaparta as a means of communication in the past: the church bells that are introduced after the Txalaparta soundtrack. In Larruquert’s discourse, communication seems to be the connector that helps merge religious manifestations (those speculated upon and the existing ones):

…Txalaparta was not only played with makilas, there was a time when it was also played with church bells. Then, logically, we come out of the cave with traditional Txalaparta and that sound is itself the horse’s, which is the zaldiko [horse man] made rite later, because the dance from Zuberoa of which the zaldiko
is part is a ritual dance, not a dance for the square. Then we go from there, from that txalaparta, with that horse, a religious element, we go to another religious element, with that txalaparta into a church bell. That is absolute relationship [sacrament] (Larruquert in Roldan 1997, 12)

In his research on Basque filmography, Carlos Roldán highlights that, like the film *Ama Lur, Euskal Herri Musika* presents Basque popular expressive culture as emerging from the daily activities of the people (1997, 339). This is mostly reflected in the film in relation to the work of the land or the sea, in a mostly rural traditional world that was disappearing at the time. Indeed, in line with Oteiza’s observations, Larruquert identifies in the ordinary life of the Basques, their labour and religious beliefs, the kind of sensibility that translates, or is contained, into their performing arts (art as sacrament, as Zulaika indicates (Zulaika 2003)). This reflection upon work as the source of art (work as play, and play providing the basis for “music”) is further elaborated, in relation to Txalaparta, by Juan Mari Beltran, within a narrative that reflects on it as related to “work and celebration”, as will be explained in the next section.

The left wing leanings, characterised by the fundamental belief that human nature is good, and by a humanistic, social, communal, orientation, which I have so often witnessed among those txalapartariak I have been with, seem to translate not only into certain themes, but into the aesthetic strategies deployed in the documentary, like close-ups of work activities and faces, rejoicing in the Basque facial patterns, acknowledging the life written in the faces and hands of mature men and women (a life that seems portrayed as demanding, simple and austere, yet profound and rich).

After an introductory tour through Basque song, music and dance within the context of everyday life, and before the sounds of Txalaparta that were introduced soon at the start of the documentary close its audiovisual script, the motive of *Bereterretxe Khantoria*, which had been introduced earlier through the image of his stela, just before the remembrance to Etxebarrieta (Arantzazu’s pietà), is retaken again: Now it is the epic song that narrates, in conjunction with images of places, Bereterretxe’s betrayal and murder; there are no people visually present now, but aurally, embodied in the different voices that take turns to sing/narrate the different sections of this tragic story. The witnesses are gone, but their voices endure through song (is it this sung epic poem that F. Riezu had in mind when discussing popular song at the start?)
...Jaun Kuntiak ber’hala, The lord Count,  
traidore batek bezala: like a traitor:  
“Bereterrex, haigü bortala, “Bereterretxe, come out to the door,  
ützüliren hiz berhala”. you will soon return.”  
“Ama, indazü atorra “Mother, give me my shirt  
mentüraz sekulakoa! perhaps the last one!  
Bizi denak oroit ükenen dü He who remains alive  
Bazko gai-erdí ondua!” will not forget the day after Easter”

(Extract from the traditional song “Bereterretxe Khantoria”)

A last gaze to the funerary stela of Bereterretxe.

A woman’s hand (perhaps the first woman shown in the church earlier on in the film) lights a candle for the dead. Next we are then shown the last scene: Popular art (life of a people, heavy fates -Oteiza’s sick man perhaps, seeking healing by means of art) and popular ritual (what seems to be a summer solstice rite) are merged in the dark shadows of the Artze brothers facing each other, playing on four planks, in front of a big bonfire, the crackling sounds of the fire mixing with the sounds of Txalaparta.

The sounds in the caverns that took us to the zamalzain dancer, and the devotional flames of the church candles and the smith’s fire, which may easily destroy what it helped create, as the song reminded us, carry over to the end of the film; an end which is only a start. Txalaparta berria, the new Txalaparta, is what the Artze brother’s are now playing. The rhythm is free; sometimes a pattern starts emerging (the result of Jexux’ input perhaps), but then an intuitive flickering style, like the flames behind them, takes hold again, as JosAnton “dances” as he plays.

The religious passion illustrated by the fusion of intimate church scenes and religious song soundtracks seems replicated in the passion for Basque popular culture of those collectors and researchers, musicians and dancers, that feature in it (some participants in this research among them). Sound and visual metaphors are woven together in a kind of dreamlike manner in a film that seems to engage with something transcendent beyond intellect, something accessed at the fusion of art and existence. Jesus Christ, Bereterretxe, Etxebarrieta.: Foundational sacrifice for the salvation of humanity in the first instance; historical betrayal and murder of a knight on behalf of a
count whose descendant fought the ancient kingdom in the next; and the death of a youth (or many) who fought and gave his life for his people, made then into popular legend through “Bereterretxe Khantoria” once more in what I understand is the central theme, the underlying discourse, weaving Basque popular traditions together in the film. Heavy fates brought together into one (archetypical) sacrifice, “celebrated”, or carried as an inevitable, necessary burden, for the salvation of the community, the nation, the mother land. In a kind of foundational dream, horse cave paintings are brought from inside the Earth by a Txalaparta spell, and with them a people’s ancient past is awakened for the present. A new contemporary Txalaparta, played by the Artze brothers in the night, before a fire that seems to depict, perhaps, the passion of the current struggle, brings us to the turn of the 80s decade. The Spanish dictator has died, a so called “transition to democracy” has been effected, leaving the most important structures of the dictatorship intact, a constitution that does not recognise the fundamental claims of the Basques is approved in the Spanish State (and rejected in the Basque Country). The choice is made: the struggle continues, with all its consequences.

After the film credits, a dark screen, and a final soundtrack, the second strophe of “Arranoak Bortietan”:

_Eztüta nik phena handia ... galdü diñat libertatia_

Don’t I have a great sorrow … I lost my freedom.

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3 Bereterretxe belonged to the Agramontese party (which sought for the Kingdom of Navarre to remain independent from Castile) which was at war with the Beaumontese party (which sided with the Kingdom of Castile in the conquer of the Kingdom of Navarre).
When I met JosAnton Artze to discuss Txalaparta in May 2003, we ended up talking for a long time. After my 60 minute tape run out, JosAnton Artze gave me another blank tape so I could continue recording (a 90 minute tape). Then that tape run out too, and we continued talking for almost another hour and a half, as the natural light in his living room gradually faded away. We spoke of universals, archetypical images contained in ancient traditions, establishing horizontal links among human cultures and vertical links with the ancestors, a universal *ttakun* beating. He spoke of the old *txistu* found in the caves of Istoritze\(^8\) (Iparralde), “made from the wing bone of a white vulture … *behi bidetako anderea*”, “lady of the boreen”, as this bird is known in Zuberoa; a replica was made and it was Etxekopar who played it:

\[\text{Figure 3.10. *Txistu from Istoritz*. Source: Euskal Herri Musika. 1978}\]

…[S]ince it doesn’t have a mouth piece, how could that be made sound! And then, Mixel Etxekopar, who is some incredible artist, he is like a bird himself! And he whistles…! Pf! Apart from playing music, he whistles…! He does it continually. He is always like a bird (JosAnton Artze, interview, May 2003).

And he spoke of the initiatory “Dance of the Sun” of the ancient Native Americans (the Lakota), in which, he elaborated, the dancers had to breath through a whistle made from the bone of a spotted eagle. He spoke of weaving the world: the dance of the Maypole (*the burdin dantza*). He spoke of ancestors and the performance of communion: When a dance is performed like our ancestors did, in the movement the dancer merges with them, for they are dancing with him, *within him*. When you play Txalaparta, he added, all the *txalapartariak* are playing with you.

He also spoke of silence.

\(^8\) The locality in the north of the Basque Country where the caves are located is referred to both as Istoritz and Istoritze (or as Isturits within French political geography, where it is classified as a commune of the Pyrénées-Atlantiques department).
Calling Device / Calling Rhythms

The Basque “Tam-Tam” (Talking Drums)

In the Basque Country there is … a type of instrument, of the idiophone category, which must be of remarkable antiquity. It is difficult to point out with certainty and real authority where does the so called Txalaparta come from and which were its origins. However there is no doubt it was a sound device used for different signals and communication. Its genesis probably dates back to cave times.

The elements that make up the Txalaparta, all of them made of wood, provide a glimpse of a remote ancestry, perhaps previous to the metals age. Its current utilisation has survived thanks to the cider restaurants in whose cider presses it was made sound in an almost ritual manner at the cider tasting events (Crivillé i Bargalló 2007, 343).

Antiquity, ritual like qualities, the mystery of a “sound device” that, married with imagined atavistic origins of human kind, takes us into the unknown, the dim interior of the humanised Earth, the dark caves where early humans left their prints. Plini the Elder argued for a wood age prior to the Stone Age, are Crivillé’s thoughts perhaps informed by the ancient Roman historian? Imagination might take us further back and across to Africa perhaps, and allow us come back to the present, with present foreign rhythms that we may imagine as primal. Imagination may work too in a kind of efficacious ritual like manner, where we exit the thinking process with a new “certainty” and no doubts: we now have Basque talking drums.

The tradition of Txalaparta, in its connection with cider-making in the past, and also with ancient ancestry according to the younger generations since the 1960s, offers great scope for speculation, especially when compared (or loosely so) with other world traditions that might be classed as “baquic rites”, i.e. the biri ceremonies of the Shona people of Zimbabwe described by Chernoff among other scholars. In such ceremonies beer is related to the dead, the ancestors (like is the case for the Zulus), and thus such fermented drink is a necessary part of those ceremonies that ensure the dead are not forgotten (the dead are believed to be part of “life” -in the sense of “existence”.) I cannot help but wonder could cider have been connected to similar beliefs for former Basques (since the community celebrated at the cider-making celebration did possibly also include dead –as was traditionally the case with regards to the Basque farmhouse institution, and as is the case for today’s txalapartariak who claim that in Txalaparta they “feel their people” and a connection with an ancient past (ancestors)).

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9 The tradition of Txalaparta, in its connection with cider-making in the past, and also with ancient ancestry according to the younger generations since the 1960s, offers great scope for speculation, especially when compared (or loosely so) with other world traditions that might be classed as “baquic rites”, i.e. the biri ceremonies of the Shona people of Zimbabwe described by Chernoff among other scholars. In such ceremonies beer is related to the dead, the ancestors (like is the case for the Zulus), and thus such fermented drink is a necessary part of those ceremonies that ensure the dead are not forgotten (the dead are believed to be part of “life” -in the sense of “existence”.) I cannot help but wonder could cider have been connected to similar beliefs for former Basques (since the community celebrated at the cider-making celebration did possibly also include dead –as was traditionally the case with regards to the Basque farmhouse institution, and as is the case for today’s txalapartariak who claim that in Txalaparta they “feel their people” and a connection with an ancient past (ancestors)).
One of the arguments provided in this narrative is that Basque farmhouses used to be very scattered and isolated from one another in the mountains, Txalaparta providing a likely means of communication between them for the undertaking of communal activities. The understanding of Txalaparta as a calling device and presented, among others, by Josep Crivillé in a reputed work on “musical folklore” initially published in 1983 as part of a series of volumes on the “History of Spanish Music” (see bibliography), has haunted many, perhaps for its primitive and “exotic” resonances, among other possible reasons. However, I have rarely encountered this narrative among txalapartariak I have met during fieldwork to date, even though they were aware of it. Those players who have participated in this research had actively sought to inform themselves from the most reputed existing sources on Txalaparta among them: Juan Mari Beltran’s research and committed transmission of both old and new forms of Txalaparta. Beltran has made a conscious effort to actively make his work available and popular in a tireless, dedicated and often voluntary manner throughout the Basque Country (mostly in the south, to my knowledge). He has also committed with passion to the dispelling of those understandings that he claims are not sustained on the direct testimony of the old surviving txalapartariak in the 60s and 70s collected by him and the Artze brothers at these early stages of the recovery of the tradition. This may have contributed to the current views on the matter by younger generations of txalapartariak, who mostly ascribe to the narrative that explains Txalaparta in relation to work and celebration, which is introduced next in this chapter.

The understanding of the origins of Txalaparta as a sound device for the production and communication of encoded messages, has been presented in newspaper articles\(^\text{10}\), the 1978 documentary film Euskal Herri Musika, the book Txalaparta initially published by Josu Goiri in 1994 in Euskara and later in Castilian in 1996, and some internet sites, with no exact consensus in the information presented between all these sources. I was also told of the school Liceo de Santo Tomás, in Donostia, which delivered its classes in Euskara since 1960, and whose “bell” was a short recording of Txalaparta Zaharra by the Artze brothers possibly, as Borja explained (interview, May 2006). I also knew of a school in Irungo Bentak (a neighbourhood in the outskirts of

\(^{10}\) A participant spoke to me of a full page article on Txalaparta in the Spanish widely read -at the time- daily newspaper Ya from the early 1970s which she treasured for a number of years. It is necessary to go through extensive microfilm material for this newspaper, day by day and page by page, from 1970 to 72, at the Spanish National Library in Madrid. This is a time consuming task which unfortunately I have not been able to complete to date and which requires an effort that is not justified for the purpose of this dissertation.
Irun,) where classes are also delivered in Euskara, and which also used a recording of Txalaparta Zaharra to summon the children for the classes (chapter 5). Nonetheless, beyond the understanding of Txalaparta as a possible calling device in the past, as I mention elsewhere in this dissertation, many of the txalapartariak that participated in this research approached it through their interest for Euskara and conceived it as closely linked to Basque culture in Basque language. Beltran explained to me during my first visit in February 1999 that some of the Txalaparta “calls” presented in writings to date at the time, were inspired in a document by two authors (the group Huts-Hitz (Goiri 1996, 19-19, 22)) which he has been unable to locate (nor the document nor the authors which he stated he had been able to identify). This document presents several calls allegedly produced by means of Txalaparta, and is one of the sources for the calls presented by Josu Goiri (1996). This last author and txalapartari, whose work has progressed since the publication of his book and who is now critical of the information provided in it, presented three calls for which Txalaparta would have been used (without indicating specific rhythmic patterns): a cider call, a call to inform of a death, and a festivity call. Goiri explained that the call to inform of a death was played slowly, finishing near the graveyard (this “call” may perhaps refer to the funeral or homage for the dead, seemingly a recent practice since the late 60s, rather than a call as such). In his 1996 publication Goiri compares the festivity call to a “poutpourri” and claims it was played very fast (the inclusion of Txalaparta in festivals not related to the cider-making celebration seems to be something relatively new as per known records indicated by Beltran (2009), dating back to 1920, as explained earlier in this chapter –though this festivity call might refer to the cider-making celebration perhaps, or the toberak). It is worth noting that Txalaparta Zaharra was referred to as “Jaia Deia” (festivity call) by the Sorzabalbere txalapartariak from Irun (who commenced their incursion into Txalaparta in the 1980s), in order to differentiate an associated way of playing from other moods domineering a given performance (I will explain this shortly). Goiri, who also kindly participated in this research, then explains in his book four other calls that he specifically indicates are unknown: A call for the work in mines, a call to warn of danger, a fire call, and finally, a war call (Goiri 1996, 18-19). He indicates that the call “to warn of danger”, or rather, emergency call, has been sourced from a member of the Zuaznabar family who illustrated it with the example (perhaps, I feel, a specific anecdote) of an ox cart axis breaking, in which Txalaparta (perhaps referring solely to interlocking and/or the kind of rhythm) would be played to request help.
I haven’t encountered it personally, but it seems there was a use [of Txalaparta] similar to that of church bells when they call to inform of a death, of a festival, to summon for mass or to put off a fire. The old ones speak of its use in funerals, or before the work of turning the soil with a laia [two-prong spade] (Goiri 1996, 48).

Though this dissertation is mostly concerned with narrative as performance, that is, constructions of truth made in the present to facilitate certain kinds of actions, I cannot help engaging in a review of the available sources that these txalapartariak, such as Josu Goiri or Juan Mari Beltran, have used to inform their understandings. This is necessary in order to shed some light on the usage of such information. One of these sources is the entry on Txalaparta provided by the Basque ethnologist, physical anthropologist, archaeologist and priest José Miguel de Barandiaran in his 1972 dictionary of Basque Mythology. This entry differs partly from what the Artze brothers and Juan Mari Beltran claim was told to them by the old players. Barandiaran explains Txalaparta rather vaguely, without offering concrete information nor producing sources, as he does with other entries in the dictionary, perhaps working from word of mouth rather than first hand experience of the tradition. Barandiaran does not mention interlocking (a trait I found in people who had a vague idea of what Txalaparta was and had not seen it played) but rather that it was a performance “consisting of sounds produced by one or more people who beat rhythmically a plank, stick or iron bar with sticks” (1972, 229). After describing one of the structures on which he states Txalaparta was played in a manner that coincides with that played by the Zuaznabar or the Goikoetxea txalapartariak (an alder plank supported by baskets on either sides with corn leaves for insulation), he states one single person would play it (a detail ignored by txalapartariak who quote this source) producing a succession of pairs of strokes, a rhythm called “tukutuna” (a term used by the Goikoetxea to refer to the role of the ttakun). It may be noted that the old players used to tell of the occasional use of “txalaparta” (perhaps performed by one single player, as this is not specified) to inform the girlfriend of one of them, at a different farmhouse, of when to go down to the village for them to meet. Barandiaran adds that two people could also play it, one of them with one single stick with which he would produce one single stroke for every two strokes of the player with two sticks (another detail omitted from Txalaparta researchers’ reflections). This scholar claims the performance could be accompanied by song (as was actually the case with the tobera, though Joseba Zuaznabar also explained that they used
to improvise verses at the Txalaparta sessions). He explains that another device on which Txalaparta was played, either by one or two players, was a gaiñaga (described as a ridgepole that is placed over a cart to fasten the cargo,) which could be substituted by an iron bar, supported on either sides by two forked sticks, about two meters apart, with the forks upwards. The function attributed to such loosely defined Txalaparta is that of announcing the commencement of communal work for the neighbours who would participate in it, as well as announcing “certain popular festivities and domestic events. They still make Txalaparta in some farmhouses from Lasarte in front of their door the night before San Juan” (Barandiaran 1972, 229). Barandiaran claims in his dictionary entry that Txalaparta (in either of the aforementioned structures) was in the past used to announce the following events in order to invite neighbours: a wedding, the start of fern mowing work, the start and end of cider-making and lime-making work and after a new house had been roofed. At the end of such tasks, this author adds, a meal was organised for all work participants, “a meal that, in the case of lime heating, was known as arraukaren etzaiak [italics are mine, bold fonts in the original] “lime weddings” or karobiaren etzaiak [italics are mine, bold fonts in the original] “lime kiln weddings”. Barandiaran’s entry is contextualised in a compilation of Basque myths and animistic beliefs in a wide array of genies and beings that Beltran, in his quest for scientific rigour (or despite of it), avoids to engage with in his 2009 publication: “Such weddings were spoiled a night in Artzate (Atáun) by a gentil [giants that in Basque lore lived in the mountains and which are attributed with throwing the big stones and megalithic monuments found in Euskal Herria] who threw a rock from the top of Iruzuloeta at a hot kiln in the foot of that mountain, in reply to the challenge directed at him by one of the people that were feeding the kiln with fuel” (1972, 230). It is striking that, given all the entities believed to populate the night, and associated beliefs and practices among farmhouse dwellers until relatively recent times, nothing has been collected in this regard in relation to a tradition, such as Txalaparta, that was played all night until dawn.

Juan Mari Beltran observes, in fact, that Txalaparta, toberak and kirikoketa were always performed at night, and after comparing it with other world traditions that might involve interlocking also performed at night, dedicates a few paragraphs in his 2009 publication to possible ritual functions that seemingly do not need ethnographic verification nor theoretical reflection (including an assumed function of protection of certain communal events that is presented, with certainty, as the origin of rites).
might have had something to do in this\(^{13}\) (José Miguel de Barandiaran, on the other hand, encountered and collected a rich lore of stories and beliefs around the same time from farmhouse inhabitants who were fellow to the old *txalapartariak*).

The first three aforementioned calls that Josu Goiri presents in his 1996 book on Txalaparta (“a cider call”, “a call to inform of a death” and “a festivity call”), or at least the second and third calls, which he explained to me were provided and demonstrated by Joseba Zuaznabar, did not meet with Beltran’s sanction (not to mention the unverified calls, stemming, as per Beltran, from the unknown document mentioned earlier)\(^{14}\). The information provided by Barandiaran, which Beltran quotes, is used selectively, omitting reflection upon some elements (as indicated earlier) and using those that suit explanations of Txalaparta that strictly link it to work. I elaborate on this soon later on.

At the interview Joseba Zuaznabar kindly granted me in May 2006, he put examples from contemporary practices to illustrate events at which Txalaparta was played. He stated he understood Txalaparta as an invitation to an event deemed important or to perform a certain activity (see chapter 3), and he also indicated the approximate point in time of such practices (from his youth to the present), when asked further.

In any case, I encountered this explanation of Txalaparta as a “calling device” often among non Txalaparta performers, who had not been exposed to the more specialised information performers had (information obtained by Beltran and the Artze

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\(^{13}\) Though centuries of oppression, immigration, the Civil War and Franco’s regime are generally invoked to explain the disappearance of many Basque traditions (or knowledge about them), as well as the selective criteria of Basque conservative nationalism on occasion, it may be the case that the youth of the 60s and 70s was also engaged in a collection work tainted with selectivity and partiality, perhaps determined by what their ideological inclination would allow them perceive and accept (where what “ought to be” might have substituted for what is) – the fact that farmhouse dwellers did not easily open up has also been brought up by other collectors, such as members of the Navarrese cultural and dance group Ortzadar (personal communication, November 2001).

\(^{14}\) I would humbly state that the funeral call and the festivity call mentioned might well be related to the use of txalaparta in modern times especially since the 1950s and 60s, when Txalaparta starts featuring in different contexts as Beltran documents (Beltran 2009), which might further indicate that the interviewee/s that described them (to Josu Goiri and to the group Huts-Hitz, assuming here that they collected their Txalaparta “calls” from people who had a first hand knowledge of the tradition) might have regarded txalaparta, at the time of such interviews, as a “living tradition”, as a part of his ongoing life, rather than something to speak of in terms of a gone past. I would presume, but I do not know, that the interviewee’s ability to demonstrate such calls (when Josu Goiri obtained such demonstrations) might have stemmed from his personal practice as a txalapartari at related events and/or his careful observation of them (since learning happened by means of “watching”).
brothers directly from the old surviving *txalapartariak* in the 1960s and 70s, as stated earlier). It also emerged (in tune with Goiri (1996) and Beltran (1998) observations) as the most extended narrative, among non-specialised people mainly, from my fieldwork research.

While Juan Mari Beltran tirelessly indicates in his writings that Txalaparta was not a “calling device”, as per information collected directly from the last performers remaining in the 1960s, he does observe a “message” element in relation to the tradition of *Kirikoketa* (which he classifies as a “variant” of Txalaparta, as will be explained soon). Beltran explains that the performance of *Kirikoketa* (or *Alakiketa* as it was also called) was accompanied by a chant in such a way that each syllable accompanied each stroke:

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Alakiketa alakiketa
Alakiketa kiketa kiketa
Sagarra jo dela,
sagarrjo dela,
sagarrjo dela, jo dela, jo dela.
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The two first strophes have no known meaning and are presented as onomatopoeic; in relation to the rest of the chant, however, Beltran acknowledges an element of linguistic communication that he links to celebration:

> This way of playing shows clearly that there is something of a message, the trace of a message. A double message perhaps: on the one hand, that the task of pressing the cider [the apple] is over, and on the other hand, a call to the festival (Beltran 1998).

This takes us to a third narrative of Txalaparta that is explained soon.

The bare, vague and confusing written records available to those interested in the tradition, which present the tradition of *toberak* as Txalaparta and vice versa, and attribute interchangeable functions also to these, offered the raw clay from which to freely shape contemporary understandings, but also scope for contested understandings as to what was or was not Txalaparta, and therefore what it can or cannot be as sanctioned by tradition, as will be explained in the next chapter.
A War Call

Though, as stated earlier, most txalapartariak who have participated in this research did not ascribe to the understanding of Txalaparta as a calling device at the moment of their participation in this research, Beltran notices that many of those who have been drawn to the practice of Txalaparta have understood it as a calling device or calling rhythms:

Although I cannot share their view, it is only fair to state that many students of the txalaparta have seen the sending of messages as the principal or sole function of the playing sessions of the txalapartaris of the past (2009, 216).

I will discuss the significance of this approach to Txalaparta in the next chapter, for now may it suffice to bring into our attention the story I was told once and again rather vaguely, and which seemed to be public knowledge yet no one knew the sources (which allegedly exist). Josu Goiri mentions it briefly in his 1996 publication and Juan Mari Beltran claims the original source was Joseba Zuaznabar, who in turn received it (albeit different) from a priest\(^{16}\). The story, as told by different txalapartariak I encountered, goes more or less as follows:

It is said there is a document somewhere where it reads that when the Romans (or some other ancient invading peoples) were coming through the mountains, they heard rhythmic wood percussion -some say they heard the sounds of an enormous mounted army, and next a rain of stones befell them.

The invaders turned around and run away in fear.

What they heard were perhaps the echoes of Txalaparta rumbling in the mountains:

A call to battle.

\(^{16}\) In the online newsletter dated June 1997 of the Basque Club in Vancouver (accessed in November 1998), it was stated that this “call to battle” was supported by some documents dating back to the times of the Roman Empire which were kept at the Diputación Foral de Álava. Beltran states that Joseba Zuaznabar was told the story by a priest who claimed he had read it in a book in the library of the Diputación Foral de Álava, the title of which he had forgotten (2009, 56-7)
Work and Celebration

There is one other narrative, which in its simplest version is based on the ethnographic evidence collected by the Beltran and the Artze brothers directly from interviews with the Goikoetxea and the Zuaznabar txalapartariak. This narrative, with which this chapter opened, is also told by the descendants of the old players. According to it, Txalaparta was performed after a communal dinner at which participants in the work of cider-making celebrated its conclusion:

The celebration consisted in preparing a more or less special dinner as per the possibilities at the time. Ramón Goikoetxea used to tell that sometimes they had cod and other times old sardines, but what was never missing was the cider, and as they got "into the mood", the desire to play Txalaparta would start emerging. Eventually someone would say “¡Txalaparta jo behar dugu!”, “Let’s play the Txalaparta!”, and taking the needed elements it comprises of, they would put it together outdoors, generally near the door [of the cider-press house], and the second part would start of a very special celebration, in which not only the meal attendants would participate, but also those who felt like coming along when hearing the txalaparta. It was customary that the people who came along was invited to cider (Beltran 1988, 15-16).

This narrative, as further reworked and elaborated by its advocate, Juan Mari Beltran, supported in his discourse by a brief examination of other world traditions involving interlocking, has great support generally, as it seemed to me from my fieldwork research, among a younger generation of txalapartariak who have been directly influenced by his work on it to date and look up to him as a teacher and an accomplished authority figure, who zealously defends this understanding. The younger txalapartariak I encountered who were fervent adherents of this understanding, and

17 Written with the first letter in capitals also in the original article, dating 1988 (Beltran sometimes writes “txalaparta” both in capitals and small cases, and will go on to write it Txalaparta in small cases in his following publications). Beltran refers to Txalaparta always as an instrument in his texts, even though he acknowledges the most important element was in fact the way it was played, so that it could even be performed with empty glass bottles on beer crates, for instance. His writings tend to be rather ambiguous in this sense, as well as in the many understandings of “txalaparta” he uses in a single article without often clarifying them or the fact that he is changing from to another (perhaps a postmodern sceptical and deliberate attempt to blur boundaries on his part).
those not so young but who take Beltran’s views seriously, invested a good deal of energy in dispelling other narratives in their conversations with me and in interviews. Participating txalapartariak who invested their passion in this narrative showed a less open and tolerant attitude toward other explanations or persons engaged or interested in other views, though were generally careful and sensitive toward them. They seemed to display a somewhat dogmatic stance toward the question of origins of the tradition (and therefore of what it is possible to do with it), perceiving other explanations as attacks on Txalaparta (or rather, on their understanding of it), seemingly echoing concerns expressed by Beltran who eagerly tries to protect Txalaparta from “apocryphal” explanations, so to speak, that he understands have emerged from outside the acceptable boundaries of science and the pristine shine of modernist purportedly rigorous methodical musicological research. This is part of the drive that has meant a total dedication to the revival, promotion and transmission of Txalaparta and which has significantly led to the popularity this tradition and instrument enjoys today, as acknowledged by participating txalapartariak.

Adherents to this narrative, in particular Beltran, invoke not only tradition or the past, but science and method, to legitimise, with greater exclusivity, the one path toward knowledge and action, so to speak. The politics of power and control over narratives and understandings in relation to Txalaparta seem to point at different ideological outlooks and ways of doing, as I elaborate in this and the next chapter.

For Beltran, Txalaparta is an “an instrument related to work” (2004, 222), but above all, as many txalapartariak stressed to me, “Txalaparta is music”. This assertion seemed a statement of the obvious to me, yet I soon joined in the advocacy without giving it much thought. Eventually I realised that it demanded attention.

Auzolan

The “artaxuriketak”, or communal corn-winnowing sessions … Held in winter evenings, these were sessions at which young people of both sexes from nearby farms gathered at the farm-house of one of their number to winnow the corn. Once the work was finished at one farm they went on to the farm of some other member of the group, and so on until the corn had been winnowed at all their farms. It goes without saying that they worked at these sessions, but to the
accompaniment of songs, stories, games and other diversions. Work was thus transformed into merry-making (Beltran 2004, 198).\(^\text{18}\)

Communal work (\textit{auzolan} in Euskara) and the following practice in which the work implements (modified in the case of the \textit{makilak}) and the interlocking technique of the former are carried over into a special night long celebration, are the elements that fascinate Juan Mari Beltran: The joy of work turned into communal celebration, which also becomes the core of a hypothesis on the origins of music Beltran presented at the festival of Txalaparta Festa in 1999 and puts forth in different publications (2001, 2004, 2009\(^\text{19}\)) through the case study of Txalaparta and other “variants”.

This narrative in which Txalaparta is regarded as stemming from communal work, and which is already somewhat outlined, in relation to both music and dance, in the aforementioned documentary film \textit{Euskal Herri Musika}, resonates with oriental philosophies (which also inspire Oteiza) that rejoice in everyday life, framing as “art” those elements that are perceived as significant: work (peasant work) in this case, and more specifically, the \textit{auzolan} that gathered neighbours together for a common task:

The end of the “\textit{auzolan}”, certain tasks undertaken communally, like cider-making, hay-making, threshing and roofing, has traditionally been and in some areas still is marked by festivities. Work gives way to celebration, and so the end of the labour is imbued with the festive spirit and the work loses some of its harshness (Beltran 2004, 198).

\(^{18}\) The DVD documentary that accompanies his 2009 publication, which showcases his hypothesis and his Txalaparta group, retakes again the theme of the corn winnowing sessions, also illustrated with the corn winnowing session scene from \textit{Euskal Herri Musika}.

\(^{19}\) In Juan Mari Beltran’s 2009 publication, \textit{Txalaparta}, what is presented as a hypothesis in previous work, is now presented as a given: “In work rhythms like the \textit{ote-jotzea} [furze chopping] certain simple musical forms and tendencies may be appreciated; from there other more complex musical forms such as \textit{kirikoketa} emerged …” (2009, 60).
Juan Mari Beltran, preoccupied with questions of origin, and informed by his extensive ethnographic research into Basque communal tasks involving interlocking (or which he suggests might have involved such technique in the past), proposes a development of music that, within an evolutionary understanding of human musical behaviour, emerges from play in relation to work. Though such hypothesis may be built on somewhat questionable premises and present a challenge in terms of academic standards, it does not only provide relevant information about the use of interlocking in Euskal Herria, it may reveal interesting clues as to the kind of performance that it constructs. Briefly put, “music”, which Beltran seems to equate solely with joy and entertainment in such reflections (2004), and which he considers in such texts as primarily rhythmic patterning, is partly developed, he argues, from an inherent necessity to make communal pounding work less heavy, which is achieved by means of rhythmic play in the form of interlocking. Beltran reflects upon the ways in which work in Euskal Herria has traditionally informed the development of so called Basque rural sports, to then observe how communal work in rural Euskal Herria (with occasional comparisons with other similar –and little researched- world cultures’ traditions) was turned into a joyous experience by means of storytelling or singing, or directly into play, when communal tasks involving pounding, for instance, were performed in an interlocking fashion among participants. One such manifestation for instance, furze chopping, ote jotzea, which Beltran has reconstructed with other txalapartariak and incorporated to his stage performances, is presented as one of the evolutionary stages in the development of music by means of interlocking, an evolution at whose top is Txalaparta.

Chopping furze is in itself a hard, heavy and boring job, but when it is turned into play, the long hours are shortened becoming entertaining and even enjoyable. In this way group work is not so hard and stops being work for many, becoming a celebration, always in company (Beltran 2009, 22).

Auzolan, unremunerated communal work for the common good, traditional to Basque rural society, and its celebration, also “in company”, seems to be at the heart of “the world of Txalaparta”. I experienced during fieldwork a kind of socialist ethos at its core, among those actively involved in the ongoing revival and promotion of Txalaparta, with some exceptions nonetheless that seemed to confirm “the rule”. Though such left wing orientation, in its many ideological forms, was represented by
participants who presented a specific inclination for either of the three narratives mentioned above (or left the door open for all three, and perhaps others), Beltran’s advocated narrative, as elaborated by this musician and as formulated by those other txalapartariak who ascribe to it (often on Beltran’s terms), seems to more explicitly disclose a socialist outlook that resonates with many others actively involved txalapartariak. Beltran’s 2004 publication in four languages, entitled in English The Txalaparta, Forerunners and Variants. From Work Rhythms to Music, does not simply introduce the tradition of Txalaparta or present Beltran’s exploration on the origins of music. It also offers an insight into the kind of discursive performance that largely constructs (or ‘is reflected in’, or both) the world of Txalaparta as it is put into practice today by a great number of txalapartariak, a discourse that is linked to a socialist ethos that is also performed and embodied at the Txalaparta Festa and other similar festivals across the Basque geography.

Txalaparta Festa. The Making of Community

“Why ‘Txalaparta Festa’? Why did you call it ‘festa’?” I asked Juan Mari Beltran. He explained the meaning of “festa” was “celebration” or “festival” in the dialect of Gipuzkoa and added:

... “festa” because it was true that the spirit of where Txalaparta had lived and what its function had been was being lost a little, right?, and the instrument’s function that we knew from collecting [the testimony of the elders], from listening to the elders, was always within something that was a celebration … That thing of…, giving it that character was missing a little. Besides, that of “festa” also because ... a festival is a call to meet, but “a call to meet” for us to talk, for us to relate to each other, not for you to be there and me here, but for us to get together… Festival has all those connotations, right? That’s why that of “festa” seemed interesting to me.

For a large proportion of the younger txalapartariak that engaged in Txalaparta practices in the 1980s, within a specific dynamic of the struggle at a time when it had toughened considerably for left wing independentists, Txalaparta seemed to be, above all, a symbol of their quest for an independent Euskal Herria, and a calling device for
summoning into a different kind of auzolan than that which led to the cider-making celebration, as is explained in chapter five.

The festival, whose first edition took place in 1987, became a space where participants brought their concerns, inseparable from what Txalaparta meant for them (i.e. by means of graffiti on the stage backdrop at given times (figs. 2.25 and 5.10)), and from the political tendency of a sizeable sector of the town that hosted it. I was told during fieldwork that Hernani, the town where the festival takes place (in Gipuzkoa), was one of the cores of the Basque independentist left and of the armed resistance, exemplified by the fact that the town has one of the highest numbers of inhabitants who are political prisoners or wanted, and by the fact that Independentist Left supporters are a majority. Participants from Iruñea and Bizkaia felt the abertzale nature of the town was significant in illustrating that only Independentist Left coalitions would get involved in the support for grassroots culture and in particular Txalaparta. Txalaparta was for them a symbol of the struggle, and Hernani was, in this regard, an example of engagement with the Basque armed resistance, that is, an example of sacrifice for the cause. When I attended the Txalaparta Festa for the first time, in May 2003, I was struck by the fact that the town hall walls were covered with the pictures of all the Basque political prisoners and depictions of dark silhouettes representing the political refugees belonging to the town. In May 2004 however there were none on the walls of the town hall because, as a participant explained to me: “the council has been stolen from us”. Hernani has had a majority of people voting for the banned Batasuna, and subsequent equally banned coalitions (legal in the French State, but made illegal in the south by the Spanish State). With the majority of the town’s citizens eligible to vote thus disenfranchised, as was the case in other parts of southern Euskal Herria, the hall ended up in the hands of conservative or españolist formations of the opposition (EA-PNV at the time). The town’s support remained with the illegalised party. The pictures were now hanging from the windows and balconies, along the streets.

Since its commencement, the Txalaparta Festa soon became the meeting point of txalapartariak from all over the Basque territory, as well as the reference point for what

20 EA, Eusko Alkartasuna (an independentist party that broke away from PNV), has now (Autumn 2011) entered in coalition with Independentist Left forces and the Basque left wing party Alternatiba, also independentist, after the latter’s public request for all agents to abandon violence. The new coalition, Bildu, has been able to join the last election campaign (November 2011), which has finished the disenfranchisement of Basque independents de facto (exclusively Independentist Left formations remain banned at the time of writing).
was and is taking place in relation to Txalaparta (with recent exceptions): “It’s not me who says it, everyone that comes says it: this is the reference,” explained to me Borja (interview May 2006), in tune with what many other participants expressed to me in different occasions. Those who are committed to Txalaparta (at least participants in this research) do their best to attend. A “world of Txalaparta” is manifested, or represented at the festival. A representation, however, determined, in relation to stage performances, by another kind of “performance” (in the Performance Studies sense), that one which is revealed by the parameters followed in the design of the concert programme: that all Basque provinces are roughly represented, as indicated in the previous chapter, and that all generations are also represented, as Beltran highlights (2009). Continuity through time and geography matters. Interpersonal relationships of a horizontal kind and community building, revealed in the “work and celebration” narrative, are also an axis point in the festival. What Beltran has collected (interpreted) in relation to the context in which Txalaparta was played in its former setting, when it was about to disappear (the celebration after cider-making, the elements of community and communion in making) is thus brought into the present of Txalaparta, or else the present is constructed by means of a discursive reconstruction of the past (or both). I will continue elaborating on this argument throughout this chapter.

Stokes argues that “music and dance … do not simply “reflect.” Rather, they provide the means by which the hierarchies of place are negotiated and transformed” (Stokes 1994, 4). If the Basque nation is constructed in the festival on the stage and, partly as a result, in the audience composition, by means of geographical representation of an all-Basque Country, this is a socialist place, that is, a socialist Basque nation; a nation that seeks to transform hierarchical and atomised relationships with nation-states into symmetrical ones.

Erlantz Auzmendi stressed to me the levels of exchange and sharing that have taken place, and take place, at the Txalaparta Festa, which presents txalapartariak with the opportunity of learning from each other. At our interview in November 2003 he referred spontaneously to a unification of the styles created independently by the different txalapartariak, through the Txalaparta Festa, as “Txalaparta Batua” (meaning “unified Txalaparta”). In this way he established a metaphoric relationship with Euskara Batua, the unified or standardised form of Basque language, and also conveyed a sense of unity among txalapartariak (interview, November 2003.) This “batua” was not
simply a coming together of all the different styles in the space and time of the festival (and thus somewhat ephemeral), or the creation of uniformity by means of the festival, but also the symbolic coming together of all Euskal Herria, as represented by the different performers from all corners of the country.

In February 1999, Beltran explained to me that the presentation of Txalaparta on the stage “is essentially simple”, while pointing out some exceptions to the norm he felt were somewhat out of place (at the time) on some Txalaparta Festa videos that he showed me while sharing his lunch with me at the Herri Musikaren Txoko. I often had the chance of experiencing this characteristic of Txalaparta performances outside of the festival confines also. Regarding the festival, this simplicity, or austerity, is also a characteristic of its general aesthetic as I could appreciate through observant participation and in the different videos that document the festival up to 2006. On the Saturday night outdoor concert, a lot of the youth (in a broad sense) end up sitting on the ground, on the seats where they have had their dinner (if the latter is the case), or on abandoned chairs, in an informal setting, with plenty of cider, beer, and smoking. Some popular (traditional) music and dance are showcased at the start of the evening, before the public dinner, by some self-conscious students of the Musika Eskola, adding to the ambience, yet attracting, as I recall, little attention from the wandering attendants, more focused on the Txalaparta free sessions on the txalapartas scattered in the festival grounds (which facilitate people’s spontaneous participation and sharing in Txalaparta\textsuperscript{21}) and on meeting acquaintances. An atmosphere of comradeship prevails throughout the event.

\textsuperscript{21} I observed this format also at the Korrika in Maule (north of Euskal Herria) in March 2003, where three txalapartas had been placed on the pelota court and the elevated stage of the main village square (where the celebrations of the commencement of the rally race took place), encouraging anyone to play, imitating in this the “free session” model of the Txalaparta Festa.
The festival is opened by a speech in Euskara, and a session of bertolaritza (in Euskara) by students from the Bertso Eskola (Improvised Verse School) of the Music School precedes the Txalaparta performances (Beltran strives to bring and integrate the school into the community –a spirit that prevails among Txalaparta groups). Performers are introduced informally by their first name. In the 1995 festival edition, a dog, a Basque shepherd, happily walked the stage undisturbed before and during one of Huts Hots performance: Erlantz Auzmendi with Ibon Otxoa. Often performers, like their audience, wear casual clothes. The audience is very participative, uttering irrintzis and audible signs of enjoyment if the performance enthuses them. Performers modestly acknowledge (if at all) the clapping and cheering at the end of their piece\textsuperscript{22}, an aspect that seemed to pervade in Txalaparta performances in general, and that struck me very much the first time I attended one, in the Ateneo of Madrid in December 1997 (at which the performers simply disappeared from the stage, letting the audience clap at an empty scenario with a txalaparta\textsuperscript{23}). Txalaparta players that participated in this research from outside of Hernani often travelled the same night back home, slept in the vehicle they drove in or stayed with friends. And though on one occasion those I was with booked into a pension for the night, I would not think that the festival boosted significantly the income of local businesses (excepting bars and pubs). In other words, festival attendants did not have budgets to expend as might be the case for a classical music concert or golf tournament. The festival does not count with a large budget, which means that payment and expenses covered for invited performers are very limited, as Beltran and other members of the organising team explained to me. Attendance is practically on a voluntary basis in that regard but the significance of the event and the promotional work it means in relation to Txalaparta is enough:

…to come to the Txalaparta Festa without getting a penny: sometimes nearly; and that is the beautiful thing, right? And that is indeed a little of… a point of pride

\textsuperscript{22} This was a matter of discussion in the Txalaparta group I facilitated for a second tour of Ireland in 2004. Karlos, the txistulari of the group, argued that it was time to seriously consider offering a visible acknowledgement of audience clapping and a more manifest end-of-performance salutation. Karlos (who was preparing at the time for public exams to become a txistu teacher), seemed to me to represent in his views throughout the tour the more formal aesthetics and standards of an institutionalised txistu environment, in contrast with the freer and more urban/working class spirit of the rest of the musicians: txalapartariak (one of whom was also a dancer) and an alboka player.

\textsuperscript{23} This was for me a great contrast with the preceding and following Basque choir performance (at which I performed as a choir member), where we actually rehearsed our salutation, which involved much ceremony. Leaving the txalaparta alone on the stage while the audience clapped was not a means of encouraging reverence for it, according to one of the performing txalapartariak, who tried to humbly excuse himself, perhaps thinking I was passing judgement (interview, February 1999).
that we may have. Even though things have changed and little by little we are, let’s say, better paid and better considered in that sense, coming to the Txalaparta Festa of Hernani is still almost like an honour for many, right? … the one that comes from Sestao, for instance, like these ones, surely telling them to come is an honour [for them], I mean. And they won’t give a damn not to get paid probably. They won’t care at all not to get paid. They are always paid, at least expenses … but surely what they have been paid has never been enough, to put it somehow. It has always been little … but people have done it always with pleasure. In a way or another, it is a pleasure; also because this is a very appreciative square [audience] as well. Of course. These are things that I don’t make up, I have heard them: “Damn! It is an honour to come here!” (Borja, interview, May 2006)

Erlantz Auzmendi explained that there was an attempt in 1985 or 86 to organise a championship of Txalaparta in the Lezao farmhouse but in the end they rather organised a gathering “which is better, because it is sharing and not competing” (interview, November 2003). This discourse resonated consistently with other txalapartariak who participated in this research, and who acknowledged in the kind of relationships prioritised among them, a spirit of sharing, collaboration and togetherness that they identified with Txalaparta: “…for me the first spirit, and the primitive one, would be play, right?, to play for fun…” (Jon, group interview, June 2006). One other present member of Jon’s group, taking this spirit to the kind of challenge itself that is established between both txalapartariak in the performance, added: “Often we do seek to collaborate … even if we are improvising, right? I am not trying to expose him, I am trying to collaborate with him! And the more we collaborate in that improvisation, much nicer is the result, right?: One rounding the other’s phrases…, him refining the other’s winks [performatic proposals]…” (Eneko, group interview 2006).

When I asked Pierre, txalapartari from Iparralde, what were his feelings about the possibility of organising some kind of Txalaparta competition he stated outright: “I don’t think so. It is not the spirit of the Txalaparta” (interview, June 2006). Erlantz explained at our interview in November 2003 that there had never been a competition of Txalaparta, and he further added that Beltran is not a friend of competing. He explained that, in relation to what had been done to date pertaining Txalaparta, there were marathons, such as in relation to the main rally race for the promotion of Euskara,
known as Korrika, “but summing up our efforts, not competing.” Erlantz referred to what he called Korrikaparta, an idea he proposed some time ago for Iruñea and which was not taken up by the Korrika organisers in the city: to have four txalapartariak couples moving forward successively so that they could cover all the race among them playing Txalaparta. In fact, the “txalapartariak of Irun”, the Sorzabalberere, explained to me they use to do it for the Korrika in its passage through Irun: “We take the whole school into the street. When all the Korrika goes through Irun, all Irun is filled with txalapartas, then the Txalaparta runs behind the Korrika, in front of the Korrika…” (Koldo Sorzabalbere, interview, June 2006). “Let’s say there may be four or five txalapartas. Within the route, the last one[s] who have played put the txalaparta into the car and go to another location … like the Egyptians that were passing on the cylinder to move the stone, in that way, and then, since the time they [the runners] enter in Irun through the border, until they come out through Ventas, they are listening to Txalaparta” (Xabi Sorzabalbere, interview, June 2006). The act of running at the Korrika, at which the Sorzabalberere make sure Txalaparta “runs” as well, has great symbolic meaning, as a metaphor for the use and promotion of Euskara, temporarily erasing, by means of the all-Basque Country race, the borders that currently divide Euskal Herria between the Spanish and French states and between two autonomies within the former (Del Valle 1994).

Beltran points out, nonetheless, that two Txalaparta competitions were organised in 1970-71 by Donostiako Kultur eta Turismo Ekintzetxea (Donostia’s Centre of Culture and Tourism), as part of the Euskal Jaiak (Basque festival). Beltran further indicates that in 1986 the Gipuzkoan group Amalur from Errenteria-Orereta organised the “First Txalapartariak Championship of Euskal Herria,” though it could not go ahead “because, among other reasons, their Txalaparta couple, formed by Joxe and Jesus, was imprisoned around those dates,” and no further attempts were made ever since (Beltran 2009, 113). Though Beltran may have proved Erlantz wrong in relation to championships of Txalaparta, the conviction with which the latter also stated to me that “there has not been a championship and there will not be” (interview, November 2003) resonates with the spirit that other txalapartariak identify not only in relation to this particular festival, or other festivals that other Txalaparta groups from other Basque provinces organise, but in relation to the wider community of txalapartariak. There are

24 The version in Castilian has a mistake and presents the winners of the 1971 competition as pertaining to 1972.
some exceptions nonetheless, seemingly since the late 1990s, in relation to the close environment of world music entrepreneur and trikitilari Kepa Junkera, who also participated in this research. In 1996 two more festivals dedicated to Txalaparta started in Sestao (Bizkaia) and in Urretxu (Gipuzkoa). A similar festival, Txalaparta Topaketak (Txalaparta gatherings), took place in Uharte in 1999 (Nafarroa) and in Iruñea since 2004, as well as the Txalaparta Maratoia of Gazteiz (Araba) among others. These tend to follow a model where horizontal relationships prevail, displaying perhaps a greater level of informality than that found in the Txalaparta Festa: Txalaparta performances are arranged in different pubs along a route in the city or town. In Iruñea, a marching Basque folk ‘band’ accompanies the people and txalapartariak from pub to pub amid an atmosphere of fun and comradeship, gradually facilitated by the helping hand of the beer. Though I had no opportunity in attending these, txalapartariak from Iruñea referred to me the messy merry making walk from pub to pub (from programmed performance to performance), playing Txalaparta at the same time on the plank that one of them (or two) carried on his shoulder (I was told this was done in Gazteiz with tobera, which makes this more manageable).

I think that a championship has many negative things, but it also has some positive ones … but one must know how to participate in a championship. One must know. It is not ok to say “that is not ttakun” and then we disqualify it (Juan Mari Beltran, interview, May 2006)

Beltran’s main concern in the interview he granted me in May 2006 was the standards that would have to be established for a Txalaparta competition of any sort to take place. This was also brought up by other participants. The ttakun beat in particular was of a relevance that requires attention in relation to the perceived nature of Txalaparta and its boundaries, as is discussed soon in this chapter.

Socialist Ethos

At our interview in June 2003, Argider referred to the renowned rescuers of Txalaparta in the 1960s as the “intellectuals”, establishing a difference with a majority of txalapartariak that engaged with the tradition in the next decades. Though the latter

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25 Trikitilari is the Basque word for trikitixa player. The trikitixa is a small diatonic accordion.
committed to Txalaparta with less philosophical or scientifist\(^{26}\) elaboration than that provided by the Artze brothers (in connection with Urbeltz and Oteiza’s artistic and philosophical endeavours,) and Juan Mari Beltran (“the intellectuals”), they were influenced by these, or/and by similar and/or parallel dynamics than those which “moved” these revivalists. If Joxean Artze, the poet, offers and shapes Txalaparta as poetry: experimental, concrete, like his own; romantic, anarchistic, spiritual, mystic, embedded in a humanist search for timeless cross-cultural universals that take a unique shape in a revered profundity and specificity of the Basque Txalaparta; a seemingly more materialistic, populist, internationalist, Marxist-like discourse (what “ought to be” from a socialist stance, rather than what is intuitively grasped, perhaps), yet also deeply anchored in the specificity of peoples, may be identified in Beltran’s \textit{doing}, the musician and advocate of traditional instruments, who incorporates Txalaparta as an instrument (and describes it as such in his writings), despite acknowledging at the same time it is more than that\(^{27}\) (Jexux Artze might have been perhaps in between both positions, but I do not wish to make guesses.)

Beltran seems to move in his research endeavours within the confines of the evolutionist modernist conceptions that characterised the European trend of comparative musicology that prevailed in studies of popular music\(^ {28}\) during the first half of the century\(^ {29}\). If the Artze brothers, like other musicians and revivalists related to the environment of Ez Dok Amairu, who reflected upon Txalaparta within the aesthetic of a more experimental avant-garde style, where influenced by Eliade, John Cage, Bertolt

\(^{26}\) I use the term “scientifist” to refer to a discourse that wants to be scientific, that is, to avail of the claims to rigour and legitimation provided by the social status of science, regardless of whether it complies or not with scientific methods and standards.

\(^{27}\) In a long and wonderfully informative chat about Basque dance and culture with Oier Arauloaza, Basque dancer and dance researcher undertaking PhD studies at the University of the Basque Country at the time, he shared with me his insight (also introduced by Karlos Sanchez in his work) of the role the \textit{txistulari} has traditionally had as keeper of the dance and local traditions (fieldwork, June 2006), a dynamic that is exemplified by some participants in this research, and which might serve to contextualise Juan Mari Beltran’s work to some extent perhaps.

\(^{28}\) I am consciously avoiding the term ‘folk’, echoing participants’ reservations in relation to the traditional use of this word, which implies a hierarchy of skill and worth (as opposed to ‘high art’ western music) that many participants strongly rejected (in tune also with current approaches in ethnomusicology which regard all musics as equal, and ‘high art’ western music also as ‘folk’ music, as John Blacking proposed in his seminal work on music (1976)). Other meanings were attached to the term ‘folk’ by some participants, as is discussed at a later stage of this dissertation.

\(^{29}\) Beltran, like Urbeltz, has invested a great deal of personal resources, energy and his life time so far with passion to the revival of Basque performing arts within a personal, often unique, intellectual vision (more so in the case of Urbeltz), at the margins of existing research, perhaps due to a mistrust for official stands (which may explain their isolation from academic discourses on the matters of their concern), and a strong attachment to the past in their intellectual pursuits (not so in their performing practices).
Brecht and writers of the Frankfurt School among other (and of course, Oteiza), Beltran seems to limit his theoretical framework in his writings to former collectors of the first half of the 20th century he resonates with: collectors such as the Hungarian Bartók and the Romanian Brâiloiu (as cited by the former,) whose work in relation to music may be inscribed in larger national building projects (also the case here, as I will argue later), at a time when the current European nation-state framework was in the making. A framework that Basque independentists, like other nations in similar circumstances, seek to redefine and regard as still in the making. 

Though his research tools would seem outdated as per academic standards and current trends, these are useful for the cultural activist that he is, seemingly more heavily oriented toward action than toward “talking/writing about it”: Beltran reflects upon the aforementioned collectors in tune with current praxis approaches in cultural studies (for Brâiloiu, as quoted by Beltran from Bartók’s work (Beltran 2008, 311), traditional popular music exists only in performance, where interpretation and creation come together). Beltran’s reflections present postmodern undertones when expressed through practice. There seems to be a level of décalage, perhaps only apparent, between his research performance, which seeks to meet perceived expectations in the realm of scientific modernist research as already stated –rational, methodical, factual, empirical (thus implicitly claiming validation by the status quo) -, and his performatic and performative music practices, which not only display qualities associated with the performing arts and traditionally excluded from academic scriptural economies – embodied, emotional, intuitive, subjected to unknown processes of creative “flow” (as described by Csikszentmihalyi (1996)), but which are also guided by an ideological postcolonial socialist stance that defies traditional official constructions of state authority.

Beltran’s work in relation to Txalaparta is part of a larger personal and educational project mainly focused on traditional/popular musical instruments (or traditional/popular music technology) and the incorporation of their associated musics into present practices, from an understanding of tradition as a phenomenon that is alive and in constant change (or always in the making) and which carries within it the

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30 Indeed the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo in February 2008, with international recognition by a sizeable number of states, and the more recent declaration of South Sudan as an independent state, are examples of the ongoing process of definition of a world nation-state framework.

31 Notwithstanding the inclusion of instruments more commonly associated with art music.
specificity of a people. This is a project infused with the spirit of his old music group *Txaranga Txantxangorri* (active from 1973 to 1980) which Beltran describes as *euskaltzale* (supportive of Euskara), left wing, “and of a somewhat red varnish,” and which, he adds, made its music “in support of a more red society” (Beltran 2008, 289). This project is exemplified by the undertaking of the Herri Musikaren Txoko (meaning “Popular Music Corner”), a Popular Music Documentation Centre that Juan Mari Beltran put together with great dedication in Oiartzun in 1995 with his personal resources and the infrastructural support of a Council sensitive to popular traditional culture (Herri Batasuna at the time.) The centre, which opened to the public officially in 2002 and is directed by Beltran, does not only make Beltran’s personal comprehensive collection of recordings, written material and music instruments accessible to visitors, but it also organises different music activities that seek to involve the community and promote participation rather than passive assimilation. The programme of music concerts the centre regularly organises “to show traditional music is alive” with groups and musicians from different music cultures within so called “roots music”, includes a dinner anyone can join “to be with the musicians, eat, sing, play and dance with them” (always stated in the centre’s leaflets in relation to its concerts), thus fostering a human connection with music makers and promoting participation. This desire for human connection and relatedness is, I would say, the most salient characteristic, or the one that struck me the most, among the *txalapartariak* that participated in this research, as I elaborate soon in this and the next chapters.

…I said that the idea of the Eibar courses and so forth seemed wrong to me in principle…, but that I wasn’t going to decide to stop it, that I wanted to discuss it with the group [other *txalapartariak*]. I rang the group, which was already quite extensive, and among them was Gerla Beti, and these decided that yes, that it had to be done (Beltran, interview, May 2006).

Relevant decisions affecting *txalapartariak*, such as the habilitation course to teach Txalaparta in official schools which the Department of Education of the Basque Government proposed to Beltran in the early 1990s, or Harkaitz Martinez’ envisaged Txalaparta association (fieldwork May 2004), are discussed with a community of *txalapartariak* in a popular assembly manner, before decisions are adopted based on the wishes of the majority.
As an exception to the rule, the only instance where I experienced a distinct distance kept in relation to other txalapartariak, showing a total lack of knowledge of what had been done to date (fieldwork 2006) in relation to Txalaparta and no interest nor connection with a txalapartari community, seemed to have to do with a distance from left wing stands, as could be the case of ETXAK (“Euskadiko Txalaparta Konpania” -The Txalaparta Company of Euskadi), Kepa Junkera’s Txalaparta project. ETXAK was initiated in 2003 with music students from the Higher Music Conservatory of the Basque Country, Musikene), a group which counted on sponsorship for events from the Basque government –with PNV, the Basque Nationalist Party, in power (fieldwork, summer 2006). This musician and entrepreneur, Kepa Junkera, seemingly of PNV leanings (of which I am not certain, but was told by other participants), presented this project as the first of its kind ever to experiment and innovate with Txalaparta, described in their website as “a xylophone”, and shaped as one (“melodic txalaparta”, a tempered form that had been developed prior to this musician’s incorporation of Txalaparta). This presentation seemed to ignore the plural community of Txalaparta revivalists and enthusiasts since the 1960s, and misrepresent work done to date by these, in tune with the much debated World Music Industry, where market dynamics seem to prevail over the fostering of local music cultures and their informed representativity (dynamics that may also be found in the so called audiovisual genres of “reality TV” and TV documentaries, or the tourist industry, driven as well by the spectacle industry dynamics where the fake and the “genuine” are intentionally blurred into profit oriented “make belief” performances).

A fear of erasure seems to be the engine of Beltran’s drive, in a globalised age where, as he outlines, traditional means of transmission of musical skills and knowledge (directly from a generation to the next and personal), gradually disappear; where “the music that has been an important part of human life experiences, has been substituted … by the consumption of a music elaborated by a few” (2008, 312), where people’s specificity becomes increasingly diluted, as Beltran highlights, and where the “level of active and direct popular participation progressively decreases”(2008, 312). Instruments at the Herri Musikaren Txoko (the aforementioned popular documentation centre) are organised as per Hornbostel and Sachs classification, yet, of the five basic groups of instruments such musicologists propose, the group of electrophones is omitted, since “in
our specific case it is quite at the margins of the work we intend to undertake” (Beltran 2008, 315). A postcolonial socialist and sovereignist discourse, at odds with a (post)modernity (in the form of imperialist capitalism and electronic music making technology to an extent) that seems to swallow not only musical forms but the specificities of peoples and their active creative participation, is presented in an instrument display with labels that defy official constructions of national borders, that is, the nation-state framework as it is currently laid out, and the power structures that hold it. An instrument whose origin appears as Euskal Herria (currently a stateless nation) is shown alongside others whose labels indicate Ireland, Cuba, Japan or Morocco (nation-states), but also as Asturias, Galizia, Andaluzia or Catalonia, for instance (autonomous communities in the Spanish State that also host independence movements). Beltran also reminds us that we are part of the world, that the Basque danburia has a sister/brother in the salterio of Aragon or the French tambourin de Bearn (likewise in relation to txalaparta in his writings); that the origin of the acoustic guitar may also be as Basque as Korean; that we are all one folk in the end: different (in expression), but equal (in value). Traditional boundaries blur, but this is a different kind of blurring, one led by internationalist aspirations rather than capitalist market dynamics. A “blurring” with Maoist undertones perhaps, in its stress on traditional peasant popular culture as the repository of people’s specificity and as a basis for creative practice, parallel perhaps to Mao’s advocacy for a revolution of the peasants, to suit an Asia whose work force was concentrated in the agricultural sector rather than an industrial one. Place of manufacture, acquisition and use of the instrument are shown in the instrument label under the same category of origin, jatorria (Beltran, electronic communication, July 2011).

Do you remember when we used to say that he who sells his work force in the Basque Country is Basque!

said a former ETA activist, in his mid 50s at the time, to another colleague from the Komite Internazionalistak at a small house party to which I was invited in July

This musician does incorporate such instruments into some of his compositions, nonetheless, and the centre does exhibit electrically powered “instruments of reproduction” such as radios and record players. Beltran always showed a concern for working toward balanced representation (he explained, for instance, that in his audiovisual work Euskal Herriko Soinu Tresnak (Sound instruments of Euskal Herria) he featured the Goikoetxea, since the Zuaznabar had appeared in different films a lot more than the former. I understand that the exclusion of electronic instruments is likely born out of a desire for balance.

Also called ttun ttun in its Basque form, a struck zither from Iparralde (Fig. 8, chapter 5).
2006. “Until we realised…” he added as the smile in his face faded, explaining to me that soon they felt disillusioned about such inclusive aspirations when they found out that a majority of the immigrant work force was not so interested in integrating in Basque society nor in the Basque socialist independentist plight. Contrary to conservative approaches to Basque ethnicity, I encountered a generalised understanding among participants that ascribed the “Basque” label to anyone who had his/her residence in the Basque Country and shared in the Basque plight to some extent (whether culturally or politically or both). Alternatively, or in conjunction with the above, the ability to speak Basque was also taken as a determinant of belonging.

Beltran’s ideological approach seems to respond to the narrative he advocates in relation to Txalaparta (and music in general), a narrative where work (peasant work) and its associated celebration, is an important part of his musical activism in relation to Txalaparta. Work and its celebration seem to be the foundations of a performance that seeks to explain Txalaparta (intentionally or not) in ways that facilitate the creation of a certain reality oriented toward socialist values: values of dialogue, human connectedness, equality, popular participation and autonomy, which participants identified in Basque traditional institutions of popular government, as was often pointed out to me. This resonates with what seems the general stance of a large part of txalapartariak both in their discourse and praxis. Indeed Beltran’s work has not occurred in a vacuum, but, as he constantly acknowledges, has counted with the support of a large number of people that have believed, and believes, in his project.

…I[f we shall find a mysticism, a beauty in the origins of this, I am not sure if that of the horse is more mystic, or [that it is] more beautiful, let’s say, to think that we are imitating the horse trot, than that we are making work into entertainment, right? I mean, more mystic than that, more beautiful than that! I think it’s hard [to find] (Borja, txalapartari from Hernani and teacher of Txalaparta, interview, May 2006).

The spirit of auzolan, of people coming together voluntarily for the pursuit of a common goal, the giving back to the community what by means of it had been received (reciprocity), the love of work and especially work related to Basque culture (and social issues), was invoked once and again by different participants (in different ways) in relation to Txalaparta and the context of cultural activism in which commitment to it was inscribed. The clearest expression of this spirit of auzolan may be exemplified by
one of the main contexts in which Txalaparta has been often transmitted, according to participants, that of the gaztetxe (literally, youth house), described by a participating bertsolari and a txalapartari as crucial in the expansion of Txalaparta (fieldwork, June 2006). Gaztetxeak, described by participants as self-managed centres, are unoccupied derelict buildings refurbished by the youth and used for cultural and social activities in a spirit of collaboration and exchange (a kind of bartering), DIY philosophy (also related to the predominant punk culture in the 1980s) and active participation, within a wider counterculture social movement, exemplified by the military service disobedience movement, the environmentalist movement, feminist movement, free radios, and so on, that emerged in the 1980s (these centres also exist in other European countries).

Berezi, a txalapartari from Iruñea in her early 20s heavily involved in cultural activities on a voluntarist basis, explained that the goal of the gaztetxe is to promote human relationships: “everyone who has some skill contributes, teaches this or that for free”, she stated, describing neighbours involvement providing materials and support, and their own activities to involve the local community across the generational spectrum. Jon, a committed txalapartari from Bizkaia in his 20s, explained it in the following way, when I enquired about the costs of their txalaparta lessons at the gaztetxe in his home town:

We don’t charge, in the gaztetxe we don’t charge … We proposed a weekly workshop. Well, we squatted a place, we started to make rooms and so forth, to build inside, to construct, and once… and then we continue distributing the space among us, right? … Well, at the start… we had no money at all, and it [the txalaparta] was a Santa Ageda stick (of those used for singing Santa Ageda that): four pieces are beaten out of it, and some boards we stole from a park bench. I mean…, in that way, without money and so forth. And then little by little we built the premises as much as the [Txalaparta] group. People started coming and we started to go out to offer performances…, and people stay on the basis of their interest, they don’t… I don’t know, they don’t pay anything, what they are asked is a commitment, and that when the premises have to be cleaned, that we all do it among us; if something must be changed, it must be changed by

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34 Tradition performed by groups of men who went from house to house singing verses the night of St. Ageda, in the month of February, and were given food and drink that later the group would eat in celebration. The singing was accompanied by rhythmic beating of the ground with a heavy thick and long makila (stick) by a member of the group. This custom is still celebrated today by mixed gender groups.
everyone; if some maintenance needs to be done, we try to do it..., I mean, we try to get everyone to participate and that they give the same than what they receive from the... [Txalaparta group], it shall be something reciprocate, right? The workshop [Txalaparta group] gives to you and you shall give to the workshop so it can continue. The people that learn then... [pass it on] -not everybody, there is people who leave, but the people who remain then take the commitment of teaching... We try it to be a little like that..., that it is done among all of us a little and out of people’s will. ... A year it wasn’t done [there was no Txalaparta workshop] because I was abroad..., Andoni was possibly in prison... (because... he had a problem, he is a political prisoner), and then the people there did not continue..., or did not feel enough like it, or did not see themselves capable enough to continue with that ... But more or less, [Txalaparta workshops are held] always, right? Two... or we are now, for instance, three, four people that would be what is the core there, like here [a different Txalaparta workshop in Bilbao] we are five, there we are about... at this time, four, and among those four and the people that come [to learn] then... [the workshop is held] (interview, June 2006).

The spirit of the gaztetxe is reproduced in other kinds of associations or socially engaged voluntary groups that get together with the purpose of infusing life, from a left wing stance, into the community, by means of culture. This is a dynamic which seems to be effected through the local and national celebrations: it seems to be at exceptional occasions, whether those inscribed within “leisure” time or events related to the struggle that Basque popular culture, and all that goes with it, is publicly re-created. Those I have been in contact with from younger generations, roughly from their late teens to their mid 30s, mostly in Iruña, and also in Bizkaia and Iparralde, have all been, with a few exceptions, independentists, though not necessarily part of Batasuna’s popular base (this was at least the case with the group I worked with of a more anarchist orientation).

The oral transmission of Txalaparta often takes place at informal workshops, sometimes aided with a basic version of the notation system developed by Beltran in the Txalaparta School of Hernani, or other notation systems players come up with themselves. These workshops constitute socializing spaces that offer an alternative to consumption oriented leisure activities: players and their peers (some attendees to the workshops of one of the groups with whom I undertook fieldwork in Iruña expressed
they had no intention to play the instrument) meet regularly, combining informal Txalaparta performances with long group chats. Those Txalaparta groups I encountered in Nafarroa, with whom I had more contact, strove to promote the mix of players, rather than fixed couples (the latter leads to a greater understanding between both players). Thus they advocated the playing by “all with all”, following the model Juan Mari Beltran promotes in the Txalaparta group of the Musika Eskola of Hernani, Ttakun Ttakun, as some of its former and current members expressed (fieldwork 2004 and 2006). Harkaitz Martinez (member of Oreka Tx) spoke of a performance they prepared in the mid 1990s for the Txalaparta Festa:

…we once did a story whose title and content, the message that we wanted to transmit was “the Txalaparta is love” … We made a parallelism between the [romantic] couple and the Txalaparta … because we saw a little that it happens a lot in the Txalaparta that you nearly [always] play with the same person. When you play with other people it is different, you learn other things, you have other difficulties … And well, it was also a time when... when we were against the idea of a [romantic] couple! (Interview, May 2004).

Though the promotion of playing with different players followed an explicit rationale of enabling technical mastery regardless of the Txalaparta partner, many txalapartariak who promoted it explained that it was an enriching experience to play with different people, not only in terms of technique but in terms of connectedness, often disclosing what seemed a certain left wing approach to relationships.

In the same way that people had actively engaged in the recovery of Euskara in a grassroots voluntary basis since the 1960s (the recovery of Txalaparta took place in such environment and context), many txalapartariak engaged with Txalaparta and transmitted it in the same way, for the love of it and a desire to see it continue, within a participatory “Do It Yourself” spirit, as stated earlier. “I didn’t pay any lesson to learn,” explained Koldo Sorzabalbere, as a rational; “nor did I!” added Xabi (interview, June 2006). The Sorzabalbere txalapartariak of Irun offer their workshops for free. They explained they had their own jobs, and their engagement with Txalaparta and its transmission was exclusively motivated by their love of it. In relation to this spirit of voluntarism in the transmission of Txalaparta, I felt, during fieldwork undertaken in
Iruña (Nafarroa) and Gazteiz (Araba) in the summer of 2006, that there was some kind of tension in relation to the spirit of transmitting Txalaparta as a mission (with a cause), for free, and the emerging tendency of charging for it, related to desires and attempts to making a living off it: “They have become more capitalist”, explained Berezi, with visible disappointment, in relation to a performance sponsored by the right wing Council of Iruña that her txalapartari friends offered. I also felt there was a recent interest by government institutions (local councils) to kindle the disenfranchised left by means of incorporating txalaparta performances to their political events or local celebrations, with different degrees of success: I learned of a village in Gipuzkoa with a majority of Independentist Left supporters where txalapartariak from Hegoalde refused to perform for the local council.

Emerging World Music Industry dynamics in relation to Txalaparta seemed to me linked to this possible cultural-political policy, which some participants perceived as well. From my participant observations and interview with musician Kepa Junkera and others within his circle who also kindly granted me hours of their busy schedules, I felt that Junkera’s alleged new innovations in relation to Txalaparta, were so rather in relation to the music business dynamics he was able to infuse and shape Txalaparta with. This is an interesting subject for future work. It is worth mentioning nonetheless what I felt Junkera’s adoption of Txalaparta provides to the political-business establishment and the status quo (in terms of entrepreneurship ethics or “company culture” perhaps) for the insights it facilitates by means of contrast with other participants in this research (or what we might call the “world of Txalaparta” that manifests at the Txalaparta Festa, for instance):

- a work ethic that, seemingly unlike other txalapartariak who have participated in this research, has no communist-like or other akin agendas attached (such as striving for people’s empowerment versus a passive, voyeuristic perhaps, consumption of culture);

- no inhibitions related to an attachment to the past or to communities with independentist aspirations;

- seemingly no apprehensions toward current globalisation dynamics (and no inhibitions in terms of music technology, unlike that evidenced at the Herri Musikaren Txoko, for instance), but rather an ability to use them for the benefit
of various agents (within institutions and the music industry) and participating “folk” musicians, to the advantage of all involved –a capacity to seize opportunities, or to match what is desired with what is done to attain it (not without a significant degree of effort and lack of immediate benefit to an extent relating ETXAK up to 2006, as per the group’s event coordinator);

- and to conclude, compliance with the dynamics of power and capital (or “the world as is”) with a capacity of commitment and seriousness of purpose in music business.

The apprehension toward txalapartariak by potential event commissioning institutions, as explained by one of Junkera’s coordinators, illustrates the above to an extent:

“Oh! Txalaparta but seriously!” There is that too, right? That also bothers me, because when you see two 17 year old [abertzale] guys playing, doing a solo, it is as seriously as when we are playing “Ekinai”! [one of Junkera’s compositions]. I mean, why, why are those two not serious? And because we wear black t-shirts and trousers we are serious…? That may be, as I tell you, on the one hand, [because of] the fact that… it [Txalaparta] may seem more or less political, or so; we go with black t-shirts and we are serious, and two guys who are playing in jeans and wearing four earrings are not serious, why? (interview, May 2006).

The afternoon I spent with Kepa Junkera in Musikene, I felt disappointed at what I understood to be a misrepresentation of Txalaparta, becoming also some sort of “witch” for him, as he openly stated after playing the “Flintstones” cartoon soundtrack on the piano when I started performing the ttakun as I had learned it (Txalaparta Zaharra), on the txalaparta in the room. I could not avoid nonetheless, from my vantage point of researcher and Basque music lover, feeling enthused at Junkera’s drive and creative force, and swept away by the dancing fresh river of music that flooded the room as he played the trikitixa and other instruments for me, kindly devoting hours of his busy time, and bringing his students and his event coordinator (who also kindly participated in this research), into the interview.
After Berezi discussed her disillusionment with the trend of some txalapartariak in Iruñea who were attempting to play professionally, exemplified by a project to play in tourist resorts in Mexico (in stark contrast with the spirit of free performances previously offered on support of the Zapatista movement by txalapartariak, for instance), the aforementioned council sponsored performance, or charging (little) more than usual for Txalaparta lessons, she added “I play because I like it, in squatter centres…” (fieldwork, May 2006).

“It was the first time we played in the street,” Harkaitz Martinez (from Oreka Tx) recalled, going back to the year 1993,

…and people was not used to busking with the Txalaparta, and that was to transgress... I knew some guys who had gone through Europe and busked in the street with the Txalaparta [Erlantz Auzmendi and a colleague had busked throughout Europe before], but here it was like..., I don’t know … I think it was more for us than what we thought with regards to the people. Busking in the street with a traditional instrument… [it was] like ugly. I think that it was more ourselves [txalapartariak] who thought that, but at the same time we said to each other “damn, listen, but it is an instrument that..., people plays guitar, they play..., so let’s understand it like an instrument too, let’s move toward people being able to listen to it in the street, and whoever wants to throw coins, let her do it, and full stop.

“Of course” I said, “you did this moved by an economic need; weren’t you?”

Well, because we wanted to buy a van to go to Ireland, I mean, it was because of that. We said “ok, we play in the street and with that we can go to Ireland, and we take the Txalaparta with us.” And well, and then we were playing more years in San Fermín [the July bull running celebrations in Iruñea]. And later it has spread, right? For instance, the Ugarte brothers play a lot now in the street. And well, there are points in which you always consider “damn, is this ok, or is it wrong, or...?” (Harkaitz Martinez, interview, May 2004).

I felt the dilemma between playing as a mission, for the motherland so to speak, to construct a Basque nation, for free, and playing for money (within attempts oriented to make a profession off it) was more acute within an Independentist Left scene (among
highly driven supporters committed to the cause culturally, socially and politically). Erramun, bertsolari and member of Askapena (internationalist organisation that operates within the Basque Movement for National Liberation), explained to me, putting as an example the Baztan celebrations of July that take place in Elizondo (Nafarroa), and are organised in auzolan:

Auzolan! Now, for instance, it’s called “militancy”, but before it was called auzolan, communal work, for the community. It has always been like that in the transmission of culture! I mean, that of charging money and all that is foreign to popular [traditional] culture … A person, when she has that sentiment very inside [the sentiment of being committed to recovering and expanding -creating-traditional popular culture, as he explained], she doesn’t care whether she is paid or is not paid for it or whatever! … Same with Txalaparta, that whatever it is, is not lost! (Interview, July 2006).

Erramun put the example of AEK teachers (teachers of Euskara for adults within the initially grassroots organisation AEK), who he explained started been salaried in the year 1995 or 96, and who had been, up to that time, “without social welfare, without salary nor nothing:”

All these movements that emerged at the end of the 70s, or at the end of the 60s, depending on the subject and so, emerged because of the need to transmit the culture, because its transmission was dying out in the home, and there was no other transmission channel, then people who was concerned with that started transmitting it, whether it was Euskera, the Txalaparta, bertsolaris, the trikitixa, the txistu, or whatever. But that happens because of an institutional deficiency so to speak! I mean, the historical claim in relation to Euskera is that it is taught for free to everyone without exception! And the same should be with culture! … The schools of Txalaparta in Gasteiz work in the manner of assemblies [decisions are taken by the group rather than one or a few appointed individuals]. Many times they reject financing [from official institutions] and they play for free… then those who want to get money out of it, then, no; those who play on ice bars [Oreka Tx] or Kepa Junkera, don’t go near that35 (Interview, July 2006).

35 Both groups/individuals mentioned by Erramun did in fact tell me of occasions in which they have played for free for given causes (i.e. on support of Euskara or, in the case of Junkera, “charitable causes” –I never heard this expression before from other participants to refer to voluntary work). I also learned, from my interview with Harkaitz Martinez (Oreka Tx) of the much time, effort, and personal funds
As I observed during my fieldwork with the two main Txalaparta groups (from Iruñea) I worked with, as well as other Txalaparta players and groups who participated in this research from other regions of Euskal Herria (north and south), and as was often stressed to me in conversation, engagement with Txalaparta is very socially oriented in terms of volunteer community work. Participant performers always stressed the importance of returning their work to the community, showing a sense of a mission when discussing the importance of promoting Txalaparta (among other Basque cultural “traditions” in the sense of living tradition). A committed txalapartari from Iparralde explained, in relation to a group of learners whom he said he was going to teach for free since they were “motivated”:

We also have a transmission role, for our generation to leave something of what we are doing, right? And the last thing we can leave is this…, it is Txalaparta, in the end, I mean, we have to promote it no matter what. And I think that those from here who are a little motivated to learn and perhaps also to pass it on, we have to offer them a gesture, we have to give them something, not sell [it to] them (Pierre, interview, June 2006).

I often encountered, in the players I interviewed and who shared moments or periods of their life with me, a committed disinterested dedication to serve “the community” through their engagement with Txalaparta and things Basque, investing a great deal of personal effort and time. In such a climate, and with a new expansion of Txalaparta since the late 1990s, exemplified by groups like Oreka Tx, launched into stardom by music entrepreneur and trikitilari Kepa Junkera, and other txalapartariak also trained with Juan Mari Beltran establishing themselves as professionals of Txalaparta much like other professional musicians (with greater or less effort), committed txalapartariak who started to try and emulate such attempts faced a dilemma between “performing as a mission”, as mentioned earlier (as was the tradition in Iruñea, for instance), and trying to make a living\(^{36}\). Many such txalapartariak, like Juan Mari

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\(^{36}\) “Playing for money” was not regarded as a problem among many committed txalapartariak who discussed the importance of getting society accustomed to valuing the work of txalapartariak much like that of any other professional. While they were pleased to “donate their services” (as Basque anthropologist Del Valle puts it in her work Korrika) for worthy causes (promotion of Euskara in the Korrika or playing for humanitarian organisations with limited or no funds, for instance,) they insisted in charging high commissions (not necessarily higher than other musicians would) to official institutions, which tended to take them for granted, as I was told (fieldwork 2006).
Beltrán, and others, regarded the possibility of making a living off Txalaparta as an indication that the work to promote it and adapt it to the now was succeeding.

Erlantz Auzmendi, former member of the bikote Gerla Beti, exemplifies well the struggle, which he considered failed, for recognition of the txalapartari as musician and music professional in his/her own right. In 1999, when I met him at the Txalaparta classes he delivered once a month for a Txalaparta group in Nafarroa, he often brought into the conversation the high quasi-religious status of the music teacher (guru) in the Carnatic classical tradition of India), expressing a yearning for that kind of appreciation. Concerned with a particular transcendental view and philosophy of life, and highly dedicated to Txalaparta, through which he accessed such view, he saw himself, I understood, as a kind of guru. In the year 2000 Auzmendi decided to move to the Canary Islands, change his name and delete the traces of what he felt were failed attempts to live as a professional of Txalaparta, including his former stage name, Perdi. Oreka Tx, skilful txalapartariak, which he also was, but more attuned to the World Music Industry and more commercially successful than he ever was, were reflected upon by Erlantz Auzmendi as a highlight of what he perceived as a personal failure of his. At an Ireland-Canary Islands engaging long phone interview in November 2003, Erlantz told me that a dream led him to “retire”: Harkaitz and Igor (members of Oreka Tx) were playing Txalaparta with their back to him. He eagerly wanted to join them, but he could not. They left, and he felt forlorn. He woke up with the realisation his time as a txalapartari was over, and dramatically changed his life. “I never had a cent,” he stated. “I still have to do my master work,” he added nonetheless, “but with calm and money in my pocket” (interview, November 2003).

Though participating txalapartariak were not pleased with the misrepresentation they perceived in Kepa Junkera’s work in relation to Txalaparta, there was a sense that it also opened doors for txalapartariak: “we have to be grateful to Kepa for having taken the Txalaparta out to the world, right? Because, what does that mean? It opens doors for you,” expressed a txalapartari who was critical of Junkera’s attitude, adding that “if those doors are not controlled, there’s no problem! The problem is when those doors have a lock. But it is an advantage, of course, because in the end, damn!, to open it up to the world is very important! Someone had to do it! Kepa Junkera has done it, very good, anyone can do it! Then, we have to take advantage of that path, of course, in that [side of things]: of course!” (Olatz, interview, June 2006).
One of the things that struck me when I came into contact with the “world” of txalapartariak, mostly in Iruñea, where the political situation is more radicalised, and where I worked with txalapartariak who openly ascribed to the Independentist Left, is the high levels of solidarity, and the open demonstrations of affection among men, challenging mainstream ideas of gendered behaviour. Exchanges of affection among women, and men and women, where also visible, but did not strike me as much since such is, in my experience, mainstream social behaviour in the Spanish State to an extent. I was also struck by their subversion of the gendered nature of Castilian when speaking or writing in this language, for the sake of greater gender inclusivity. In Castilian, a mixed group of men and women will use male language forms and are referred as male by default; these Basque men, however, used female adjectival forms and pronouns to refer to themselves, regardless of the personal sexual orientation of the speaker (the men of the group of anarchist txalapartariak seemed to be more consistent with this than the left abertzale ones I have been with). The members of this community seem to be very close, and formal behaviours that stress social distance are rejected. A general trend in this line of connectedness (and equality) that I also noticed among participants (with a few exceptions) was a general dislike for establishing hierarchies of “better / worse” when it came to evaluating player’s performatic skills. Preference in relation to style was generally expressed with great respect for other ways of playing and their advocates. As a young txalapartari from Hernani put it (in relation to the idea of dance/music competitions, which he expressed he would not like for Txalaparta):

[T]o have to give points…! I don’t know, I find it very sad! With something like “let’s see who throws this further away” [grabbing a biro], it can be marked: “I throw this further than you”, ok, there is no arguing about that. Now, “no, this one has danced better than that one”… Damn!” (Borja, interview, May 2006).

The more or less consensual approach, transcending personal preference, was that everyone’s skill and style had a right to coexist in equal terms. This was expanded to

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37 I stress this because in two occasions male txalapartariak (two of my hosts during my fieldwork in Iruñea: Jokin who defined himself as a radical anarchist (fieldwork 2003), and Kemen, who ascribed to the ezerk abertzale (fieldwork 2004)), felt compelled to clarify that they were not homosexual, after displaying affection and physical closeness (hugging, kissing) with their colleagues in my presence.

38 My experience is that, with the exception of Josu Goiri (whose current approach is spiritual healing oriented), researchers who have participated in this research project were less flexible about their views on Txalaparta than exclusively performer participants, whose “research” was above all embodied and fully practice oriented, generally disengaged from writing practices and not seeking academic validation.
people’s personal appearance, for instance, in an attempt of human inclusivity beyond mainstream exclusive ideals of beauty (it was also forgotten when referring to Iruñea’s right wing politicians). I observed a similar trend among many txalapartariak in relation to narratives about Txalaparta, excepting perhaps Juan Mari Beltran or JosAnton Artze, who had invested more dedication to the advocacy of one or another narrative, and who were thus more emotionally attached to one over the others.

…For me they [the different narratives] are important things … in the sense of being able to play with them, right? … I don’t know if I care too much whether they are real or not… (Edorta, interview, May 2006)

Despite the general trend among participants of being particularly supportive of one narrative and somewhat keen on dispelling the rest (perhaps out of preference for one influential txalapartari over another), I encountered an underlying coexistence of all three narratives to some extent, and most participants in this research tried to remain open minded about all possibilities at some stage of our conversations. An example of this is put forth by Jean Claude Enrique’s itinerant exhibition of Txalaparta and website. Jean Claude Enrique (originally Catalan, in his 50s), organiser of the former “Festival des 3 cultures”39 and of the Ziburuko Txalaparta Taldea (Txalaparta group of Ziburu, Iparralde) presents all narratives with more or less equal weight, despite his personal attraction for the horse narrative:

Ourselves, especially the older ones, who know more, I think we have to make as much as possible available to people, but without putting arrows, right? For instance, when I put together an exhibition,

Figure 3.13: Logo of the Txalaparta group Sestao TX (part of the Basque cultural group Zugarramurdi). Source: Sestao Tx’ t-shirt, fieldwork June 2006.

It is worth noting that aforementioned independent researchers had a strong background in Basque traditional dance, a domain where there seems to be much openly expressed rivalry as per my experience and participants’ perceptions.

39 Festival that celebrates Basque, Corsican and Catalan cultures, with a desire to expanding to more cultures. It used to take place in Zuburu (Iparralde) over a number of days up to approximately 2004.
you will see that we use question marks: “party instrument?” Question mark. We
don’t know (“it may be”, “some say it”). Uh… “prehistoric rites?”… Question
mark. Uh… “horse trot?” Question marks … Only here we do not put question
marks, in the work rhythm and music. Why don’t we put question marks?
Because we have the proof, the pictures are real, that exists (interview, May
2006)

Another instance is the group Sestao Tx (from Sestao, in the left bank of Bilbo’s
Estuary, Bizkaia), adherents of the narrative that relates Txalaparta to the celebration of
communal work: Their logo features, nonetheless, an image inspired by the horse of the
painting Gernika by Picasso (exhibited in t-shirts and posters) which I was told had to
do with the narrative that relates Txalaparta to the horse (fig. 3.13). The txalapartariak
Koldo and Xabi Solzabarbere, from Irun, referred to the old style Txalaparta as “jaia
deia”, “festivity call.” Despite this implied acceptance of the narrative that explains
Txalaparta as a calling device, Koldo showed an explicit preference for the narrative of
the horse, while Xabi was not particularly concerned about origins, excepting their
shared understanding that Txalaparta belonged with nature (implicitly or explicitly
shared by other participants). They explained that on those occasions at which they had
performed on the night of the summer solstice, in the mountain, in a setting of close
darkness and bonfires, Txalaparta was in “its habitat.” When I asked the Sorzabalbere
for the trend among txalapartariak of playing in the mountains, Xabi replied “those are
the roots!”

In line with the rejection of asymmetrical power relationships mentioned earlier,
a general anti-clerical stance, and a suspicion toward organised religion, did also
characterise most participating txalapartariak in this research (with few exceptions, like
JosAnton Artze), as evidenced, for instance, by their critical attitude toward the
imperialist and colonialist agendas of the Catholic Church, as participants from Iruñea
put it. This was so particularly in relation to a certain religious order and its collusion
with Spanish extreme right wing forms of government, especially in the Basque capital
of Iruñea and the province of Nafarroa. This was illustrated, for example, by a much
acclaimed metaphoric performance, offered by txalapartariak from Nafarroa, which
combined Txalaparta with puppetry at the 19th Txalaparta Festa in 2005: A spider
wearing a bishop’s miter kept standing on the way of the makilak during the performance session, until the makilak gradually beat it out of the way.

Anyone can have their beliefs, but jeepers, this of the clergy is… I don’t know, I don’t know if you are a believer or not [speaking to me], but, uf!, it cries to heaven! I mean, the gods must be at this stage very, very pissed off! … Here unfortunately –and the clergy was much guilty of it- a great deal of that ancestral culture that was here of cult to nature was lost, right? Let’s say, the Ama Lurra, the mother land … all those kind of things did not suit the Church, because it gave it neither clienteles nor profits. Then, of course, the Church was always allied to the political powers, with the army… And that is still the case, right? … Then, in just a stroke, they got rid of part of a culture, and of many cultures in many places (Manu, interview, June 2006).

A member of a dance group from Iruña, also txalapartari, in his late 40s or early 50s, who seemed to be an exception to the rule in relation to other participating txalapartariak from Iruña, felt very strongly about my initial perception of txalapartariak as left wing and generally independentist. In a desire to counteract my emerging understandings, he put the txalapartariak of Irun, the Sorzabalbere, as an example of religious performers: he explained they used to play in a church. When I spoke to the latter, however, I learned they played in an annexe to the church, and since the mass would be disturbed by their Txalaparta workshops, they’d take a break at mass time and go to the nearest bar for a drink in the meantime. Players of an instrument rarely sanctioned by the church (as seems to be the case with percussion in general), and one that, among other things, represented ancient “pagan” Basque culture, these txalapartariak did not warm up to the clergy as much as the clergy disliked their sounds:

Koldo Sorzabalbere: It is a long time since I don’t go to a mass at all…

Xabi: No. And we played in one, and that… We had a little fight –and we won, by the way- with the… [Txalaparta] … Instead of throwing the dogs at us, he [the priest]

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40 I could not delve much in his ideological approach, but I felt it was odd that he referred me to an academic Basque ethnomusicologist with no knowledge of Txalaparta or its environment (and not akin to the left, from what I could gather from him), dismissing Juan Mari Beltran as a non academically sanctioned researcher.

41 I recall an Irish priest who explained to me that he was unable to get bodhrán players for his Irish mass –they were not interested, while he did not have a problem sourcing other traditional music instrumentalists.
threw the organist at us. We went to play at a wedding and we were going to play together. And damn, he got scandalised because “that instrument, and that noise…” … And then the priest was not much for it, and “listen, but what is this, that such and such and so forth.” And “no, listen, it is not something that…, it won’t be a lot of noise or anything, because we are going to play soft” … And he left “pa pa pa pa pa”, and the organist was near the sacristy, and he [the priest] told him to start playing. “Well! Let us play too!” There was no people from the wedding yet, right? The church was empty … And then the organist started playing “bri bri bri bri” [imitating the sound], and so did we. The organist started playing louder, and so did we. And the organist kept playing louder; he got to a stage where he did not know what else to play, and us “pa pimp pam, pam pam” [laughing]. And finally the organist closed the organ and left [more laughing]. And that day we played inside the church, and we played very softly. Then… we have never got on very well with clergy! (Koldo and Xabi Sorzabalbereg, interview, June 2006).

In tune with a concern for Basque culture and social issues from a left wing stance, txalapartariak contribute with their performances (as mission) to different activities of a social and political kind, beyond celebratory events: Txalaparta was played at the demonstrations against the closure by the Spanish Government of the only newspaper in Basque language, the Euskaldunon Egunkaria (2003), and also at demonstrations against capitalism and imperialism. Txalaparta players I was working with in Iruñea at the time when the invasion of Iraq had recently started in 2003, took part in the demonstrations against the war performing Txalaparta, and some of them played at the airport to bid farewell to the volunteers who were departing to Iraq to act as human shields prior to the start of the war. Txalapartariak from Iruñea of an anarchist orientation, explained that Txalaparta was part of a certain context which implied a particular sensibility they understood as contained in the instrument, a particular sensibility that links together people with specific collective identity claims and shared values. “The Txalaparta is linked with a type of people” observed Harkaitz Martinez (member of Oreka Tx):

the basic thing of the Txalaparta … it is an instrument that has to be shared. It is an instrument that has to be shared and which does not belong to one player but belongs to the two of them. And the meeting point of two players is the
instrument itself. That’s were it would be, if you want, let’s say, the most philosophical of the Txalaparta, right? No doubt that if you are an egocentric person, [who needs to be] the centre of attention, and whatever, it is going to cause you problems, of course, because you have to share it with someone else! (Interview, May 2004).

Acknowledging that a new type of person is approaching Txalaparta, or that a new understanding is emerging detached from what Txalaparta may have been in terms of meaning until recently, Harkaitz further elaborated on this point:

I think that the Txalaparta…, people who have it as an instrument will use it, and then the Txalaparta will continue being what it has been up to now also, right? which is [something] very symbolic of Euskal Herria. It’s uh… it’s an instrument to which you arrive by other means that are not the usual. Today the person that starts to study any instrument…, for instance piano, it is hard to imagine a pianist as self taught, isn’t it? The most typical is to join a course, to enrol in the conservatory, do some courses … I don’t know. The Txalaparta, well, it is an instrument that you share, that brings you together with music and the tradition, that has those values. I don’t think it will lose those, right? I am not afraid those values will be lost.

Sharing Euskal Herria Self-taught …………… The tradition.

Limits:


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tta\text{-}kun \quad tta\text{-}kun \quad tta\text{-}kun
\]

\[
tta \quad kun \quad tta \quad kun \quad tta \quad kun...
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Conclusion

This chapter has introduced interpretation in a more explicit manner, by means of a general approach to the practices explored in relation to Txalaparta (verbal and non-verbal) “as” performance, in tune with the broad spectrum approach to the study of performance advocated by Richard Schechner among others (Performance Studies). Discourses of what Txalaparta is and what is not, have thus been presented in this chapter for their further exploration and are reflected upon as constructions in the next, regardless of whether they are plausible or not. This chapter is the first half of an attempt to explore the interface between verbal discourse and action, what is constructed and the narratives that facilitate or justify such doing.

The three main narratives encountered that seek to explain Txalaparta, and which serve as doors into interpretive communities and forms of doing within the community that a participant defined as “the popular world of Txalaparta”, have been introduced in this chapter.

The first narrative introduced explains Txalaparta as the sonic evocation of the transition from trot to gallop of the horse (or pottoka, native Basque horse), presented as ancient totem of the Basques. It originated within the dynamics of the revival in the late 1960s and 1970s, in the environment of the Basque School of Contemporary Art, and it was gestated at the encounter of dance revivalist Juan Antonio Urbeltz and Oteiza with Eliade’s work on shamanism, who enchanted the Artze brothers with their theorisations of Basque primitive and Basque popular art, threading different cultural elements in a romantic search for timeless components of a Basque culture, and in the search of a lost, forgotten, and subtracted (banned), identity. The horse, which appears in different European mythologies linked to ideas of transformation or transition, and often, in records of Eurasian shamanic practices, as Mircea Eliade discusses in his work, as a psychopomp that aids the shaman in his trips to other dimensions, inspires the development of an explanation for Txalaparta that relies on the existence of a Basque essence, like some sort of archetype pertaining to a collective mind that is Basque, European, and ultimately Universal (a link between the first and the latter is established, for instance, by means of the takun beat, as is shown in the next chapter). This is facilitated by the acknowledged presence of the horse figure in different forms of Basque “expressive culture”, and the meaning of the word “Zalaparta” as transition from horse trot to gallop, registered by Urbeltz in relation to the Erro valley’s knowledge of horses (Nafarroa), where his father was from. That such horse motion
transition was given a name in the traditional culture of the Erro valley (Erronkari, Nafarroa), made it the more relevant for such emerging narrative in relation to a sonic tradition whose name also referred to a certain sound and way of playing explained also as a transition (rather than as a physical sound-making structure), and whose context also marked the end of a transition from apple to cider. This narrative seems to have been upheld by participants who encountered Txalaparta in this environment (early years of the revival), influenced in one way or another by the Artze brothers, such as Erlantz Auzmendi and those of his students I met in Nafarroa.

This narrative, presented, alongside the others, in the storyline of the 1978 documentary film Euskal Herri Musika (meaning “Basque popular music”), introduces a thematic thread, that of sacrifice for the motherland (the struggle), which helps remind us of the social and political context of the armed conflict in which performances discussed here are embedded, as is further discussed in the next chapter and the final conclusion of this dissertation. Indeed, the underlying discourse of this documentary, that opens and closes its tour through Basque music and dance with Txalaparta Zaharra, the old style, at the start, and Txalaparta Berria, the new, by the Artze brothers, at the end, seems to be the existential dilemma to which the youth is exposed in the struggle: death (sacrifice) for the sake of life.

A second narrative is presented in this chapter, that which explains Txalaparta as a former calling device or some kind of rhythmic calls. This explanation of Txalaparta in relation to its possible use in the past, for which, according to Beltran’s research on the tradition, there is no evidence, is reflected upon briefly, since its significance, or part of it, is elaborated upon in the last chapter, in relation to the understanding of it as “a war call”. It presents a functional (efficacious) understanding of Txalaparta that, for some participants, precludes understandings of Txalaparta as “music”, and it is for this reason contained and addressed in Juan Mari Beltran’s discourse. This second narrative will become particularly significant in interpretations provided in the last chapter of this dissertation.

A third narrative, construed in relation to the context in which the tradition was encountered when it was threatened with extinction, that of the cider-making celebration, in a rural Euskal Herria regarded by Basque independentists as repository of the Basque specificity that underlies ethnic national claims, is the main focus of this chapter and more closely interpreted in the next. This narrative is explored in relation to
the socialist ethos that transpires in the actions of txalapartariak and the festival, Txalaparta Festa that since 1987 is organised by the Txalaparta Eskola (School of Txalaparta) of the official music school of Hernani (Gipuzkoa), under the leadership of Juan Mari Beltran. In this festival, modelled within the spirit of communal celebration identified in Txalaparta’s former context, the informal network of txalapartariak (an identifiable community of practice), seems to materialise. The festival is consciously fashioned in terms of Beltran’s socialist outlook, as exemplified in his writings and the Herri Musikaren Txoko, the Popular Music Documentation Centre that Beltran has put together with his tireless often volunteer work, personal resources and the support of the council of Oiartzun. The Basque nation is constructed by means of the programme of outdoor performances, and represented in attendants. The festival may be thus considered a construction of place (the nation), and a socialist one. Such outlook resonates with txalapartariak who often uphold it and develop their activities within volunteer assembly-like organisations and centres, such as gaztetxeak, self-managed centres where different cultural and social activities are offered for free in a spirit of reciprocity that also prevails in the work of txalapartari groups encountered in this research. Within a socialist ethos, also highlighted by contrast with an exception within the World Music industry, and in relation to the struggle for an independent Euskal Herria, a dilemma emerges, which I identified more saliently in relation to the Independentist Left environment of Iruñea (historical capital of Euskal Herria): The quest of txalapartariak to be recognised as musicians and live as professionals of Txalaparta versus performing as a mission, in a spirit of reciprocity, for the cause of Txalaparta’s survival and promotion, and the survival and promotion of Basque traditional popular culture in general (much as was the case in relation to Euskara until relatively recently, and still is for Basques I have encountered who have eagerly and kindly given me free grinds of the language, refusing monetary retribution). The quest to live off Txalaparta within contemporary music industry dynamics, the making of community exemplified by the festival of Txalaparta Festa and the general spirit of committed txalapartariak, and the narrative that links Txalaparta with communal work and its celebration, are woven further toward the salient project of the construction of “music,” elaborated upon in the next chapter.
Chapter 4: Plural Understandings and One Project

Introduction

In the previous chapter I have focused on the three main narratives that seek to make sense of Txalaparta, and some of those performances which I interpret these narratives disclose and construct, in particular the narrative that relates Txalaparta to the celebration of the cider-making. A prevailing socialist ethos in relation to the informal social network, or community of practice, that is woven around, and weaves, Txalaparta, has also been presented.

There are other understandings in regards to what Txalaparta is considered to be by different participants and sectors of Basque society acquainted with it, understandings upheld by different yet overlapping interpretive communities. These understandings, introduced in this chapter, point at boundaries beyond which the tradition is felt either corrupted or simply dissolved, boundaries put forth in terms of sound production (the performative performatic) or in terms of the values motivating the use of Txalaparta (the performative). These other understandings, of which the theme of the interlocking technique with which Txalaparta is mostly played (and that largely defines it for many) is particularly salient, emerge in the work intertwined with the three main narratives previously presented, furthering our insight of what such performances seem to construct.

The emergent project of construction of Txalaparta as “music” as per western canons, linked to the narrative that relates Txalaparta to the celebration of communal work and “entertainment,” and which addresses all other understandings mentioned so far, is presented here. Schechner describes a performative as consisting “not of naturally determined operations but of something built and enforced by means of ‘performance’” (2002, 130) that is, a performative (i.e. gender) implies the enactment of a socially constructed “reality.” It is in this way that I discuss the performativity of the concept of “music” in relation to the aforementioned project.
Limits of Txalaparta –When Txalaparta Is No More

Current explanations of what Txalaparta was in the past point at discourses about what its nature is -or should be- today. Such discourses, or performances, deconstruct the tradition, as told and practiced by the old txalapartariak (or not quite, since what has been told -and practiced- is also a contested matter), into behaviours that are then selected and combined with new ones, and/or rearranged (“restored” as per Schechner’s theorisation of performance). The old is thus reinvented, an “old” that is then invoked to create anew, in a certain way, as per the given circumstances and attuned aspirations of the makers and practitioners of such ever changing tradition(s). The main narratives presented in the previous chapter are enmeshed with further understandings about what Txalaparta ultimately is and the boundaries beyond which it dissolves or becomes counterfeit.

Soon after Txalaparta was rediscovered by the youth of the late 1960s and 70s, as explained and exemplified by the Artze brothers and Juan Mari Beltran, they embarked in a process of experimentation with the tradition, pushing its limits in certain directions and encountering limits they were not prepared to trespass, even though in some cases (such as the interlocking technique, which is discussed soon) some txalapartariak dared to break some boundaries, only to discover a feeling of unease that brought them back. If initially Txalaparta was performed as it had been learned from the old txalapartariak, soon some changes where gradually introduced by the Artze and Beltran, giving forth to what is known as Txalaparta Berria, the new Txalaparta. These players started playing without necessarily keeping the ttakun or herren roles (or interchanging them along the piece, which the old txalapartariak did incidentally in one recorded occasion), roles which, however, are still acknowledged as intrinsic to the relationship between both txalapartariak at the time of playing, as explained for instance by Edorta:

For me the functions of the ttakun and herren are important and are real, and for me there is a lot of base in them. … A different thing is that … all the time you are “ttakun” and me “herren.” …The order and the disorder, the balance and unbalance, comes from a relationship between two people that are doing something, and there is a pulse between both for that to move on … it is part of life, that is, I mean, that if there is a relationship, there is a push and pull between two people who live together or between two people who play the “txala,” I
mean, those functions exist and are real. And besides, I believe that we, the 
*txalapartaris* who have been at it for some years, have it very present when we 
consider playing and improvising, and we always ask each other ‘what function 
do you take, *ttakun* or *herren*? At least to start off, we’ll see later, but how do we 
start this off?’ (interview, May 2006).

New materials were used for the stands, more planks were added, and different woods 
were experimented with for these as well as for the *makilak*. The sound dynamics and 
range of tonality were expanded. The rhythmic base of Txalaparta was also changed, as 
Jexux Artze explains in the sleeve of the recording *Sakanatik Arbaila Ttipira*, in relation 
to their initial experience with Txalaparta Zaharra:

…[W]hen one starts learning to play the txalaparta, as he advances, when novelty 
wears off, the path takes one to a kind of narrow passage between mountains. 
…After a ceaseless search, I eventually found an exit in the easiest of ways, in 
truth. All I needed to do was stretch out the *ttakun* a little. The *ttakun* we had 
been taught had a certain similarity with a horse’s gallop; spacing out the *ttakun* a 
little meant leaving a greater space between both strikes, thus changing what was 
a gallop into a trot in the following manner:

```
ttakun -- ttakun -- ttakun -- ttakun -- ttakun  \textit{(gallop)}
```

```
tta - kun - tta - kun - tta - kun - tta - kun - tta – kun \textit{(trot)}
```

And just as the *ttakun* can be extended, it can obviously be shortened as well, 
which provides us the opportunity of using different types of *ttakun*. In the same 
\begin{quote}
\textit{sense, if at the beginning the times shall be equal between both txalapartaris, 
further on it will be possible to play with the aforementioned times by getting 
ahead, falling behind, penetrating into the partner’s time [turn], etc” (Artze et al. 
1999).}
\textit{Eventually other *txalapartariak* would follow suit in the endeavours. Among 
them was Erlantz Auzmendi, formerly Fernando Auzmendi, more well-known among 
*txalapartariak* by his artistic name, Perdi, a name he is not fond of since he decided to 
retire from Txalaparta. From Araia (Araba), he explained to me he learned about the 
existence of Txalaparta from a record passed on to him by “the priests from Araia” in}
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1976 or 77, and saw it played at a festival in the village. That’s when he recognised the rhythm, he argued, a rhythm he was familiar with from “playing Indians” with his friends as a child, imitating riding horses: he conveyed the rhythm was already within him (an organic rhythm, as he put it). He told me he went to live with a group of friends “as hippies,” “in communes.” A friend of Pilar Goikoetxea and his, Iñaki Olano, who learned Txalaparta with the Goikoetxea family, “came back and we decided to play with the full moon. And I played better than him, cos I remembered” (Erlantz Auzmendi, November 2003.) They played on the kitchen bench until his friend, Iñaki, bought a plank. From there they started experimenting (“researching,” as he put it) with new materials, introducing upholstery foam to substitute the corn leaves, and later the A shaped trestle supports in substitution of the baskets (Erlantz was a construction carpenter, which facilitated, as he explained, his experimentation with different types of wood.) They tried to recycle any materials they could find for the txalaparta, such as railway sleepers. They also introduced the stone slates that are now so sought for by different groups of txalapartariak. Harkaitz, from the renowned bikote Oreka Tx, explained at our interview in May 2004 how eager he was to contact Erlantz to buy stones from him. Where he got them from was a trade secret (he explained he found them by chance, in a way that Erlantz attributed as “the workings of the Great Spirit”). They decided to tour Europe, Erlantz explained, after the reaction their performances awoke in tourists (they were trying hard to live off Txalaparta,) and from that and inspired by xylophones, the idea of making the boards smaller came from. They added up to 16 boards to the txalaparta, kindly cut for free at a carpenter workshop of independentist left supporters (for the motherland). They were also the first to combine tobera and wood in their txalaparta, he added. While touring in Switzerland, someone spoke to them of the sound of matter, and from that they decided to experiment further with more materials (Erlantz Auzmendi, interview, November 2003).
Other rhythmic structures and beats, soon adopted by many more txalapartariak, have been created by txalapartariak like the Sorzabalbere from Irun (who developed a ternary rhythm) and especially by Juan Mari Beltran within the environment of the Txalaparta Eskola (The School of Txalaparta of the School of Music of Hernani, in Gipuzkoa), with implications I reflect upon later in the last section of this chapter. As Erlantz Auzmendi claimed, Gerla Beti introduced iron bars, inspired by the tobera, alongside the planks (or on their own over the stands), or the aforementioned bell sounding stones which make up what he called Harriparta (a txalaparta made up solely of stones (fig. 4.1)). When I met Erlantz Auzmendi at a workshop in February 1999, he played an immense txalaparta made up of several planks (fig. 4.2), not “tuned” but arranged following a scale, incorporating planks of several lengths, woods, thickness and sounds, marked with letters and numbers to facilitate their arrangement in the overall structure. Iron bars and stones were added to it.

Gerla Beti, like other txalapartariak, also experimented with the length and shape of the makilak, performing on occasion with bones for sticks, perhaps looking to endow their performances with a prehistoric resonance, of which Txalaparta is not exempt for participants who imagine it played on cavern walls by the early artists, in conjunction with their horse paintings (as somewhat recreated in the film Euskal Herri Musika (1978), Josu Goiri’s book about Txalaparta (1996) or hinted in the more recent documentary Txalaparta, herri baten oihartzuna (2005), where ethnomusicologist Grégory Antipas appears beating alone on a megalithic stone).

As the videos of the different editions of Txalaparta Festa testify, experimenting with Txalaparta was taken through many routes, often motivated, as per participants, by the festival itself, as explained in previous chapter: from holding the makilak differently.
to produce the strokes (i.e. as if they were drum batons) to beating them against each other, beating the planks (or other materials used) on the sides, beating the stands, beating on more than one txalaparta or the floor itself, for instance. Creativity has led txalapartariak to combine Txalaparta with other instruments (in an interlocking fashion between the txalaparta and other instruments, on occasion), to incorporate it in different music genres, and with other performing arts like dance (from Basque, to flamenco to Amazonian), theatre or poetry. A spirit of recycling also characterises the shape, and sound, of some groups’ txalapartas, as was the case of one of the groups I spent time with in Iruña, who incorporated on occasion two recycled beer plastic crates (strung together by means of a pole that was then placed over the stands), thus blending, so to speak, with an immediate performing environment (where drink is not missing).

As I observed during fieldwork research, and as explained by txalapartariak themselves, they learn from each other, incorporating in their repertoire elements from other groups and bikoteak, such as Gerla Beti’s stones, or the cardboard tubes developed by Oreka Tx for the recording Quercus Endorphina (2001), as Harkaitz Martinez (member of the latter group) explained at our interview in May 2004. Experimentation with different materials, initiated, as per Erlantz Auzmendi, by his former bikote Gerla Beti, has its more well-known example today with Oreka Tx, as exemplified in their documentary Nomadak Tx, where this bikote travels across the globe incorporating the materials encountered as they meet different cultural groups. Particularly salient, for its polemic nature, as is presented in the next sections, is the drive represented by the Txalaparta Eskola of Hernani, and in particular Juan Mari Beltran, whose developments in relation to Txalaparta show a specific orientation toward literacy, as is exemplified by the development of a notation system, as an alternative to staff notation, that not only facilitates teaching (fig. 4.3) but also composition. Composition for Txalaparta was already pioneered, according to Josu Goiri, by the late Jexux Artze, though it has received and important thrust by the

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**Figure 4.3: Example of notation developed by Juan Mari Beltran in its simple form (to facilitate transmission).** Extract of a Txalaparta exercise. The beats pertaining to one of the txalapartariak are notated above the horizontal line, those pertaining to the second txalapartari are notated below. The names given to the beats are shown above to facilitate mnemotechnic learning. Source: Beltran 2004, 62.
work developed in the mist of Hernani and, as stated earlier, by the dynamics of the world music industry.

…with all your respect toward what you have learned, you start to make it yours (Eneko, interview, June 2006).

One of the boundaries pushed within this thirst for experimentation was the interlocking technique inherent to Txalaparta. Erlantz Auzmendi explained that in the Lezao recording with Tomas San Miguel, they, Gerla Beti, played Txalaparta “like it was a drum,” beating the plank in unison, without interlocking: “it was a sin from us that the old ones forgave” (interview, November 2003).

We have done things that I would not do now, for instance! And that is to play each in one instrument, in a txalaparta, if you want, in a wooden drum, three guys, but without playing Txalaparta! Doing as if each of us had a djembé, and all of us playing on the same impulse, the same beat, playing to mount some rhythms on top of others! What they do at the batukadas with percussion, with the djembes, the darbukas and all this (Eneko, group Sestao Tx, interview, June 2006)

We, ourselves, have also taken like a step back sometimes, when we have felt we were entering into areas in which, at that stage, “damn, this…” (Borja, interview, May 2006).

Borja explained that they have many times used the planks to play all at the same time, without interlocking:

…we considered that it was not Txalaparta what we were doing…, but it seems also a bit dangerous the thought that people could believe [it was], or that we didn’t let them see that that was not Txalaparta. Then, to avoid confusion, almost, let’s say, we arrived to the conclusion… -it is also something unspoken perhaps, but which in general has happened to everyone, we have all done these kinds of things. And in the end we have taken like that step of “Uh! Not that way! Not that way, just in case we confuse people,” right? … There are times when you yourself see that you are going extra limits a little and you say “this is not Txalaparta anymore!” And you say “well, I am having a very good time doing this, but let’s see what message is people going to receive, right? They may
understand that that is also Txalaparta,” and just in case, just in case, in a way in which you also see yourself as transmitter, and also in a didactic manner –while Txalaparta is so unknown, you will always have the feeling that it is also a bit of didactic work what you are doing when you play. Then, seen like this, “hey! Watch it!” right? We did have that reaction. … When we formed that group of four txalapartaris … even among ourselves we considered not to do that again, I mean, at least to be more careful … We simply decided “well, look, we are not going to do this,” “if we play Txalaparta, we play Txalaparta, or else, to do those things [percussion without interlocking] we pick up the djembés and that’s it,” right? You play the djembé for that and that’s it (Borja, interview, May 2006).

The path that becomes too widened is a path no more, explained JosAnton Artze at a speech in the Txalaparta Festa at which his deceased brother, Jexux, was paid homage, in May 2003.

With the high levels of experimentation, came also a need for limits. Txalaparta, a symbol of Basque identity, was on the brink of loosing the very thing that had attracted many txalapartariak on the first place, an anchoring in the world as Basque - with universal undertones, as Beltran reminds txalapartariak of the world phenomenon it is: similar human sounding phenomena and instruments in exotic places makes Txalaparta –and by extension Basques- exotic, somewhat out of place in terms of surrounding cultures (unique); similar but now lost traditions in Europe, Beltran highlights, point at the preservation by Basques of what others have lost, what indeed makes Basque culture into the repository of an intangible human heritage.

Interlocking Technique

“Never, never ever has Txalaparta been played by one only person [pause]. Always two, always as couples.” (Joseba Zuaznabar, interview, May 2006).

Eneko, a txalapartari in his 30s, after explaining he had played with his colleagues in unison, without interlocking, but that he had no interest in it anymore, he added:

No, I don’t think that [beating in unison] is what has given forth to this kind of play, those work tasks of eternal beating nor… Four, three, two, but one? All at
once? The instrument may be the same, a wooden drum, but for me that is what Txalaparta would not be any more perhaps, right? (Eneko, group Sestao Tx, interview, June 2006).

This txalapartari strongly defended Beltran’s narrative in which Txalaparta is explained as emerging from the celebration of (pounding) work performed in an interlocking fashion, with a sole function (or “almost only function” (2009)), as I will discuss soon. This was for him the ultimate rationale in his understanding of Txalaparta as interlocking, if the way of playing did not match such roots of Txalaparta, as established by such narrative, the link was finally broken. Interlocking, accepted by all participating txalapartariak as essential to Txalaparta (even though it is combined at times with effects created by the overlapping of certain strokes by more than one player at once), is well rooted in Basque traditional society, as evidenced by Juan Mari Beltran’s ethnographic work. So much so that in order to better understand the narrative that explains Txalaparta as part of the celebration of communal work, it may be more productive to rather discuss it in relation to the interlocking technique with which it is performed, at least in relation to the hypothesis developed and effectively advocated by Beltran among a younger generation of txalapartariak for whom he is a main reference, as discussed earlier.

The importance of interlocking is exemplified with an anecdote which Beltran explains was told by Miguel Zuaznabar, which appears consistently in this musician’s publications, and which younger generations quote almost literally as part of the teaching content of their workshops: after a dinner of military service recruits they felt like playing Txalaparta but had none of the usual implements, so they dismantled a booth near a railway pass and played Txalaparta on the reassembled materials. What was told as an anecdote, now fixed in print again and again, and repeated many times in oral transmissions at workshops, becomes thus a kind of foundational stone, or the key that opens a door from the past to legitimise new practices: anything goes, so long as interlocking is mostly maintained. Whether what those old txalapartariak may have performed was a certain interplay between given roles, with high levels of interdependency, and within a certain general piece structure (Txalaparta Zaharra), it does not matter, as I discuss shortly.
If for txalapartariak it is the interlocking technique that defines Txlalaparta, which immediately places an emphasis on process, as was also the case for the old players as evidenced by ethnographic accounts, this technique is not enough for others, who set narrower boundaries to what Txlalaparta is: the interlocking technique plus improvisation (to greater or lesser degrees depending on the txalapartariak). For others still, another essential element ultimately defines Txlalaparta: the pulse established by the takun beat of Txlalaparta Zaharra. Such performatic elements are also performative, as I discuss soon.

It is a bit our sin also to confuse a little Txalaparta always with the instrument itself, right? And in that I do believe that we txalapartaris more or less agree that the instrument, like Joxean Artze said recently, the instrument has no name … The Txlalaparta is what the interplay between the two is called. … by extension, you call Txlalaparta to the plank also, of course, right? (Borja, interview, May 2006).

Borja compared referring to the instrument as Txlalaparta akin to referring to a guitar as “the flamenco” or “the Rock ‘nd Roll,” “in any case we should say: ‘bring the plank, that we are going to play Txlalaparta’, right?” (Ibid.)

In February 2004, in Ireland, some txalapartariak from Iruñea, Kaiet Ezkerro and Mikel Hernandez, where invited by producer Tom Newman and singer and song writer Tommy Sands, to participate in the recording of the remake of Tubular Bells. Kaiet and Mikel had to play in synchronicity with the tune, but used as they were to binary rhythms, had some difficulty fitting into it. “But why do they have to play like that?” asked Tommy Sands intrigued at their insistence to perform in an interlocking fashion despite the difficulty. I asked them about playing without interlocking for that one occasion: “But then it is not Txlalaparta” Mikel replied outright (fieldwork, February 2004). The interlocking technique seems widely understood as the main boundary beyond which Txlalaparta is no more. It is not however the only boundary, as different interpretative communities take shape within “the world of Txlalaparta” on this issue alone. One exception to the rule that I encountered in the summer of 2006, to an extent, was the compositions by trikitilari Kepa Junkera who devoted one of his Txlalaparta classes in the Higher Music Centre of the Basque Country, Musikene, to this research (fieldwork, Donostia, May 2006). Junkera showed a different understanding of the interlocking fashion in which Txlalaparta is usually played, by allocating whole
series of beats of Txalaparta Zaharra, which would normally be shared by two
*txalapartariak*, to one player alone (a player would perform a long series of beats on her
own at the start of the piece for 8 consecutive bars –see appendix C).

“Variants” of Txalaparta

Juan Mari Beltran groups different manifestations of percussive sound making
by means of interlocking (mostly, but not always, including perpendicular percussion),
linked to communal work in a way or another, as “variants” of Txalaparta. This
conception of other forms of interlocking as “variants” of Txalaparta seems to have
been generally adopted by most participants in this research. “Txalaparta” seems to be
understood by Juan Mari Beltran, as per his published work, as a (music) practice
involving interlocking among two or more participants with work implements (or tools
that resemble them, in the case of Txalaparta as performed by the Zuaznabar and
Goikoetxea) in relation to the communal work (*auzolan*) that preceded such practice or
in which interlocking -music- happened. That Beltran speaks of “Txalaparta and its
variants,” rather than “tobera and its variants” and so forth, seems related to his
hypothesis on the origins of music (where it pertains to interlocking in the Basque
Country). The “variants,” according to Beltran, may be regarded “as different stages in
the development of a single process or form of music-making” (2004, 195), and though
he adds such stages may not be part of the same process or in the order he proposes,
Txalaparta is different from all other forms, according to him, in that it exemplifies the
final stage in the attainment of “music” within his evolutionary scheme: if other
practices take place within work, or afterwards using work implements, Txalaparta (as
performed by the Zuaznabar, the Goikoetxea or the Zabalegi) is performed with tools
that are work implements no more, since they have been modified for the purpose of
“making music.” Txalaparta (as performed in relation to cider-making) is thus at the top
of the evolution “from work rhythms to music” (ibid.)

It seems possible to infer, from the testimony of collectors (from Severo de
Aguirre in 1882 to Juan Mari Beltran and Josu Goiri), a tendency among those who
experienced the tradition as part of their lives, to refer to the interlocking fashion with
which certain tasks were undertaken by two or more people, as “txalaparta.” Beltran
points out this tendency in relation to the earliest collectors, who mention Txalaparta (as
played on wood in relation to the celebration of the cider-making) but also *tobera* by the
name of “txalaparta” (sometimes vice versa). It is also evident in his study of tobera that sometimes performers and those familiar with it referred to it as “txalaparta” (2004). This is not surprising since, as explained earlier in this chapter, Txalaparta, according to the old players, was not “the” instrument, but rather the interlocking fashion and improvised rhythmic structure of the piece. As per the emic discourse of those who knew the tradition before the 1960s and 70s, as collected by the Artze brothers, Beltran and Josu Goiri, and expressed by family relatives of the old players, it was the performatic process that was named, rather than the overall sound device on which Txalaparta was played. In the act of naming, attention is placed on the particular interaction of more than one individual engaged in the common pursue of the task at hand, the process by which separate members’ contribution, kept separate yet complementary in the performatic process (in their alternation), create a monophonic line of sound (this is most relevant in relation to the narrative of Txalaparta as related to work and its celebration).

The fact that the name of “txalaparta” is also used to refer to the tradition of the tobera (or toberak in plural) may lead to some confusion when it comes to defining the tradition for research purposes. I feel this might be the case in the relationship established between Txalaparta and church bells by Larruquert in the film Euskal Herri Musika, perhaps some of Josu Goiri’s initial work on the tradition (in relation to “calls”), or, more recently perhaps, the testimonies obtained in 2003 by Antxon Aguirre from two consultants from Hondarribia (Aguirre 2004), according to which Txalaparta was played by the fishermen skippers to let the former know it was time to go fishing, with different rhythmic patterns for different fishermen (this is presented in a short article that shows a lack of familiarity with Txalaparta and work done to date in relation to it).

Some of the calls presented by Josu Goiri as unknown and which Beltran argues the old txalapartariak did not sanction, seem to me to make sense when understood in this context in which the term “txalaparta” is used to refer to other forms and tasks where an interlocking technique is used among participants (regardless of whether participants referred to them as “calls” or not). This could be explained as a kind of “keying,” a concept used by Erving Goffman to explain the phenomenon by which

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1 It is striking that those who have sought to document the tradition of Txalaparta so far are mostly independent researchers. Like most practitioners of Txalaparta, its researchers too have often worked outside of the sanctioned structures until relatively recently.
understandings or terms from a certain familiar context are used to make sense of a less familiar one (Goffman 1997).

In relation to the performance of Txalaparta “before the work of turning the soil,” mentioned by Josu Goiri in his 1996 publication, it may be noted that the 1963 film *Ama Lur* features several men turning the soil with spades in an interlocking fashion. I cannot help but wonder has “interlocking” been referred to as “txalaparta” in relation to this task (even though, as is the case in relation to the celebration of the cider-making, interlocking took place during work and/or afterwards, rather than as “a call” to start the work). Though a participant passionate for the old player’s testimony explained to me that the consultant who provided the link between Txalaparta and the work of turning the soil had never worked in the fields (fieldwork, February 1999), it makes sense that the consultant could have known what the makers of *Ama Lur* knew, or that he could have learned about it from the film itself and then incorporate it into his discourse about “Txalaparta” (meaning “interlocking”).

The ambiguity created by the consideration of Txalaparta as a process, mixed with an attention to “the instrument,” is also maintained to an extent by Beltran, who does not always clarify to what kind of interlocking based tradition he is referring to by the name of “txalaparta.” It is necessary to point out, however, that there is in his approach an acknowledgement of the emic focus on interlocking among two or more performers through his consideration of other forms of interlocking related to communal work practices as “variants” of Txalaparta (i.e., *tobera*, *kirikoketa* or *ote jotzea*, and more recently, “*ttinbilin-ttanbalan,*” a problematic example which is discussed below).

As is the case in relation to the narratives that relate Txalaparta to the horse or present it as a calling device, there is a significant degree of speculation presented as certainty beyond the factual in Beltran’s reflections, as is exposed, for instance, by his work in relation to the practice of “*Ttinbilin-ttanbalan.*” Such reflections involve a deconstruction where certain elements (i.e., the belief system that contextualise the recorded practices) are also ignored. Fascinated by the frequency with which interlocking appears, or has appeared, in communal work and associated celebratory rituals in a past rural Basque Country, and led by what seems a strong attachment to his

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2 Some have also related Txalaparta to the witches Sabbath that are believed to have taken place in the caves of Zugarramurdi, where Beltran points out there was a lime kiln where “txalaparta” [or some form of interlocking] could have been played.
hypothesis on “the origins of music,” Beltran is determined to find interlocking among several players, and furthermore “music” (I discuss this later on), in practices for which there is no evidence of such technique. “Ttinbilin-ttanbalan,” presented as a “variant” of Txalaparta by Beltran, even though it was performed by a single player, is a practice recorded by Jesús Ramos in the Araitz valley (Nafarroa) that used to take place during the first celebration of the communal work of house building. The celebration, at which payment was settled, and which included a communal meal for the workers prepared by the householder, took place after the stone mason’s work was over (when the stone foundations, some main walls and basic beam structure had been laid out). At this celebration, the stone mason performed, on his own, a percussion piece by means of interlocking of both hands, beating, at ground floor level, two iron rods of different lengths hung vertically from above (tied to the main top horizontal beam of the house skeleton) with chisels of different lengths -and sound- as batons. As per this author’s ethnographic accounts, which he contextualises as protection rites, there seemed to be a relationship between the stone mason’s dexterity at work and ttinbilin-ttanbalan performance virtuosity (Ramos 1995). Beltran presents a hypothetical performance among two and then three players for this tradition which he wants to believe may have been played in such a way, alas forgotten, in his 2004 publication⁵. In the space of five years, this hypothesis becomes for him a certainty, as evidenced in the track of alleged ttinbilin-ttanbalan included in the CD that accompanies the 2009 publication Txalaparta. This track features a performance by two players in an interlocking fashion. This apparent confusion might be, nonetheless, intentional, and part of a process where the “ought to be” is consciously brought into being⁴.

Though as per current academic standards Beltran’s functional and evolutionary approach work in relation to the “origins of music” seems questionable⁵, it is not at all exempt from interest in terms of “performance”: it does not only seek to explain, it

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³ The argument presented to propose that interlocking between two or more players might have been the case for ttinbilin-ttanbalan in the past, is that similar practices (toberak or Swiss “zimmermannsstreich” – interlocked?) where performed in an interlocking fashion among many, and that the name is likely to be the spoken rhythmic pattern of the performance, somewhat resembling “kirikoketa” or “ttakun ttakun” (Txalaparta Zaharra), therefore his hypothetical stone mason’s performance “seems likely” (no players of this practice were left when the practice was encountered by Ramos).

⁴ The entry for this track states, however, that ttinbilin-ttanbalan was performed after making the roof of a newly built house, which does not seem congruent with Ramos explanation nor its quoting by Beltran in earlier work (2004).

⁵ Perhaps a study in the line of possible links between the interlocking technique among two or more people, work hierarchy structures (power relationships) and social values and beliefs could prove more fruitful (if questions of structure or meaning occupy the researcher’s endeavour, that is).
seeks to construct. Beyond explanations of what such traditions might have been, what matters is what they are now, by force of doing. What this performance constructs is “music” by means of interlocking, the latter considered as “an example of our particularity and authenticity which links the traditional with the modern” (Beltran 2009, 128). Interlocking is “authentic” because it is a universal, as seems to be the message in Beltran’s work, which only the Basques in contemporary Europe have been able to preserve. It is universal and it originated in a rural Euskal Herria (traditional rural societies of Africa and Asia have also preserved it, as highlighted in Beltran’s examples). Now, as in the so called musical nationalism of the big classic composers of the first half of the century, the peasants are (or were) the repository of the authenticity of the nation (Mao was not born yet, but some antecedents had been somehow rehearsed back then). Tradition is in motion, tradition is now: Txalaparta is contemporary. In this approach, Txalaparta is basically the Basque term for “interlocking between two or more musicians/singers.” In 2006 Beltran explained to me he liked to sing the Txalaparta rhythms, much like tabla percussionists in the Indian Carnatic tradition. Like Erlantz Auzmendi wished for the recognition afforded to the guru, I felt this was another instance where comparison might have been effected for the sake of legitimation, besides explanatory purposes.

In relation to the interlocking technique, Beltran highlights how the new txalapartariak’s endeavour to incorporate the other “variants” in their performances led to performatic modifications: “When we became aware, for instance, of the kirikoketa or the ote jotzea performed by three, we also started to play among three. The same happened when we started to work with the ote-jotzea performed by four” (Beltran 2009, 106).

An element that was stressed by several participants as essential in their understanding of Txalaparta (a part from the interlocking technique among players) was improvisation.
Improvisation

Hegoak ebaki banizkio
nerea izango zen
ez zuen alde egingo
Bainan horrela
ez zen gehiago txoria izango
eta nik,
taxoria nuen maite.

If I had cut its wings
it would be mine
it wouldn’t have flown away.
But then
it would not be a bird anymore
and I,
I loved the bird.
(Lyrics of “Txoria Txori”).

[T]he lyrics are by Artze, and the music is mine … People don’t know anymore. Once my sister told me: “Listen, I’ve been told that song is traditional, but isn’t it yours?,” she said to me. “The music is mine, but the lyrics are by Artze! You’ve been told it is traditional?!” (Mikel Laboa, interview, May 2006).

“To make it into a musical instrument is to limit it, it must be able to fly” stated Josu Zabala, at our interview in June 2006, discussing his incorporation of Txalaparta in Hertzainak’s song 564 (chapter 5).

The spirit of Artze’s poem, the song above, which has enamoured so many Basques across the ideological spectrum, and which has been so widely used in written and audiovisual introductions to the Basque Country, seems to impregnate his and Laboa’s understanding of Txalaparta (already present since the start in Ez Dok Amairu) to which a number of participants in this research ascribed. Participants generally understood improvisation as an inherent part of Txalaparta\(^7\) even though their groups might perform pre-programmed pieces as well, generally for the purpose of adapting Txalaparta to composed tunes also performed with other instruments.

Improvisation is generally based on prearranged structures, relying occasionally (but not always) on agreed upon signals, or short spoken dialogue while playing (as was

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\(^7\) I am excepting Etxak, about whose approach to improvisation I am unsure. I understand nonetheless that composition is given preference by this group over improvisation, if the latter happens at all.
the case sometimes with one of the groups in Iruñea I worked mostly with), for the introduction of different rhythmic structures, or effects, such as change in dynamics (volume, tempo), incorporation of other materials or planks into the piece, or a rehearsed ending. The more two txalapartariak play together, the greater their mutual understanding and synergy in the progress of the piece, as can be expected.

Within the general consensus on improvisation, I encountered different sensibilities in relation to what it meant and the extent to which Txalaparta is or may be compromised by its loss. Such sensibilities coexisted fluidly in many participating txalapartariak, where some might emerge as preferences, rather than as clear-cut personal ascriptions separating people. One such sensibility disclosed an advocacy for a Txalaparta that is free when incorporated to composed pieces involving other instruments, or that is not subdued to other instruments, but the opposite. Reflections on freedom are thus projected onto a Txalaparta that is not subjected to a pre programmed tune, to a metronome, to a fixed beat, that is not “accompaniment” and that -for some- should not be:

I believe that the Txalaparta, … if there is a form in which it fully shows all its expression, that is when it is alone, when no one limits you, right? When no one limits the rhythmic play, right? I mean, no one is imposing a beat and so forth on you. When everything depends only on the play between the two that perform, right? When you have that elasticity (Borja, interview, May 2006).

This sensibility is exemplified, for instance, in the particular case of the Artze brothers within Avant Garde experimental compositions, such as Luis de Pablo’s avant-garde’s composition “Zurezko Olerkia” (Wooden Poem) with the Artze brothers, whose Txalaparta was only given restrictions of time duration and entrance. Common examples put by different txalapartariak were those performances at which Jexux Artze and his partner perform an improvised Txalaparta that is followed by Iñaki Xalbador also improvising on the piano in a jazzistic style and Laboa’s own improvised experimental singing and guitar (such as Laboa’s recording Lekeito 9 “Mugak” (1994), where Jexux plays with Joseba Urzelai). Another example where Txalaparta is not subdued to the composition is Itsasoa ta Lehorra (Laboa 1998):

It’s that Mikel’s respect for Txalaparta is so great…!
...It is a way of saying “I am going to integrate the Txalaparta in a song but as Txalaparta rather than as a rhythmic sequence that is accompanying the flute, or the guitar, or my voice. No. Txalaparta as such. Respecting the instrument as such: free, anarchistic, loose…, let it do whatever it feels like it…, and I try to do something with my voice on top of it” [Emphatic pause] The proposal is there! It is a daring proposal. Very bold. But it is there. And it is recorded. [Emphatic pause] And it is a way so that later, if someone wants to develop the instrument, or things with that instrument, it is a reference that there was already a man that, respecting the instrument as such, put in there a guitar, or a flute, or voice on top of it, but did not limit the instrument at all. The instrument remained free. [Emphatic pause] It’s a terrific proposal (Andoni Aleman, interview, July 2006).

“It is a very elastic Txalaparta … there is a beat that is continuously evolving” stated Borja. In such compositions, he added, Txalaparta is “completely free.” Allusions to the idea of freedom were common among participating txalapartariak when discussing improvisation. Erlantz Auzmendi, for instance, stressed the “surprise element” in Txalaparta playing, which he argued was “inherent to freedom” (fieldwork, February 1999). Metaphors like “limiting,” “forcing,” “submitting,” ”subduing,” “tying,” were often used to refer to a Txalaparta that is fitted into a composed tune. Borja further referred to the beat imposed by the metronome, “something that is dead, that doesn’t even follow you,” as “authoritarian.” On the other hand, “freedom” (and “anarchistic” by some txalapartariak) was used to refer to the opposite. “Among us we perhaps more often use to do the opposite, right?, to try and hold a more or less regular beat,” Borja (trained with Juan Mari Beltran) continued, explaining that in this way the other instrumentalists in the performance could play with prescribed time signatures as they usually do.

I remember when we started, me on the guitar and two friends with the Txalaparta. Damn, it was impossible, it was impossible for us to fit into each other’s rhythm! And it is because, of course, from all our life playing Txalaparta alone to all in a sudden having to force ourselves into a specific tempo… and damn! We realised it was a very difficult exercise. Today everyone does it.

Borja added, in relation to the Txalaparta Party Aparta (where Txalaparta is combined with Techno and DJing):
…I understand it like this, like an exercise. An exercise. That for instance doesn’t inspire me that much because … I am not free to play whatever I feel like with the other one, I cannot take off and do what I want, I cannot play to try and break it [the rhythm] … There is a third one that rules you. And besides, when it is a recording or something like that, which is dead, which doesn’t even listen to you… you are very forced! For me, yes, there we are already in the limit of even considering it Txalaparta.

Borja, who expressed himself eloquently, went further in defining an understanding of improvisation that many participants in this researched shared:

There’s who says that just because the measure is shared, it already is Txalaparta. I don’t think it is so simple. It is much more than that! …: That is already that one [of both txalapartariak] does not depend on the other, but simply that I am filling half [of the measure] and you are filling the other half. For me that is not enough to consider that Txalaparta (interview, May 2006).

Intrinsic to Txalaparta, within its improvised nature, is the challenge between both txalapartariak, a challenge that, not subjected to a prescribed beat, leads to what Borja termed “elasticity.” A challenge, or “play,” as participants often referred to it (in the sense of testing limits and having fun, so to speak), that consists in the creation / increase and decrease of tension in the piece by means of advancing or delaying one’s strokes (increasing or decreasing one’s sonic space) in relation to the other player’s strokes/sonic space. As both players test and move each other’s limits, the beat changes as a consequence throughout the piece (depending on how preoccupied performers may be with maintaining a regular beat, for instance). This challenge and interdependence, part of Txalaparta Zaharra, is often maintained in Txalaparta Berria, despite the prescribed role of itakun formally disappearing. I witnessed some hypnotic pieces that led to exciting, thrilling moments when both players would end up with the striking makila paused, looking at each other, action frozen, for a few seconds, or longer, while we, those watching, were held in suspense as to who of the two was going to strike first

8 Some participants observed, nonetheless, that in Txalaparta Berria there is always an intentional or non intentional enactment of the regular role of base (as a kind of figurative itakun) by one player, while the other, akin to the role of herrena, endeavours to more creative play. These roles could sift during the piece, or be adopted in a consistent manner throughout the given performance, or in all the performances of a given couple. In the case of the Artze brothers, for instance, Andoni Alemán, or Josu Goiri, noticed that Jexux was always the solid base on which JosAnton, whose style I would describe as highly intuitive, explored free rhythms (fieldwork 2003-2006).
(this happened with the two groups from Iruñea I mainly (field)worked with and the Sorzabalbere txalapartariak at the workshop I attended in June 2006).

This sensibility where a preference was expressed for a free Txalaparta that does not follow the fixed beat and tempo of a composition when combined with other instruments, and where the challenge between both txalapartariak is maintained, is also exemplified in the way many young txalapartariak incorporated it into instrumental pieces in the 1980s and early 1990s (chapter 5). This sensibility seemed to go with a stress on free rhythm to an extent (especially in relation to JosAnton Artze), a stress on feeling and also non submission to structures. One of the groups I worked with more closely in Iruñea, of strong anarchist leanings, for whom understandings of Txalaparta in relation to the horse, improvisation, and the importance of the ttakun beat (which I explain soon) were important, used to stress an “anarchistic” nature in Txalaparta. Members of the group also expressed, however, a level of frustration with their own lack of organisation and certain inability to undertake projects and make things happen for them (this was a group whose members, with some exceptions, I felt were very critical of the Independentist Left and any indication of institutionalisation in fact). Jokin, a member of this group, used to tell me that they would meet to get some project going but in the end, after spending hours talking, nothing would happen. This same feeling of a need for organisation that was perceived as lacking, was stressed to me in relation to their outlook on Txalaparta by one of its members: “Txalaparta is so anarchistic! We want to put some bit of order there, and it is so difficult! But we kind of have to” (Gaizka, fieldwork March-June 2003). Jokin in fact, explained to me that they were considering getting one of them to enrol in Beltran’s Txalaparta classes in the Txalaparta Eskola of Hernani, so that s/he could then teach Beltran’s techniques to the rest of the group. “Txalaparta is so anarchistic!” Gaizka repeated to me again some days later, enthused by the nature of Txalaparta, which seemed to mirror that of so many txalapartariak I have met. In May 2004, Harkaitz Martinez explained to me his idea of creating an association of txalapartariak (like there are of txistu players,bertsolariek, dancers, and so forth), which was put forward at the Txalaparta Festa of that year, and which did not encounter much enthusiasm. Attending txalapartariak found the idea of a formal association alien to them and it has not been effected to this date.

This understanding of Txalaparta as free, not to be domesticated by fitting it into a metronome beat nor to be incorporated as accompaniment in performance, which in its
extreme resulted in an incorporation of Txalaparta to musical pieces that txalapartariak like Beltran considered “ornamental”, seemed to appear, in the discourses I encountered, in conjunction with the narrative of the horse (though not always). I also encountered it in conjunction with an explicit understanding of Txalaparta as ritualistic, as opposed to “musical,” (I discuss this later), or in conjunction with both (narrative of the horse and “ritual-like” character). Adherents of improvisation that used to ascribe to the narrative of the horse (usually older participants, closer or past their 40s, who would have encountered Txalaparta in the 1970s and 1980s) did so in a discourse that takes inspiration from nature through an imitation of its free rhythms (within an acceptance, or coexistence, of other narratives also). This seemed to be linked to a preference for the unpitched sounds of wood, as opposed to tempered versions of Txalaparta. Some txalapartariak took very seriously the image of the horse:

If you go to the mountains at night, or during the day (there is less noise at night) and you listen to the pottokas walk, and you see them walk, run, do a bit of everything, you’ll see that it is never a regular thing, because in the mountains… [beats on the table imitating a horse trot that breaks every now and then randomly], and that too is Txalaparta … I am going to go with a student who is very young. I’m not going to tell him “let’s go there because you know that horses…” No. I say “let’s play in the mountains tonight,” and I’ll see what goes through his mind (Laurent, interview, June 2006).

Bertsolaritza

“We are the bertsolaris of Txalaparta” stated Beñat, member of the Txalaparta group with a more declared preference for improvisation at the time (2003) as it seemed to me, the group of a more open anarchist orientation (and whose members were generally more mature) of the two I spent more time with, in Iruña (Nafarroa).

Sung improvised oral poetry, bertsolaritza, highly regarded in Basque culture, performed in Euskara⁹ and necessarily linked to work for the salvation and promotion of

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⁹ With some recent occasional exceptions.
the language within the struggle\textsuperscript{10}, did not only emerge as a metaphor in Beñat’s spontaneous statement, but also, I felt, as a deeply interiorised strategy in txalapartariak such as the Sorzabalbere, from Irun (a strategy employed by Jexux Artze, with whom the former collaborated on occasion).

Bertsolaritza performances mostly take the form of wit competitions involving duets whose members improvise sung verses against each other, based on a theme provided for the bertsolariak to improvise on. Such improvisations are based on a set of prescribed rhythmic and metric structures (to an existing tune), which, considering Beñat’s metaphor, may be compared to an extent to the rhythmic structures and techniques developed by txalapartariak at their workshops (or learned at the Txalaparta Eskola of Hernani, for instance), which form the basis upon which they improvise, including, in the case of participating txalapartariak, prepared endings and perhaps also prepared starts. At some events whose primary theme and motive is not that of bertsolaritza (such as the Txalaparta Festa, or an event on support of Basque prisoners, for instance) there may be greater cooperation among bertsolariak, as bertsolari Andoni Egaña states (Egaña 2005). In such cases, the roles taken by both performers, as described by Egaña, seem somehow similar to those of the Ttakun and the Herren in Txalaparta Zaharra: “[O]ne of them will take the responsibility for putting up arguments for improvised oral confrontation: looking for themes, opening up new ideas, and changing the melody” (ibid, 340). This bears a resemblance to the role of Herren, who provides a changing rhythmic structure to the endless sequence of ttakun beats, and who, in the pieces by Pello Zuaznabar and Ramon Goikoetxea, seems more openly engaged in the search of different sounds in the plank (perhaps just a trait of Pello Zuaznabar, who used to perform the role of Herren at such pieces). The other bertsolari, Egaña continues, “tries to follow the ‘script’ and sticking to it, its theme, its arguments and its airs, tries to respond accordingly and to the best of her or his ability, always remembering that the most arduous work is that of his companion” (ibid.) The latter bertsolari role bears some resemblance to the fix role of Ttakun.

\textsuperscript{10} Basque ethnomusicologist Denis Laborde explains that the first bertsolaritza championship after the Spanish Civil War (after 1936 in fact) was organised months after the creation of ETA in 1959 within a spirit of defiance and an emerging cultural revival, at a time when Euskara was still banned. The conflict was reflected on the improvised lyrics of bertsolaris, and in 1968 bertsolaritza was banned again by the Francoist Regime in relation to the first deaths of the struggle (though championships continued clandestinely). The first legal championship of bertsolaritza would not take place until 1980 (Laborde 1996).
Participating txalapartariak who established a comparison with bertsolaritza did not elaborate on detailed resemblances, however. The elements of a duet occupied in an improvised dialogic challenge (verbal or percussive), is what was brought up in conversation by txalapartariak who, as was often the case, approached the tradition through an initial interest for learning Euskara as adults (or in conjunction with that), in an “euskaltzale” (Euskara loving) environment. In their transmission of Txalaparta at their workshops, the Sorzabalbere focus on the communication of sentiment rather than on learning “emotionally disengaged” technique. Sentiment, if deeply felt, should guide the improvisation. This is achieved by similar means to those used at bertsolaritza events, at which bertsolariak are provided with a theme or a brief story scenario based on which they shall extemporise their verses:

For instance, we are there on Monday [with the Sorzabalbere] and they tell us: “you are going to play the two of you. You are in the port of Ziburun, and a ship is arriving, and you play for it” Well, we do a non prepared piece, and then they tell us “well, ok, now the same boat has left the fish and is leaving, and you play because it is leaving” (Laurent, interview, June 2006).

The strategy of setting up a theme to guide the improvisation of the piece, as in the example provided by Laurent, student of the Sorzabalbere, was replicated by other txalapartariak who had not trained with them, as the group from Iruñea of an ezker abertzale (Independentist Left) orientation I worked mostly with, who used to dedicate their tokatas (“Txalaparta pieces” in their colloquial speech) to different people at the start, without communicating it to anyone else necessarily, but just for the players themselves to have an inspirational theme. I found out when I approached one of the players after a performance, and he told me casually that they had dedicated it to me. A while later the other player told me the same thing: “we dedicate the tokatas to people many times” (Kemen, fieldwork 2004). I was struck that they would not announce it nor inform the “honouree” beforehand (not even afterwards necessarily, as they explained).

Koldo Sorzabalbere: …in the classes and so on, yes, we try that, right?, with a view to enriching ourselves and enriching the instrument a little, for it to help a little to create that, those improvisation needs that you have … you have to set goals, right? … to create a bertsso [improvised verse] somehow, in the way of playing … of saying to someone [to two players]: “listen, you are the mouse, and you are the cat,” right?, “and let’s see, how are ye going to do it. Here. … If one is the mouse
and the other is the cat, how are ye going to play,” right? And then, well, the mouse starts “tatata,” and the cat follows him, and “ta, ta, ta, ta”; and then what you are creating somehow is a game of the mouse and the cat, and what you are doing is that you are paying more attention to the other’s sound variations, to the changes of rhythm… I mean, you are not thinking of “tata – tata – tata – tata – takata takata – takata takata” [sung with a monotonous voice in a mechanical way], which is what is always played [by other txalapartariak].

Xabi: It gets to an stage in which you can teach technique and one can learn the technique, but that is the end. … you take away the music scores and the musician is over. In this case it is the same a little … You can teach all the technique that you want, well or bad, and in the end one may end up with very good technique. If he is not able to do anything, [at least] he has a good technique, but he is not able of transmitting anything.

The Sorzabalbere explained that some of their students felt intimidated by their style and preferred a technique based Txalaparta such as that taught by Hernani txalapartariak. This was also mentioned to me by Laurent (who despite praising free rhythm and JosAnton Artze’s style, expressed a need for the type of training provided “by Hernani,” as the Txalaparta Eskola where Beltran teaches, and his former students and now teachers, were usually referred to). Laurent expressed a perceived gap in the Sorzabalbere’s teaching of Txalaparta: he said he could not express himself as expected through Txalaparta for the lack of a technical base, which the former had acquired through their own weekly experimentation for 24 years (in 2006). Xabi Sorzabalbere stated that with his and Koldo’s style “you have to improvise, you have to produce things from inside; … it is easier [for others] to have ready made patterns, and measures, than to dedicate yourself to start doing things, right?, to see what comes out of you” (interview, June 2006). Unlike other txalapartariak described earlier, the Sorzabalbere promoted, among their students, the formation of stable Txalaparta couples: “…that is something that we try to transmit, right?, they shall try to find a partner or someone whom to play with and develop themselves, right?, because otherwise the instrument [meaning their playing] ends up very limited! … But of course, if one is changing of partner everyday… pf! In the end… let’s say that you are missing a great deal of that power of transmission [communication] of the instrument, right?” (Xabi Sorzabalbere, interview, June 2006).
Our old culture is unwritten [pre literate], not written; like our traditions [“lege zabarre”: “old laws”] and literature, which started to be known in written form in the 16th century … Our original literature is the bertsolari’s, who doesn’t write his songs, because they emerge as he sings. Our literature lives in the lips of the bertsolari. The literature of other countries remains in books, like water in a well. Our literature is not a well but a spring. Other literatures are static, ours is dynamic. We don’t need wells of literature because we have springs and where there is a source, a well is not required. The bertsolari is a source of verses that flows constantly. Like Xenpelar said [famous 19th c. bertsolari]: “I improvise a party whenever I feel like it” (Lekuona in Larruquert 1978).

**Xabi Sorzabal bere:** That’s why there isn’t [wasn’t] literature in Euskadi, because things were transmitted orally. And how were things taught? The alboka was taught: ‘you stay here, I stay here…’ and they learned. Or the pandero [tambourine], or the couplets of the trikitixas, or those things, they were learned like this, by oral transmission, from some to others. Then, this [Txalaparta] also somehow, right? We have learned it that way! There is not a book that explains… Plus that is impossible! There’s who has produced one! … Juan Mari and the ones of Sestao… From him I can understand it, but the rest of mortals that play Txalaparta, how do they understand that! Or do you go to a university of Txalaparta to be taught that?, the theory, [and] you spend fifty thousand hours learning that…

![Figure 4.4: Example of an exercise for Txalaparta from the home produced book Arikutet Bilduma (collection of exercises), by the Txalaparta group Sestao Tx. Different lengths of vertical lines refer to the intensity of the stroke. Dotted lines indicate silence. The numbers above the vertical lines refer to the different planks used. Brackets contain phrases to be repeated the number of times indicated by the number that precedes the brackets. The way of beating the plank is also notated in other scores, which include other signs to indicate other materials added to the instrument, etc. Source: Sestao Tx Eskola 2006.](image-url)
Koldo: But that would not be the Txalaparta any more!

Xabi: … Take that away from someone who has learned with that: "Improvise.” Someone who has been learning with music scores, all his life, take away his scores [Emphatic pause]: "Now improvise.” And at the start… completely lost. Then, the Txalaparta has that: it is an improvisation instrument. People will approach it in other ways, but it still is an improvisation instrument.

Koldo: … the ancestors did not use in the Txalaparta any kind of music score, right?, they were always dedicated to the sensations a little, right?, and to play and to transmit something (interview, June 2006).

The aforementioned improvisation strategy in relation to the transmission of sentiment, emerged in discourse in conjunction with a certain rejection of music literacy in the form of music theory or composition (not necessarily a rejection for accommodating to other instruments): “We have no idea of sol-fa, and I think we don’t even want to learn. …We don’t know music [sol-fa],” stated Xabi Sorzabalbera, “no idea of music, nor sol-fa, nor…” said Koldo. Then Xabi added, as we broke into laughter: “No idea! You give me a music score and I make you a paper bird!” As Oteiza put it, with not much compassion perhaps:

There are two fundamental and opposed styles in order to follow the course of a river: moving on along the shore or steeping into the river. The most culturally backward is the style of he who goes along the shore. He is afraid, he forces himself to reason. He counts, measures and supports himself, he secures himself in space. It is the modern style (paradox intended) in the western history of art. It has two variants: the Classical, which does not move away from the shore, and the Baroque, which dares to take some shortcut, always on land. Thus classicisms are extended through time in Europe by alternating these two ways of walking, with an art that is inconclusive. …. However, in the Basque Neolithic a definitive conclusion is reached: with the empty cromlech [megalithic structure] a new style is launched for life and for art, which is transformed from cult into secondary and popular. In this style, man steps into the river.

In this style there is no more need to reason. It is free, temporal, vital, non logical, thoughtless, improvising, instantaneous and continuous. It is visible in many Basque traditions and we might be able to unhide it in everyone (as well as interpret its hiding) (Oteiza 1994 [1963], 112).
“Urgun” is how the herrena was also called before (it means “water place”) because he is the one that moves the water of the ttakun player (Simon Goikoetxea, interview, July 2006).

**Pierre:** We have a super free instrument, no instrument is more free nearly in the world of music, and we put it in a small corner to put it in records, ha! [*with disappointment*] to make it fit in simpler musics… What I like the most in the Txalaparta is precisely this: it is a free instrument for improvisation. And to put it in a little box, I don’t feel like it … but when I see such amazing txalapartaris as the Ugarte brothers [from Hernani] or like Oreka Tx, or… who play the same thing two, three, five, twenty times… …They are so technical and…, I don’t know, it almost seems to me that they almost don’t allow themselves the right to live free! But I respect the work they do, because I’m not able to do it, first of all.

**María:** But would you like to do it?

**Pierre:** No. Neither … But I find it interesting, as work [on Txalaparta] it is interesting. That’s it. Then we have to consider … that we [txalapartariak in Iparralde] are more influenced by the school [style] of the Artze, this freer school, [which is] more poetic…, more melancholic also… (interview, June 2006).

An advocacy for improvisation was linked, in some discourses, to orality vs. literacy, that is, to a rejection of notation, whether sol-fa or that developed by Beltran (or rather, a rejection of notated works and exercises for Txalaparta). Improvisation is advocated in opposition, or preferred to the use of Txalaparta as accompaniment for a tune and/or other instruments. *Txalapartariak* who identified strongly with the improvised characteristic of Txalaparta, felt uncomfortable about the so called “melodic txalaparta” (often referred to as “xylophone” by participants) developed by Oreka Tx and thoroughly adopted by Kepa Junkera’s Txalaparta group, Etxak. This is a tempered Txalaparta where the whole western scale is present in 13 planks (sometimes less), as per a member of Etxak, and where melody and composition takes precedence, subduing the improvisatory qualities of the tradition to the tune to be performed, compromising spontaneity. The rejection, in greater or lesser degree, of this so called “melodic Txalaparta,” was clearly noticeable in participants from Iparralde, who were also more attuned to the Artze brothers’ style or Basque musicians from the region such as singer Beñat Achiary, who has also incorporated Txalaparta (by the Artze brothers) to some of his improvisatory artistic work. A dislike for “the xylophone” was also expressed by
most participants in this research (players or not). This tempered instrument was described as very destabilizing by one of the members of Etxak, who felt that the access to certain notes/planks from a preceding remote one, as imposed by the melody, made little sense in terms of ergonomics (which he expressively enacted for me in a kind of acrobatics). The imposition of a melody interfered with the interlocking dynamics of Txalaparta he was accustomed to.

A plank has so many different sounds within itself…! Am I going to sacrifice that to get a C or a D? And all those sounds, and that search… which is perhaps the beauty when you start to play the instrument…, that depending on where you strike, with what part of the stick, and what strength you do it with, [the sound] is going to be in a certain way…; and there are many times that without moving away from the same plank you are going to produce a series of six strokes which sound differently! And that’s the beauty of it! And sacrifice all that to get whatever note … It is much easier and much more simple, and much more logical, to take an instrument that one single person can play… I do not see the process of evolution through that path … If someone does it, look, perfect, ok, fine, continue… and at least you will help for the aesthetics of the instrument and the planks and the stands to remain through time, but… that is not Txalaparta (Andoni Aleman, interview, June 2006)

The melodic Txalaparta, for me, uh…. it makes no sense. It is very interesting, right?, but there is a melodic Txalaparta already, its name is xylophone, the balafon… or the marimba, and it is very nice, but what interests me is the communication with the other txalapartari, and I am not interested in the setting of melodic or rhythmic limits for oneself (Pierre, interview, June 2006).

Most txalapartari participants in this research were favourable to the tuning of the planks (according to a western scale) to accompany certain compositions, despite a dislike for the aforementioned “melodic txalaparta,” for the sake of adding variety and interest to their performances, and to be able to play Txalaparta along other instruments. For some participants, however, this was a transgression where, despite interlocking, Txalaparta was finally no more. Though in a kind of “live and let live attitude,” it was not drastically rejected, it awoke concern:
Any proposal that is well crafted deserves all the respect I presume, and deserves attention when someone presents it, right? But I wouldn’t go in that direction (Andoni Aleman, interview, June 2006).

I also encountered, in relation to “limits,” a different discourse, represented by Josu Goiri in an attempt, I felt, to rescue two of his students from the past, as they expressed fear that Txalaparta Zaharra might be displaced by the tempered programmed version presented by Oreka Tx in their record *Quercus Endorphina* (2001)

…that one, of course, is another link! …they “prostitute” the Txalaparta, in between inverted commas. But they are creating a new use. Then, an instrument is defined by how it is used. Then, yes, if you compare it with before, it is a prostitution! If you compare it! But if you go and say ‘no, an instrument is what you do, and now this is what is done’, ok, then, like very interesting people, like Oreka Tx are, in this context, and with a lot of respect for the instrument, they are doing this. Perfect. And on top of that they are giving it some very interesting capacities and reach. That is an instrument! An instrument is to play, not to get stuck there in “this was done before, let’s repeat what was done before.” No. Now is now … Basically, what is important is not the [fixed] image, but the vibration that is being transmitted, and Oreka Tx are very good for that (interview, June 2003).

A preference for improvisation disclosed a discourse of a more romantic and poetic tone than that upheld by more methodical and technique focused *txalapartariak* (I did not feel the latter abounded among participants in this research, who perhaps might not have been a representative selection of such tendency, but perhaps among members of Sestao Tx to a certain extent, and participants trained in the Musika Eskola of Hernani). A more ritual like character seemed to be revealed also in relation to a clear preference for improvised conceptions of Txalaparta, in a way that I would find hard to describe from an approach other than an experiential, phenomenological one: I felt, on listening to these *txalapartariak*’s performances or in the way they spoke of Txalaparta during the interviews (in their own space, whether their house or their place of rehearsal), in tune with an intuited transcendence of some kind, especially in relation to *txalapartariak* like those from one of the groups from Nafarroa I worked mostly with.
(who learned Txalaparta, among other, from Erlantz Auzmendi), JosAnton Artze or the Sorzabalbere from Irun (whose rhythm during the interview reminded me of Artze’s: paused, calmed and centered, as if dwelling, at that moment, in an empty space of presence).

*Txalapartiariak* (with some exceptions pointing again at the world music industry), seemed to share the understanding, in the combination of their spoken discourse and their performance (as behaviour), that experimentation and an occasional breech of perceived limits in relation to Txalaparta was acceptable (as per their track record as *txalapartiariak*) so long as there was a kind of anchoring in Txalaparta Zaharra by means of the first lessons of its transmission. Notwithstanding his *bikote*’s, Gerla Beti’s, programmed performances as accompaniment for Tomas San Miguel’s compositions, Erlantz Auzmendi (adept of improvisation) insisted in the importance of “feeling the essence with one plank” like those used by the old players, with its deep interiorising vibrations, as essential to the training of any *txalaparta*. This advocacy for a simplicity and sobriety of Txalaparta in 2003 by someone like Erlantz Auzmendi, who had experimented so much with it and transgressed its limits before (despite claiming that he always had the acceptance of the old ones) seemed mirrored, somehow, in Borjas’s experience of the Txalaparta Festa, who observed that Txalaparta alone was becoming a point of return for many *txalapartiariak*, after all the experimentation undertaken with it:

...it seems as if, in an unspoken manner, we are all arriving to a conclusion, right?, and it is: if it is about coming to play to the Txalaparta Festa, let it be, above all, just Txalaparta. If you notice, there were very few instruments yesterday [at the outdoor concert of the festival] apart from the Txalaparta itself … I recall we only saw the *txirula*, the *trikitixa*, and a little of voice also, yet if we refer back to about ten years ago, it was the very opposite of that. …In truth, there has also been a very daring attitude in that sense of wanting to do too much and in the end… neglect a little the Txalaparta itself. Then, it seems that with this we are all reaching a little, without saying it, one conclusion, and that is that the Txalaparta is in all its expression above all when it is alone, or at least when it is not hindered too much with something [else] (interview, May 2006).
On a par with an advocacy for improvisation, a need to evoke feeling that was understood as contrary to a tendency toward speed, was also stressed, generally by older txalapartariak. Laurent insisted on the need to listen to horses in their natural habitat as a way of interiorising irregular rhythms, as opposed to playing fast for the sake of audience effect: “In the mountain it is very different, it is balance, unbalance…” Laurent elaborated on the different steps of the pottoka that could be interiorised by the txalapartari to inform his playing.

“The mastery of velocity in the development of the piece is proposed as an exercise of great importance” explains Erlantz Auzmendi in the report of his classes for the Eibar Txalaparta habilitation course (1993/4). He continues:

A great majority of txalapartaris start playing and can only run faster and faster, without being able to hold the reins of this bolter horse (Erlantz Auzmendi in Several authors 1994).

“Let’s play fast, that’s what people like” recalled a participant in relation to a busking experience in the street (trying to making an earning, a theme in this research that kept emerging). Beltran also expressed a concern for this tendency to play fast when I visited him at the Herri Musikaren Txoko in Oiartzun in February 1999.

Sometimes it is played very mechanised as well, I don’t like it. Too mechanised. Very “ta ta ta ta ta!” and to look nice, right? To look nice… It is not about looking nice. What has to be made nice is the sound, and what comes out of there… And to be able to play as it must be done. I don’t know. There’s people who… (it happens in everything, in music and in everything, everywhere) [who seek] to produce a good impression, to be spectacular, right? … One does not have to seek the spectacular, there has to be a distance between the audience, you, between… everything, right? A distance, a movement that does not express. I mean, Brecht used to say that, the distance with the public in theatre also, right? You must not say “oh my heart” and take your hand to your heart! [laughing] … You do it [play] for yourself, and the audience is there, and let them appreciate if you do it well or bad … with that distance … Not to seek to move the audience, not to get to… Let [the audience] be moved if [the performance] is good! If you do things well, let it be moved (Mikel Laboa, interview, May 2006).
Edorta, in his 30s, observed a tendency contrary to some extent to the rejection of competition and stress on horizontal relationships promoted among txalapartariak, or despite of it, and highlighted a connection between playing at a fast tempo and a competitive spirit:

…all what we saw in Hernani [at the 20th Txalaparta Festa in 2006], everything, is based on it, right?: let’s see who can fit in more strokes than who … There are so many strokes that the space… -the time, the voids, people play very little with all that, with very slow [wide] spaces… For me the most difficult in playing Txalaparta is to play slow. To play “txala” slow but with weight, and that the person that plays, you can see, and you can perceive [that they have] that calmness, that serenity, that… For me it is much more difficult to transmit what you want at that moment, and succeed, than to play [with great technique]. To seek to do this [the latter], which is to fit 6 strokes instead of 4, and to be able to do this…, it is like a skill, like you were a juggler that you can do the more the better, right?: It is a bit the idea of who is faster, who fits more strokes, who has… right? And, well, in the end it is a little what society transmits also, I mean, what is there. I mean, the Txalaparta adapts to what is there in society, to what we are as a society, right?, and we function like this in everything, we are competitive … and besides the value is [put] in that, I mean, it is like “if I can buy a car of three million instead of two, I do it, and I am going to demonstrate…” And we are like this in general. And in music and in the “txala” it happens too, right? But there are also very beautiful things that can be done then [with Txalaparta] (interview, May 2006).

[Oreka Tx] are very good, but… because they go very, very fast, whatever you like, but for me that is not Txalaparta. For me Txalaparta is more what Artze does, the Artze brothers. It is very strange what they do, that is clear, but… that is the Txalaparta, [there] it may be seen that the Txalaparta shows a story, that it feels something… for me that is the Txalaparta (Mattin, 19 years old, from Iparralde, interview July 2006).

What happens when we start playing Txalaparta? It happens that we are educated and we are flooded by such an amount of sounds…, everything is like very
complex and very baroque, right? .... Then, of course, in front of the austerity, the simplicity and sobriety of this [Txalaparta], we feel like a little… “no, no, it is too much.” And then that can be appreciated in the way of playing. What happens? Then if we start to play something that would be to be played, I think, majestically, it is played…, it starts: tta-kun, tta-kun, tta-kun, and that is gradually accelerated, and that becomes like a machinegun …

Look, the silence of the Txalaparta, for instance, which is very important, it is not had into account, right?. Everything is filled with sound, and then…

everything comes from silence, doesn’t it?

All sounds, and all songs, all music comes from a silence.
All sounds are like collected in silence, right?
But we are afraid of silence, like we are afraid of solitude

(JosAnton Artze, interview, May 2003).

There is the issue in the Txalaparta of observing silence. I mean, of creating silences and creating spaces of silence. I mean, the most important is not what is manifested, [but] what manifests it, [which] leads you to silence. …after you finish playing the Txalaparta you don’t have the noise, I mean, you have like a void … you end up like you have entered in a space of silence, right? Silence is emptiness. You are not dwelling on things, right? When one is connected to life, it’s like that. When one is connected to life, one doesn’t have a reason to think (Josu Goiri, interview, June 2003).

Josu Goiri referred me to Deepak Chopra, among other authors, to help me understand the concept of what he was discussing. He advised meditation in order to grasp what he was explaining (the kind advocated by oriental philosophies, and indeed Chopra). Juan Mari Beltran also spoke of “emptying” himself when playing Txalaparta, which I felt meant “giving” in the context of his speech, though I never enquired.

Deep, almost unstated philosophical reflections emerged in relation to Txalaparta, improvisation and feeling, as well as in relation to ttakun. Laboa, in tune with his experimental compositions invoked the “alienation effect” that Bertolt Brecht envisaged to foster social criticism (much like, as Brecht stated, science’s estrangement from the naturalness of every day life, which the German dramatist reclaimed for art
JosAnton Artze’s reflections resonated with oriental philosophies: a womb of silence, the void filled with potentiality that brings what it precedes into existence. The spaces of silence in Txalaparta (i.e. the absence of a stroke where one would be expected, called hutsune by txalapartariak, literally meaning “void”; or the space between strokes), like the Japanese concept of ma.

The last search of the two [Artze] brothers was how to put as many silences as possible in their performance (Laurent, interview, June 2006).

JosAnton Artze: We did not work with silence much [initially] because we also had a tendency to speed it up, also, yes. I mean, it has been a kind of trap, right? Now I realise... Well, but... I am realising in the end...

Maria Escribano: And why do you think you tended to speed it up? Do you think it had to do with the fact that you were young and…?

JosAnton: Well, young, and also a little to give it… to make it more impressing also.

But that is external. That is not internal, you know? (JosAnton Artze, interview, May 2003).

JosAnton Artze connected, in his discourse, silence with the significance of the ttakun beat.

Ttakun Beat

JosAnton continued:

…later … we have had very much into account our internal aspect, you know? I mean, firstly it would be to play inwardly. And once already inside, it finds an echo inside you, the ttakun of yours inside starts to awaken. Then it is the moment of exteriorising that, but from inside. … Once you have achieved the inner ttakun … then all what you play is sacred, it comes from the most intimate of yours, that which is normally the most artistic thing a person can do, right? That is, to give the most intimate you have inside…, the most intimate is the most sacred, right? The sacred is in the most intimate. Then, what comes out of there is now beautiful and is true.
“In the Eibar gatherings it came near to extinction,” explained Erlantz Auzmendi, in relation to the discussion that took place in 1994 at the habilitation course that was organised in the Gipuzkoan town of Eibar (interview, November 2003.) In the face of the transmission of Txalaparta, this course, the first of its kind to enable txalapartariak and titled music teachers to teach Txalaparta in schools, presented participating txalapartariak with the question of a curricula, and of what Txalaparta was in the end: “There was a split. You know, wherever there are two Basques, a split” Erlantz added (interview, November 2003). At this course, as Erlantz explained, the ttakun beat was put into question, threatening Txalaparta.

The ttakun of Txalaparta Zaharra, explained as a pulse composed of two immediate strokes, with the accent on the second (ttakun), was regarded as essential to Txalaparta by some participants in the course, Erlantz Auzmendi and Josu Goiri among them. Beltran, and other txalapartariak trained by him, exposed, however, a transformed ttakun, one that allowed them combine Txalaparta with other instruments and incorporate it in existing or composed tunes: the strokes of the ttakun are separated further (or rather, the space among ttakun beats is reduced), to the extent where the space between each stroke is equal to that between ttakun beats. In this new development, the accent is also put on the first stroke (tta kun), accommodating it to the regularity of a meter (or the regularity of the beat marked by a metronome) and placing the accentuated stroke in the downbeat, thus breaking what could be referred to an extent as the syncopation of the ttakun explicitly taught by the old txalapartariak independently of its progression into something different along the piece of Txalaparta Zaharra.

Though the ttakun pulse was referred to as “closed ttakun” by participants, and the regular succession of strokes as “open ttakun,” the question, as explained to me by participants who regarded the ttakun pulse as essential, was not so much its stretching, or “opening” (that is, its opening by allowing a wider space between its two strokes), since its width changes along the piece in Txalaparta Zaharra, as part of the challenge and interplay that is typical of the performance process, and also in improvised pieces of Txalaparta Berria that are not subjected to a regular rhythm. Some participants referred to the so called “open ttakun” phenomenon as “lauko” (meaning “of four”), a rhythmic resource by which each txalapartari produces two strokes resulting in a total of four
strokes which are equidistant from each other. “Takataka,” used by participating txalapartariak to refer to a series of four strokes performed in a consecutive manner by a txalapartari in his space of playing (Eneko, Sestao Tx, interview, June 2006), or to refer to a similar resource to the lauko (Beltran 2004, 227), was also used by some participants to exemplify equidistant strokes and explain the “new ttakun.”

For those who maintained the necessity of keeping the ttakun pulse, the concern, as Erlantz Auzmendi explained, was its dissolution in a regular metric succession of strokes, while arguing the latter was -also- ttakun: “Josu and I proposed the need to discern,” stated Erlantz Auzmendi, while the rest, he added, excepting two or three people, did not differentiate between traditional Txalaparta and the rest. “What is traditional Txalaparta? What is the traditional rhythm? Juan Mari claimed that what he did was, and we claimed it wasn’t” added Erlantz who defended, with Josu Goiri, that “the ttakun is a pulse, the pulse of the transit… [transformation], … if you hook it to staff notation, then you get that [Beltran’s version], but that is Txalaparta berria.” Erlantz explained they spent three days discussing the issue:

It was hard-hitting … In the end, “for peace a Hail Mary” it was agreed that everything was Txalaparta: “For peace a Hail Mary, let’s play and the debate is over.” We put up with it and shut up (interview, November 2003).

Nonetheless, he added that in the end “after a few months it was understood.” Erlantz Auzmendi, who had put Oreka Tx as an example of Juan Mari Beltran’s performatic approach to Txalaparta, explained that in the 9th edition of the Txalaparta Festa, in 1995, where “they play ttakun on different materials” claimed that “there they finally do the pieces well … after that of Eibar they now play ‘Gerla Beti’ bloody brilliant.” He added that those txalapartariak he has been with (those he taught Txalaparta, such as the group with anarchist leanings I spent time with in Nafarroa) have not wanted to learn “the stuff of Hernani.” “Those of Hernani have great skill at everything, including the ttakun, but it is not their strong point” Erlantz concluded.
In the report of the Eibar habilitation course, if Goiri speaks of collective pulsation and the appreciation of the harmonics created when beating the planks, Erlantz shows, in the description of his classes, a concern for the “closed” ttakun beat, and uses the metaphor of the horse, when discussing technique.

Firstly, the sobriety of ttakun unsettles us a little. On the other hand, only that bores us a little, we think that we need for it to be more complex, and then we think that if it bores us then it also bores others… Then we accelerate and we play like very fast, to impress people precisely by means of the speed in the piece than the beauty there may be playing in a different way, like softer, more slowly, playing with silent spaces… (JosAnton Artze, interview, May 2003).

I encountered clear preferences among other txalapartariak for the “closed ttakun.” The two groups I spent more time with, in Iruñea, placed a lot of importance on it, in particular the more mature “anarchist” group: “The ttakun is the heart of Txalaparta” explained Gaizka (fieldwork 1999, 2003.) “You know that the basic rhythm of Txalaparta is the ttakun. The ttakun, ttakun, ttakun, ttakun… It is a very simple rhythm, it is a very easy rhythm,” stated JosAnton Artze, describing it as a basic rhythm, a reference.

Even if ttakun is not played, the presence, it must be present among those who play, right? My brother and I sometimes when we played perhaps the ttakun could not be heard, but the ttakun was present between the two, it was like a third one who played, but who played in silence. With us the ttakun was always present, and it was around it that we improvised (JosAnton Artze., interview, May 2003).

JosAnton Artze elevated the ttakun to the category of an entity. How this ‘third one’ who played in silence manifested in performatic terms is something that I did not understand. Was it the solemnity, the feeling, the trance like state in which JosAnton played? The ttakun is silence set (mamitu) into sound, explained the poet txalapartari. He explained ttakun as well in terms of the horse trot, also arguing it might be the rhythm of the Basque people, the internal rhythm of a people that he discovered in the 1960s, when the youth was waking up amid Franco’s repression; a rhythm that had been dormant in him up to then, after his encounter with it as a child (chapter 2). A heart
beat, like other txalapartariak put it as well. The txalapartari’s reference is, when playing, his own heart beat, argues JosAnton Arzte. Erlantz Auzmendi, Josu Goiri, and others, explicitly referred to the ttakun as an organic sound. The base, as participants often stressed to me: “If you ever get lost, come back to the ttakun” (fieldwork 2003-2006).

The ttakun is the base. It is the base, the norm, the rule. It is the place on which you base yourself to do all the improvisation. The ttakun, even if it does not sound, is. And when it is not, you are lost [Emphatic pause]. If you get lost, return to the ttakun!, and become confident. And when you come back to the ttakun, [the purpose is] to give security and a base to the person with whom you are playing. And [then] you [can] go off [start doing other things]. But if you are very lost and there is a moment in which you need a reference, you need a ttakun, and it will be marked either by you or by the other one (Andoni Aleman, interview, July 2006).

Erlantz Auzmendi insisted on the perception of Txalaparta, and the ttakun (role) as it interacts with the herren, as a transit from life to death, or to a new state: “The rhythm is not a trot –tantan, tantan- nor a gallop –trakatran, trakatran; the ttakun is the interval. It is a rhythm of transformation, a rhythm of transition” (interview, November 2003). “The traditional rhythm is the essence of Txalaparta,” he explained in his transcendental approach to it, “Txalaparta is a chalice.” He further elaborated on how he felt Txalaparta should be referred to: “‘The Txalaparta’ no, ‘Txalaparta’,” explaining this is what JosAnton Artze, for whom he had great respect, had told him. “Joxean is very profound, he is a guardian of Txalaparta, Joxean and me. A guardian is he who keeps the tradition, who keeps the spirit, the essence of tradition … like a priest, in the sense of hight priest, not of reverend.” “What do you mean by essence, what is ‘essence’?” I asked him. “The essence is the eternal. To feel with a single plank the simplicity of the essence. It is very difficult to define the essence.”

Like JosAnton Artze, Erlantz Auzmendi was concerned with a beat of life, with something simple yet unfathomable, an embodied experience that I unfairly expected him to put into an intellectual, logical worded form. “Txalaparta is something sacred, not to be even written in small cases,” he added, noticing he had seen in my work (my
Master’s thesis) that I used to write it in small cases, and asked me to write it in capitals out of respect, to which I agreed.

He argued that he arrived to Txalaparta “with my mind absolutely clean, without staff notation,” insisting in the good fortune it is to approach Txalaparta “with a clean, pure mind,” without fitting it into ready learned western music schemes. Erlantz disclosed to me a transcendental outlook on life: nothing happened by chance, but intended, beyond our comprehension, by the “Great Spirit” (tantamount with the concept of “God,” beyond the boundaries, specificities and exclusions of religions). Important people in his life were, like characters in a kind of shamanic “epic” novel, or a mythical story, ascribed metaphoric categories, in an attempt to reach behind the ordinary, into the depths of the Universe and the meaning of existence. In his “mystic view of Txalaparta,” as he described it, Pilartxo Goikoetxea, as he referred to Ramon Goikoetxea’s daughter (of his same generation), was addressed as “the witch,” acknowledging in this manner an enhanced intuition he perceived in her (“we had a similar view on things,” he explained). If JosAnton Artze, whom he profoundly respected and admired, was referred as a “high priest” of Txalaparta, as stated earlier, Juan Mari Beltran was “a king,” and Josu Goiri was referred to as “herald” (he was the first person who published a book dedicated entirely to Txalaparta.) I felt he portrayed Txalaparta like a holy grail that the great ancestors had carefully delivered to us, like a beating heart of life, passed on from generation to generation, until it had reached us, when Basque culture was about to collapse. A holy grail it seemed to me (not a Christian one, but a rather a universal one), in the sense that beyond it being portrayed as a Basque treasure of which Basques (certain Basques) had been entrusted with its continuity, it contained a universal truth, put a par with other shamanic traditions, from the ancient Native Americans, to the Nahual immortalised by Carlos Castaneda, or the wisdom of the Hindus. The ultimate entity in this transcendental vision of Txalaparta (and the world) he offered, was “the Great Spirit,” and idea of God beyond boundaries.

Erlantz Auzmendi insisted in his and his friend Iñaki’s connection with the Goikoetxea (Pilar told me her father Ramon, one of the old txalapartariak, took a shine on Iñaki, unusual for he didn’t generally like youth with “messy” looks). He explained that Gerla Beti’s piece construction was based on the ttakun pulse, with an intuitive style based on the “primitive rhythm” (of Txalaparta), improvising over predetermined rehearsed structures. “It is necessary to renovate, but to rescue. If something doesn’t
evolve, it dies. The balance is that it evolves from the essence, not from appearance,” he stated, adding that he always had the recognition of the “grand fathers,” and that even when introducing changes, in the end they approved what he did. Olatz, from Bizkaia, who showed a clear preference for the traditional *ttakun* and improvisation, argued that “he who doesn’t learn the Txalaparta Zaharra can never feel what Txalaparta is, that is quite clear … It is more, he who cannot play that, can not hold the pulse of Txalaparta” (interview, June 2006).

There are people who, for instance, when we play of four, “ti ki ta ka, ti ki ta ka,” -that rhythm made up of four equal strokes, as the old ones use [used] to do their [piece] endings-, there is who calls that “new *ttakun,*” and the narrow one, “old *ttakun.*” And that is another nonsense also, because precisely the old ones, when they start slow, they start narrow, but when they end, they always end with this one [a series of equidistant strokes]. And they themselves say “*laukoa,*” “of four.” They themselves already distinguish it already even with a name, the “*laukoa*” (Borja, interview, May 2006).

Borja presented, in his discourse, Juan Mari Beltran’s approach, who validates the performance of regular series of strokes, made to fit neatly into a 4/4 time signature, for instance, as also *ttakun,* with the stress on the first stroke, as stated earlier, facilitating the adaptation of Txalaparta to other musics (or “to music,” depending on the understanding of the concept we use, as discussed in the next section).

If, as Beltran argues, the old *txalapartari* Miguel Zuaznabar referred to the last sequence of *ttakun* beats of their performance as *lauko* (summing up both roles, *ttakun* and *herren,* into one, by naming the sum of both roles’ beats rather than their interventions separately), Joseba Zuaznabar, son of Pello Zuaznabar (one of the last old *txalapartariak*), referred to the end of the piece as *tukutun,* and JosAnton Artze was provided with the term (also by Miguel Zuaznabar) of *tturrukutun* to refer to it. Though in their explanations of the final fast tempo performance of *ttakun* by both *txalapartariak,* the old *txalapartariak* seemingly placed the emphasis, as explained by JosAnton Artze, on performing strokes so close to each other that no space was left for

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11 It might be the case that some of these might not be fixed terms used by generations of old *txalapartariak,* but onomatopoeic names improvised for the purpose of teaching the Artze and Beltran brothers.
more ttakun beats, Beltran (and those txalapartariak who stand by his arguments) focuses on what is seemingly the performatic consequence (equidistant space between all strokes) of what was explicitly sought. In this way, Beltran seeks to provide a legitimation for the “open ttakun” that stems from the authority of tradition.

“There is an attempt to correct in time the vices derived from a bad use of the txakun in relation to the pulse, something common in students who have studied sol-fa,” explains Erlantz Auzmendi, in relation to his classes, in the report for the Eibar habilitation course (Several authors 1994). Despite his observations in relation to the ttakun, Erlantz Auzmendi, who identified the “open” or “new” ttakun or lauko (series of four equidistant beats produced among two txalapartariak) with the school of Hernani (where Harkaitz Martinez, member of Oreka Tx, trained as a txalapartari), explained that this school represented “the most tenacious, the most disciplined” txalapartariak, arguing it provided “the best education there is”: “The laukos where developed by the ones of Hernani, the ones [adept] of staff notation. They give in that an excellent education which serves you to play any thing between two people” (interview, November 2003).

“Why innovate? Why to you change the Txalaparta?” I asked Juan Mari Beltran at our interview in the Herri Musikaren Txoko in February 1999. He replied outright: “for it to be useful to me.”

Joxean … made the musician go to the Txalaparta. Of course, what has happened with time? The opposite. Musicians have taken the Txalaparta to their field (Josu Goiri, interview, June 2006).
**Txalaparta is Music**

As stated earlier, I frequently encountered among participating *txalapartariak* I worked with (the younger generations, it seemed to me, and Juan Mari Beltran in his spoken and written discourse) the emphatic statement that “Txalaparta is music.” Though I took it at first as an statement of the obvious, I immediately adopted it in my own discourse about Txalaparta, almost unwittingly, with a similar “militancy” to that exhibited by these *txalapartariak*. This statement eventually emerged from my incipient understandings as a salient performance within the process of the ongoing revival and reconstruction of Txalaparta: a construction of fact by force of doing, a discourse that pointed at action; the bringing into being of, once more, what “ought to be.” It is for this reason that I have taken the concept of “sound making tradition” as a starting point or a conceptual basis that allows for greater interpretative freedom than “music” in relation to the social phenomenon of Txalaparta.

The performance dealt with in this section (or the main one from which I glance at others in this section), adhered to by other participating *txalapartariak*, seems to emanate in particular from Juan Mari Beltran’s agency, as per the discourse put forth in his writings and interviews, as well as other promotional work in relation to Txalaparta already outlined in this chapter and the previous one. It seems to be part of his personal mindset and expertise as a musician of melodic instruments (before encountering Txalaparta in the late 1960s) and the dynamics of commodified and spectacle music. It encompasses a discourse that is built on the foundations of its denial, and thus contains it: among other (and this “other” is relevant, as I will explain soon), the fundamental understandings about the nature of this tradition and instrument(s) presented so far, seemingly perceived by Beltran and others as opposed to the particular musical nature claimed for Txalaparta, such as those that pertain to the horse narrative, the calling device explanation, or which advocate an identity of Txalaparta that interlocking alone does not define.

“Txalaparta is music,” as defended by Beltran and the younger generations that support his particular approach, is part of the “revival” dynamics exposed so far, and related to those more openly or directly related to the Basque struggle which are presented in the next chapter. This performance helps disclose different understandings of music -and different modes of doing- also, as is presented soon. There is more to it:
the concept of music emerges in this discourse (as it does in others, but differently), as a performative, not only in the sense of a noun that discloses a constructed reality (or the ongoing project of its construction), but in the sense of one which frames that to which it is applied.

In order to articulate an interpretation of this performance, I will first discuss some of the understandings of “music” encountered, which leads to the performative concept of “music” as a construction and the kind of construction it seems to point at in relation to Beltran’s endeavours, supported by other txalapartariak. Next, the transformative qualities of such performance, and how this transformation is actually achieved in practice, are reflected upon in relation to what is sought -or why- for Txalaparta, including, briefly, some participants’ reflections as to the consequences that might be taking shape.

**Understandings of “Music”**

Txalaparta was not a musical instrument like many thought, but was a communication device. It was used between “caseríos” [farmhouses in Castilian] to communicate various events (i.e. funerals, festivities…) (Zazpiak Bat Basque Society 1997).

The explanation of Txalaparta as an instrument for the transmission of different calls arouse strong emotions among participants who argued against it:

They cannot understand that it could be possible to enjoy in a festival with so ‘poor and simple’ elements, and as they do not understand that nor can they acknowledge it, they make up their ‘logical reasons’ … For instance, in relation to the performance in the cider festival, they explain it by arguing that “they were informing that the work of making cider had been finished” without understanding that the performance was part of the festivity, like if we claimed today that the verbena of the festivities is to inform that it is the festivity of this or that saint (Beltran 1988, 17).
Explanations that are perceived to rule out the argument that “Txalaparta is music,” are taken very seriously within the kind of performance that concerns us here. Within this performance, which is developed in conjunction with the narrative that seeks to explain Txalaparta as communal entertainment in relation to communal work (such as pounding the apple for making cider), with further elaborations that will be explained soon, other narratives are regarded as threats to the “truth” presented by the old players’ testimony. Participants who showed a preference for other narratives, or who were open to them, maintained that there had been a gap in the transmission of Txalaparta at some stage and that ancient knowledge had possibly been lost, or that archetypical meanings were at work regardless of practitioner’s awareness (in line with anthropological structuralist approaches). Juan Mari Beltran, however, advocates for the spoken testimony of the old txalapartariak (whether the latter labelled their practices as “music” is another matter), passionately dispelling, in particular, understandings that hear in Txalaparta the sonic evocation of the horse or some sort of calling rhythms. The horse narrative is demystified with the claim that, while its advocates argue for an imitation of the horse, “it seems difficult to find the resemblance of the horses gallop in the rhythm ‘ttakun, ttakun, ttakun, ttan ttakun’ of the traditional txalaparta; and much less the trot” (Beltran 2009, p. 59). The gaze into European mythology or Eliade’s work is a step too far to address in attending to sound.

Some of the young txalapartariak interviewed who have had Beltran or one of his former students as their teacher, used to argue the impossibility of Txalaparta being played as a fire call or for any other emergency purposes for the awkwardness of having to get two people, a plank, stands and makilik in order to produce the call: “by the time you have all that, the people hear you and come to help, the house may just be ashes!” (Borja, interview, May 2006). Txalaparta as a calling device was seemingly interpreted by these participants as a denial of its musical qualities. A common example also used to dispel the understanding of Txalaparta as some sort of former calling device, was that similar explanations had been given in relation to African drumming which were spurious, since there was not such a thing as talking drums with which encoded messages could be transmitted (despite the fact that these are well documented in ethnomusicology literature and by its current practitioners). Another argument brought up by these txalapartariak consistently was that similar explanations had been given of native American’s smoke signals, misguided explanations disseminated by Western movies and with no foundation whatsoever in the cultures of the aforementioned
(despite existing literature that also testify to the use of smoke signals for communication across distances\(^{12}\)). That the examples used to dispel this narrative, shared by many young participants almost word per word, are not well chosen, may disclose that, regardless of whether there is evidence or not to support the “calling device” (or “encoded rhythms”) narrative, the priority is to “rescue” Txalaparta from understandings that deny it as “music” at all costs. Beltran argues that if Txalaparta has had communication purposes like church bells have, it is information that we do not have since the old txalapartariak do not know it themselves. “What we do know is that they loved it and believed in txalaparta as a musical instrument” (Beltran 1988, 17). Folklorists from the Navarrese cultural group Ortzadar, however, explained to me that those from former generations they had worked with to recover the lore, exposed conceptions of the term “music” and related terms that did not match those conventionally used nowadays (fieldwork, 2001). From an ethnomusicological stand, we may work with two definitions of music. A wide definition that opens our scope to include any “humanly organised sound,” as John Blacking argued (1976), and a culture specific one, where music is deemed to be that which a given culture considers -frames- as such. A given community of practice, such as that of txalapartariak (or a given individual) may exhibit different understandings of what “music” is, nonetheless, and I often felt that participants used that term to refer to different sound aesthetical constructs.

Beltran applies the term of “musical instrument” in a wide ethnomusicological sense to anything that may have been used or is used to make “humanly organised sound,” yet equates “music” with joy and entertainment precluding other functions (that is, arguing that Txalaparta Zaharra was music, implies it was used for pure fun and entertainment, as he argues in relation to other traditions like the albute dantza\(^ {13}\)). Other understandings are implicit in relation to the performativity of the concept as used by Beltran and others who share in his performance, as I discuss soon.

\(^{12}\) An example is, for instance, *The Land of the Spotted Eagle* by Lakota chief and writer Luther Standing Bear (1933).

\(^{13}\) The albute dantza is a dance found in Baztan, recorded by Basque song collectors Azkue and F. Donostia, who explain that it was performed on top of the wooden container used for the measurement of corn.
For other participants, music refers to western art music canons of “sound organisation” (western diatonic scale, rhythm and tonal understandings, western music notation), as exemplified by Josu Goiri:

…[T]he txalaparta is not a musical instrument, but a sound instrument which keeps within itself determined forms and senses that once interiorised, are the base from which each txalapartari expresses his particular search” (Goiri 1996, 194).

Everything is music, right? But, I mean, I am referring to tuning, and whatever and so forth, to that structure and so on (Josu Goiri, interview, June 2003).

Goiri further adds that Txalaparta “is a sound instrument, not a tuned instrument” (1996) illustrating once more such understanding of music. This author and txalapartari further resorts to musicologist Arana in support of this understanding, at a time when the Eibar experience was still recent (his 1996 publication, in Castilian, is based on a book published in Euskara in that year, 1994):

Free rhythms refuse any meter and irregular rhythms do not submit to equal periodical movements. This revelry of popular airs against the preconceived meter and time signature has been overpowered through time either by forcing the songs into a mould in the process of transcription, or by educating the centres for transmission of popular music in the modern laws of tonality and meter. (Arana in Goiri 1996, 178)

Josu Zabala: The txalaparta is not exactly music…

María Escribano: In which sense?

Josu Zabala: Man! In the sense that its function… uh, yes, is tangential with music, it may be used as music, but its primitive function didn’t possibly have much to do with the issue of listening to music; it rather was, I think, a form of entertainment and a way of calling each other! [A way] of communicating, right? That would be as music as church bells, which in fact can be music, there are even concerts for bells, right? But anyway, bells are not considered music, right? Rather, they are calls and other kind of… communication, right? A communication more… perhaps… uh… more functional and less aesthetical, right? (interview, June 2006)
The imitation of the transition from the horse trot to gallop, or the narrative that explains Txalaparta as a calling device (or the production of encoded messages), as is explained in the next chapter and has been also presented so far, seem to relate to efficacious performance (as Schechner refers to ritual), to a kind of functionality of Txalaparta which some participants (i.e. Benito Lertxundi or Josu Zabala) regarded as contrary to “music” (the latter seemingly equated, as already stated, with western music canons).

There is one other understanding of music that is relevant in relation to Txalaparta, related to experimental avant-garde approaches to Txalaparta, such as those exemplified by the Artze brothers and Mikel Laboa’s practice. I elaborate on this further below.

**Sound Making Spectrum**

The different understandings presented above, provided by participants, seem to allude to an imagined continuum (or spectrum of practice) from the least humanly organised, or least codified, sound making, to the most organised or structured one. This image seems parallel to the imagined continuum that places nature (wilderness, also freedom) in one end, and culture, equated with human processes of control of the environment, elaboration and the concept of “artificiality” (where “man made” is taken as “non natural”), in the other end. This sound making spectrum of practice is in any case useful for interpretation and explanatory purposes in relation to the different projects of Txalaparta fashioning and to facilitate the understanding of music as a performative concept, that is, a construction.

On one end of the sound making spectrum: Zen reflections upon nature, free unpitched Txalaparta, almost random in the case of JosAnton Artze’s free rhythmic style, like the non intentional sounds of everyday life (urban nature in this case) that John Cage considered music (sound framed by the act of listening). On this end also: the birds that JosAnton heard in Mixel Etxekopar’s mouth-whistling, which he mentioned to me as he spoke of Txalaparta, sounds which Jexux Artze incorporated in one of his recordings (Artze et al. 1999). Mikel Laboa’s imitation of speech, unarticulated yet, like perhaps the sounds of the autistic children he worked with,
struggling voices of the voiceless, may also be situated on this end. An end that is a beginning: Rafa Egiguren referred to the *irrintzi* cry, Laboa’s “babbling” in his experimental compositions (his line of *lekeitioak*), as already mentioned, and a free Txalaparta, not subjected to mainstream musical canons, as para-musical (that is, pre-cultural, perhaps): primeval, in the sense of original, in tune with Oteiza’s reflection of prehistoric Basque art as contemporary. Oteiza, moving forward, encountered the origin, the void, like the primitive humans who also moved in a circle as they drew it in the landscape with stones. A search for such origin, in disenchantment with mainstream cultural standards, seems to characterise sound art projects developed in this extreme of the spectrum. The Txalaparta found closer to this end is “primitive,” “anarchistic,” “free,” as participants who showed an inclination for it described it.

On the other end of the spectrum: “Music” (tamed sound?), as a parallel concept to “culture” (tamed nature), and a more elaborated sound practice as per western musical cannons mainly, may be inferred from Beltran’s practice and those discourses that seem to regard the term as not fully compatible with functional ritual-like understandings of Txalaparta and/or its unpitched qualities (in relation to the physical fashioning of it that still prevails) and other of its traits. Projects in this end of the spectrum may translate in more calculated, less spontaneous, Txalaparta stage performances, as the control of the sound making process is increased (i.e. programming the piece –composition). At an extreme point of this end, random, avant-garde Txalaparta, or a Txalaparta that does not blend with the time signature or the beat of the melody to which it is incorporated, is simply “bad” skill, noise, some sort of “ornament” in the overall piece, a “flower jar.” If Mikel Laboa resorted to Brecht, who somehow “dismantled” theatre for the sake of provoking thought by means of distance or detachment, the project that seems to unfold in this end (the performance I engage with in this section), seems oriented toward closeness, music as “entertainment,” “celebration, always in company,” as stated by Beltran. People coming together, and the joy of it, seems to be sought. The anecdote told by one of the Goikoetxea brothers (old *txalapartariak*), claiming that on some occasions their grandfather passed under the plank bending backwards while they played (a great acrobatic feat considering the plank was placed very low), repeated once and again by Beltran in his different publications and incorporated to the younger *txalapartariak* corpus of knowledge and discourse, is meant to testify as to the musical/entertainment quality of such sound making. Txalaparta shall be near, enjoyable and understandable, a part of the project that did
resonate with most participants in this research: a common observation among players and non players was that Txalaparta is hard to listen to for too long (playing it was a different matter), especially from a disembodied sound recording. As a young txalapartari, critical of the “xylophone” (so called “melodic” Txalaparta), explained:

It has to be made alive and be made popular, and if that is the way to get people to listen to it… I mean, people listen to that music [tempered Txalaparta] because they are not used to… They buy a CD to listen to music, not to listen to some sounds that don’t grab them at all … well, if that’s the way… But let not that be the only way, I mean, let it [improvised non tempered Txalaparta] not be lost… Yes, let there be branches, but not the main thing to be lost … (Txan, interview, June 2003).

This “hard to listen to” quality was overcome in Txalaparta concerts, for instance, by combining improvised sessions with melodic pieces (with other instruments) to which Txalaparta was incorporated subsumed to a given time signature and as percussive accompaniment. The group Jo Tta Kun, for instance, was able to maintain audience interest for hour long concerts in Ireland by including in their repertoire alboka, guitar, txistu and Basque traditional dance pieces, to which Txalaparta was adapted, to great acclaim (fieldwork, 2004).

Two projects may be identified (at least) in relation to the construction of music out of Txalaparta. I identify one of them mainly with the environment of the Txalaparta Eskola of the music school of Hernani and the drive of the revivalist and musician Juan Mari Beltran (though other txalapartariak, like perhaps Jexux Artze, may have contributed to it), as well as Txalaparta groups and participants that gravitate toward Beltran’s vision. The other one, more recent, and which is not dealt with here since it exceeds the scope of this dissertation, seems to be linked to the world music industry, impressing its own market dynamics upon Txalaparta from a melodic musician’s perspective, and also seemingly affecting its transmission, since txalapartariak engaged in this project also teach with a view, in some specific instances, of training future txalapartariak that will be suited for this conception of Txalaparta, as Kepa Junkera explained to me in May 2006.
“Txalapartaris are impostors,” was a comment some txalapartariak had heard from a musician, non txalapartari until relatively recent years, struck by the numbers of txalapartariak who perform in public without music training.

A friend who thought himself a music expert, said once, when he saw one of our school’s students rehearsing: -That boy should choose a different instrument or else a good musician will be lost (Abad 2006)

This anecdote, which is presented by the Txalaparta school of Sestao’s cultural group Zugarramurdi (the group Sestao Tx) in the prologue of one of their home produced booklets containing 60 written exercises (based on Juan Mari Beltran’s notation system), and also appears in the prologue of an earlier booklet (2001) to teach Txalaparta, is part of a text that reclaims its value and proposes a “rigorous technique” to master it. It also illustrates that which this performance, “Txalaparta is music,” seems to address above all: discourses that are perceived to demean and look down on Txalaparta.

…[A] lot of people find it hard to understand that the music of txalaparta may have value in itself, and that such value constituted its function in such gatherings [cider making celebrations] (Beltran 2009, 60).

“Music” and its derivatives (“musician”, “musical” instrument) act, in this performance, as nouns that transform that to which they are applied: they increase, or seek to increase, its status. It does so, in the specific performance discussed here, with the same standards of the establishment, so to speak, from which the exclusion of Txalaparta emerges, and to which Txalaparta shall belong. In his early writings, Beltran used to refer to the old style of Txalaparta as “Txalaparta klasikoa,” classical Txalaparta (a term which I adopted initially), resembling the manner in which music works of former times are referred to within so called “high art” western traditions. The pain of experiencing Txalaparta despised and dismissed, or a fear of erasure (as discussed earlier in relation to Beltran’s discourse), seems to drive a number of txalapartariak to shape Txalaparta as music by western canons, to literacy and to composition (the ultimate control that may be exerted over a sound work: the elimination of uncertainty).
What is “music” in this performance? Juan Mari Beltran provides a more detailed understanding, besides the basic conception of music as “entertainment,” as he analyses Txalaparta Zaharra in search for the elements that justify its musical qualities, its belonging. The old txalapartariak’s playing “serves the sole purpose of making music, and therefore cannot be considered as anything else; it is a strange music perhaps, but it uses the same resources as other kinds of percussion” states Beltran (2004, 227). Such resources are:

- different basic rhythms as per the structure of each “rhythmic bar” (the two players’ “alternate strokes form the two parts of the ‘buelta’ [rhythmic bar] in binary time” (Beltran 2004, 227));

- “rhythmic phrases and figures” created by both players’ interlocking beats, polytonality, changes in volume, “variations in the tempo and rhythmic pulse, arising from the interplay between the ‘ttakun’ and ‘herrena’”;

- and “a balance between tension and repose, common to all music” (Beltran 2004, 227).

In this discourse, furthermore, a study in relation to Txalaparta shall not be approached but through musical analysis, and one at that as per western cannons (emanating from European classical music standards and terminology), for otherwise, as I perceived, the status of Txalaparta is seen to be compromised.

Once musicological authority has been established in relation to Txalaparta (the old style) as music, a deconstruction of some of its rhythmic structures will serve to legitimate current practices. Thus, Beltran identifies a ternary rhythm within the progress of the piece (fig. 4.6), resulting from the interplay between the ttakun and herren players, which I understand legitimates the development of ternary rhythms for Txalaparta Berria, rhythms which non-musically
trained txalapartariak, accustomed to perform the old style (excepting the keeping of the ttakun role), and accustomed to the so called “closed” ttakun, did not immediately master, as I observed in fieldwork research. In his dissection of the old style, Beltran finally finds a legitimation for the so called “open” ttakun, as stated earlier: “Migel Zuaznabar called this final rhythm ‘lauko’ (‘four-time’), and indeed this is what it is, a four-beat 2/4” (2004, 232). After isolating the aforementioned structures from the context of the overall piece and the otherwise revered discourse of the elders, the musician, as he explained to me he preferred to identify himself as, states:

These same figures can serve as a source of inspiration for today’s players who would do well to follow in their forefathers’ footsteps and breathe new life into the tradition (ibid., 232).

Richard Schechner refers to performance, or the process of performing, as “restored behaviour” (also “twice-behaved behaviour”), that is, behavioural constructions made up of reassembled and newly framed, previously learned, actions. The concept behind this term is helpful to understand the process by which this performance is effected in Beltran’s discourse, as it happens as well in relation to other txalapartariak who also select certain elements from Txalaparta Zaharra, such as the “closed” ttakun, to frame or highlight it in specific and new ways in their own discursive performances and related performatic processes, such as in Avant Garde understandings of Txalaparta, for instance, where the old style is also transformed.

By way of dissecting Txalaparta Zaharra into different sections or rhythmic schemes (behaviours) and selecting those that suit, these are “restored” into a new performance: the construction of “music” as per western cannons (regular ttakun with equidistant strokes and the accent in the downbeat, i.e.), seemingly ignoring the overall structure of the piece as a meaningful unit as per explanations of the old txalapartariak (the philosophy of Txalaparta transmitted by Miguel Zuaznabar, for instance, culminating in his explanation of the tturrukutun, as per JosAnton Artze’s account). In this way, Beltran solves the dilemma between seeking legitimation from the old txalapartariak’s practice for the present, and seeking legitimation for Txalaparta from the music establishment. The narrative that explains Txalaparta as related to communal work (auzolan) and celebration belongs to this performance.
Beltran notes, within his hypothesis of the origin of music, that the *makilak* the old *txalapartariak* used are not exactly the work tools employed to beat the apple. He observes that the size and weight of the *makilak* varied from one couple to another, and that this may have influenced the complexity of their play (notably the Zuaznabar’s, who he argues showed the greatest complexity in their *Txalaparta* pieces, the *txalapartariak* who had the lightest sticks). Beltran reflects upon this as a possible further indication that, like today’s *txalapartariak*, whose sticks are increasingly lighter to facilitate greater virtuosity, this served the purpose of facilitating the making of “music” (within an evolution that originates from work). This also facilitates a further reflection, the ongoing process of transformation imprinted in *Txalaparta* since its recovery, is in fact not new, but a continuation (and natural “evolution”) of a process initiated further back in time, in which the old *txalapartariak* were already immersed. “*Txalaparta is alive*” participants, Beltran among them, used to state. Like life itself, *Txalaparta* moves forward within a movement that comes from afar.

Juan Mari Beltran’s tireless creative work within the environment of the *Txalaparta* Eskola, in the Music School of Hernani, is part of this process of music construction (to which other *txalapartariak* have also contributed) which, beyond written or spoken discourse, translates into embodied practice, as exemplified by his creation of:
• a curriculum for the transmission of Txalaparta, taught in a system of three levels, comprising from the old style and “variants” to the latest developments that have emerged from the work of Beltran’s circle of txalapartariak;

• tuning of the planks (tempered txalaparta) in order to be able to make melody and play with music groups (process started by 1989 (Beltran 2009));

• a notation system adapted to Txalaparta’s rhythmic elasticity, based, as Beltran explains, in the spectrogram of a recording “to indicate the when and how of a stroke” (2009, 108), and inspired by western notation (stems above a horizontal line correspond to one player, and below it, to the other one, in the early form of this notation) –melodic pieces with fixed rhythms are represented by means of sol-fa;

• development, with an IT specialist, of a notation software, Ttakun 2.1, released in 2007 (an early form was freely distributed at the Txalaparta Festa in 2004, thus making it into a communal project, built with the feedback of other txalapartariak);

• composition (programming of the piece), initiated also by other txalapartariak;

• and a well rehearsed technique, evidenced by a repertoire of new rhythmic forms, specific beats and dynamics, of which he argues they “always have into account the traditional ways, and are based in the interlocking and improvisation system” (Beltran 2009, 108);

There is still a lot of people that join Txalaparta [lessons] as something that is more or less exotic, as something that they think that it’s going to be dead easy, effortless, a cinch… It is not [emphatic pause]. And there is many, many people today that joins Txalaparta because they want to learn music through that instrument, and they see that it is a good tool for them, to make music. …We have many people that is [dedicating] already 8 years, 10 years, or more! What means that, well, that the story is being taken in a different way [more seriously] (Juan Mari Beltran, interview, May 2006).

The presentation of Juan Mari Beltran’s 2009 milestone publication: Txalaparta, dedicated entirely to the tradition and new developments from a personal perspective, showcasing Beltran’s wealth of knowledge, focused on the work undertaken by him and other txalapartariak within his circle, and briefly mentioning mainly groups under the
influence of his school or which follow his steps (in a list that makes sure not to leave any Basque province out –Iparralde appearing as a block), is also performative. The book, accompanied by a CD and a DVD with Beltran’s self produced documentary, including interview footage and sound recordings of the old txalapartariak released for the first time, follows an aesthetic model that resembles Juan Antonio Urbeltz’ 2001 also milestone book on Basque dance\textsuperscript{14}. It is presented, in a kind of encyclopaedic style, with hard covers, shiny colourful jacket and glossy paper, and illustrated with good quality art photographs all throughout. The book emerges like a loving altar, a tribute that pays homage to the tradition and instrument that gives it its title. Txalaparta deserves, like a Sunday Mass, the best costume. The book thus provides, as a kind of pedestal, a special stage for a discursive performance that seeks recognition and status for Txalaparta, a recognition that is no less deserved by its author.

As early stated, the construction of Txalaparta as music is embedded in the vantage point of a musician, the dynamics of the music industry and the desire of many txalapartariak to live off Txalaparta. Indeed, in relation to the dilemma introduced earlier in relation to the subject of earning a living by means of it, Beltran, and other txalapartariak, interpreted such a possibility as a sign that Txalaparta is strong and successfully incorporated as a music alongside others. The work toward the inclusion of Txalaparta within existing musical frameworks and established music dynamics, or “the normalisation of the instrument” (Beltran 2009, 103, 106), has gone a long way:

\begin{quote}
[T]hanks to the development that has taken place in relation to it, [Txalaparta] has come to have a place and an important presence in the world of musicians, music groups and composers (2009, 181)
\end{quote}

At times, perhaps when the effort to make a dream into a reality is too great, or acknowledgment is sought for it, opposite perceptions manage to make their way into the discourse, in a way that might reveal the intentionality of the overall claim. Txalaparta was a musical instrument, however at the same time it did not reach such a category until the late 1960s and 70s: “It was striking the progression of the txalaparta in the music festivals and in discography, where it reached the category of musical instrument” (Beltran 2009, 103). Equally, despite the much defended argument that Txalaparta fulfilled a musical function at the cider making celebrations, “[w]e can state

without any fear to err, that unlike forty or one hundred years ago, the txalaparta fills
today a space and fulfils a function [that of music] in its environment and society itself”
(Beltran 2009, 181).

The Txalaparta Festa is also part of a performance that seeks to make “music,”
as per mainstream western canons, out of Txalaparta, within other types of performance.

**Txalaparta Batua?**

In our interview in 2003, Erlantz Auzmendi, as stated earlier, mentioned a
“Txalaparta batua” (“unified Txalaparta,” as a metaphor of “Euskara batua,” the unified
form of the language), to refer to a coming together of *txalapartariak,* learning from
each others’ styles. Some *txalapartariak* expressed that a consequence of the Txalaparta
Festa was the emergence of a process of uniformity. In one of the interviews, after
praising Beltran’s promotional work for Txalaparta and the important influence of the
festival in *txalapartariak,* participants’ concerns eventually emerged:

**Ibon:** Perhaps what may be happening now is that it has got out of hand, right? I mean,
of course, you must know how to channel that, right? In the end the result is that
now you go to the Txalaparta Festa of Hernani and the Sestao ones play like the
Hernani ones, and the ones from… Nafarroa play like the Hernani ones, and
others play like the Hernani ones, and then, if everyone plays like the Hernani
ones… you have to put up with three hours of the same thing of Txalaparta, right?
… In the end that has been the approach, right? I mean, he has made good
students…, has exported that, as much in Navarre as in Bizkaia, as in…, I don’t
know, in Vitoria…, in Gazteiz…

**Manu:** …The school of Hernani has been ff! I don’t know, like an explosion that has
spread everywhere… A lot of people has come out of there… A lot of people has
gone to learn there. …Then, let’s say that everything has scattered out of control a
little, right? Then, anyone that may be playing out there, if he has not gone
through Hernani, then he has learned with someone that has been in Hernani
(group interview, June 2006).

In tune with a tendency toward unification, as expressed by some *txalapartariak,*
Harkaitz Martinez, member of Oreka Tx and former Beltran’s student, who expressed a
desire and a commitment to continue the promotional work developed by Beltran for the “normalisation” of Txalaparta, shared with me his vision for an official association of txalapartariak, to protect their interests, like there are associations of txistulariak or bertsolariek, for instance. He also expressed a desire for a unification of contents for the transmission of Txalaparta, a curriculum to be designed with the participation of the larger community of txalapartariak, in tune with Beltran’s practice when taking decisions that affect other txalapartariak. I wondered, when he expressed these views at our interview in May 2004, whether this was motivated by Kepa Junkera’s drive to promote Txalaparta with his back turned to the larger community of txalapartariak, and the latter’s Txalaparta teaching for classically trained musician students¹⁵ within the peculiar understanding evidenced by his approach. Harkaitz’ proposal, presented by other colleagues in his absence at the Txalaparta Festa in 2004, encountered reticence from other txalapartariak: “We txalapartariak have always been very… free, very much improvisers,” stated Olatz. “Perhaps there is no need for us to have an association, for instance; perhaps, perhaps…” I insisted on the possible benefits, like the investment of officialdom to the community of txalapartariak (“the popular world of Txalaparta” as he referred to it):

But of course, why make an association. That’s what we have to ask ourselves, right? Perhaps…, perhaps… it makes things worse, I don’t know … [The world of Txalaparta] has to be fluid, it has always been like that… and I think it should be like that (Olatz, interview, June 2006).

Olatz advocated the informal character of the txalapartariak network, an informal character that I felt had a romantic touch to it, even among those participants who adamantly defended the demystifying rationality and need for technical resources advocated by Beltran, including the narrative the latter supports.

JosAnton argued at our interview that tobera, yes, it had a clear connection with work, and was satisfied with that. No further search for deeper meanings or a certain spiritual connection was invoked in relation to it. The deep sounds of the wood and whatever was experienced in Txalaparta seemed to have an enchanting power of its own that moved and captivated not only JosAnton Artze but most participants in this research, including Juan Mari Beltran beyond compelling needs for rationality and the

¹⁵ Conservatory students would have greater chances of teaching Txalaparta within the establishment than many “popular world” txalapartariak with no official music degrees.
desire to meet validating “scientific” expectations. In the poem that accompanies the self produced handcrafted CD of the Txalaparta group Sestao Tx, Txalaparta is written without article, and in capitals also in mid sentence, showing the deference that Erlantz Auzmendi advocated for it. These young txalapartariak’s passion, drive and thrust of sentiment, like a torrent of life, breaks through the words of the academic, my interpretations and my own words:

Txalaparta is a four makilak game, an artistic battle between two restless minds that eventually agree; a fight between opponents that become brothers, or a pair of brothers that play fight. However Txalaparta is much more. Txalaparta is rudimentary poetry, music in its most archaic expression. It is the poetical thoughts of the oak and the ash tree, of the alder and the larch. It is an irritintzi that crosses the misty forests; a throat, and its howl crossing the skies, over Belagaoa and Erronkari, from Aizkorri to Aralar, and also in Ezkerraldea [Left Bank of Bilbo’s Estuary]. It is the wild trot of the pottoka, the violent tide breaking against the sharp rocks, the whispering howl of the wind, the roar of the storm and the crackling of fire. It is the melody that inspires the playful dance of flames. It is the primitive song of the mountains and valleys, the cry of its people. A rain of rhythm that moves the soul with each stroke, each pulse. It is the flowing of the rivers that are the blood of this land. Txalaparta is Euskal Herria’s heartbeat (Sestaoko Tx Eskola 2006).

Conclusion

Though I previously stated that I assume the issue of “intentionality” in performance with caution, a conscious revolutionary effort effecting a Txalaparta that “ought to be” into being, is identified in one of the discourses or projects presented in this chapter: The construction of “music” under the drive of Juan Mari Beltran and txalapartariak who resonate with his vision.

The narratives presented in the preceding chapter, lead to other understandings of Txalaparta, within an interpretative effort that seeks to disclose the performances such narratives seem to articulate. These understandings, and forms of doing, which I summarise below, are made sense of within a kind of continuum or practice spectrum, where the performance that pertains to “the construction of music,” and its seemingly
corresponding narrative, might be found at one end. This continuum, which I have termed “sound making spectrum,” could be inferred, I felt, from participants’ understandings as per their discourse/behaviour (or as “we felt” since it was an understanding achieved while seeking to make sense of research understandings with former txalapartari, writer and poet (in Euskara) Rafa Egiguren).

The narrative that relates Txalaparta to the horse, associated with reflections upon freedom with anarchist undertones, and, in some participants’ discourse, to a search for (or encounter with) universals, emerged in discussions about a fashioning of Txalaparta in which it is not subjected to fixed rhythms or other instruments, ultimately exemplified by experimental avant-garde approaches such as those of singer Mikel Laboa. Such experimental approaches (as well as the Basque traditional irrintzi cry), which Rafa Egiguren perceived as primeval, para-musical sound elements, could be identified, for interpretation purposes, with the opposite end of the spectrum to that one where more structured coded conceptions of Txalaparta (as “music” as per western canons) may be located.

The narrative that identifies Txalaparta with the celebration of communal work, adamantly defended by Juan Mari Beltran, and adopted by many txalapartariak, reflects upon work as the source of art, as already suggested in the film Euskal Herri Musika, and prior to that, in Ama Lur. More specifically, such narrative is part of a reflection upon communal work, and its celebration, as the origin of music, since “Txalaparta is music”.

Ideas of sharing, equality, and freedom, often within a countercultural spirit, that is, socialist and independentist approaches presented by participants in relation to Txalaparta, have been presented in explicit discourses that refer to the boundaries of Txalaparta. Such boundaries, or limits, of what it is and beyond which it fades (and with it the Basque specificity it represents) immediately emerged amid the high levels of experimentation that characterised the ongoing revival, evidenced at the different editions of the annual Txalaparta Festa since its commencement in 1987.

For Juan Mari Beltran and other participants, Txalaparta basically refers to the interlocking technique which is taken as an example of authenticity: universal yet lost in Europe, and thus specific to the Basques who, like distant rural peoples in distant continents, have stayed true to it. This understanding, that seems to emerge from the
writings of previous collectors and people interviewed by Beltran, is taken on by Beltran and most participants in this research after him, in the identification of any form of interlocking as a “variant” of Txalaparta, whether originally performed at work (such as furze chopping), afterwards (such as the Kirikoketa of Baztan), or imagined as interlocked (such as *tinbilin-ttanbalan*). A consideration of Txalaparta as merely interlocking, in the sense of alternation between two or more players, provides also greater freedom to mould and shape Txalaparta as music, as per established music canons. For other *txalapartariak* (sometimes the same as above, since advocacy was fluid), improvisation (and the interdependency between both players that develops with it) is an essential quality of Txalaparta. Improvisation emerges, in *txalapartariak* like the Sorzabalbere and others, linked with a discourse that either verbally or in terms of improvisational strategy, connects it to *bertsolaritza*. The transmission of sentiment, as opposed to a focus on technique, appears also related to this theme of improvisation and *bertsolaritza*, and the question of silence, disclosing deep philosophical reflections that have Zen resonances.

The last contested boundary, which discloses transcendent views in relation to Txalaparta and its practice, versus more pragmatic demystifying approaches, such as Beltran’s, is the *ttakun* beat. If for those with a more mystic understanding of Txalaparta, the old *ttakun* is the heart of Txalaparta, which perhaps contains ineffable truths about existence, for Beltran and other participants trained with him, it is a beat that can be transformed to suit what shall be construed for the sake of the survival of Txalaparta within the music and spectacle industry: it may be transformed into regular equidistant strokes and the accent placed in the first syllable, *ta* kun, so as to make it match the downbeat of the rhythmic bar. This transformation of the *ttakun* beat, along other innovations (tempered Txalaparta, notation, specific rhythmic structures) and promotional work (such as the inclusion of Txalaparta in some official schools), are aimed at the larger project of construction of music out of the tradition, necessary for the “normalisation” of Txalaparta: the increase of its presence in the music scene, its inclusion in music teaching programmes and its consideration as an instrument and music of equal value to others by mainstream society. The latter is seemingly hindered, in these understandings, by the unpitched sounds of the wood and its emission of harmonics when struck; its rustic, simple, austere qualities, a farmer’s tradition the dynamics of which are easily learned.
“Txalaparta is music,” often stated by Beltran in his work and by other participants, reveals the ongoing project of music construction, which is argued to be the continuation of a process in which the old txalapartariak were already immersed. The performativity of the term “music,” which seems to increase the status of that to which it is applied (Txalaparta), and thus combat a fear of erasure and the pain of regarding Txalaparta excluded from mainstream aesthetic conceptions of sound making, is disclosed in Beltran’s project (also taken on by other txalapartariak, and in a different but similar manner within the circle of musician and entrepreneur Kepa Junkera). A consequence of Beltran’s and his students’ promotional work for Txalaparta, and specifically his own specific fashioning of it as music, was identified by some participants as the unification of styles, a tendency, seemingly motivated by a desire to protect Txalaparta, that is disclosed more clearly by Harkaitz Martinez (member of Oreka Tx), trained with Beltran in Hernani.

The approach, or project, that seeks to shape Txalaparta as “music,” and which may be located at the opposite end of the spectrum to that of Txalaparta as “paramusical,” also responds to, and addresses, perceptions that regard understandings of Txalaparta as “ritual like” or efficacious performance, and as contrary to “music.”

The next chapter explores such perceptions, which perhaps oscillate between both ends of the sound-making spectrum outlined (yet closer to experimental endeavours), and ways in which these relate to the Basque struggle.
Chapter 5. Ritualising Txalaparta

Everyone has a right to a nationality.
[Rewords]: Everyone has a right to belong.

(Fieldwork, May 2008)

Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the tendency towards ritualising in relation to Txalaparta among those who worked for its recovery and ongoing revival, incorporating it to new practices since the early 1960s. If the previous chapter dealt with discourses of Txalaparta and related actions “as” performance, this chapter deals more specifically with a particular kind of performance within Schechner’s performance spectrum: “ritual,” or rather, according to Catherine Bell’s practice approach: “ritualising behaviour.” I initially elaborate on the etic understandings of ritual and ritualising which facilitate the interpretation that I then provide in relation to the kinds of actions and discourse displayed and presented by participants in relation to the Basque struggle. Themes that have been introduced or hinted at in previous chapters are elaborated upon together with additional ones in an attempt to understand the kind of sentiment (or sentiments) at the heart of this performing art for many, a sentiment that cannot be separated, as it seems, from Euskal Herria and the political conflict, that is, from the gravity of life and death.

The chapter discusses two types of “efficacious performance,” a kind that seems openly related to the political, and more specifically, the armed struggle, and one that I reflect upon in terms of healing, both related to the gravity of the conflict. This is an artificial differentiation on my part to an extent, since perhaps the first kind of performance might be considered as “healing” too, in relation to the necessary role that Txalaparta seems to play, at least until recent years, in performance, at a juncture experienced as painful by those involved. The distinction is made in terms of a theme that was brought up by participants themselves in discussions about the struggle and which I will not disclose just yet.
Art, Ritual, Ritualising

An approach to the practices and understandings exhibited by txalapartariak and others in relation to Txalaparta, through the prism of “ritual,” or rather, as a kind of “ritualising” (Bell 1997), provides a greater understanding of the symbolism of Txalaparta and its performativity in relation to the Basque struggle. Furthermore, as it may be appreciated from the glances provided so far into the discourse of various participants and relevant Basque thinkers, such as Jorge Oteiza, Txalaparta has often been approached as a kind of “ritualistic” practice in a very explicit manner. This demands attention.

It is necessary to clarify the understandings of ritual that allow me make sense of the kind of performances herein framed. This is not an easy task, as an attempt to define “ritual” may easily take us into philosophical depths where different vantage points produce their own paths, each of them disclosing treasures, and also hiding treasures away from view. On occasion I will use one or other understanding of what ritual may be for the sake of what I wish to disclose.

The concept of “ritual,” as Catherine Bell, Talal Asad and other scholars point out, is broad and problematic, since it encases many different understandings, constricting and constructing the subject matter. Bell points out in her analysis of the history of ritual scholarship (ibid.) that the concept of “ritual” is rooted in particular, culturally and historically situated ways of framing the world (behaviours, human/social phenomena, life itself), rather than being a universal category that automatically contains a natural given. Asad, as Bell points out, detects specifically Western ethnocentric constructions of power in the application of the single term “ritual” to different phenomena. There are as many explanations and understandings of “ritual” as vantage points, and, as Bell states, these conceptions of “ritual” may tell us more about the theorists and their societies than about those they studied. This author further notes that the concept of “ritual” is not only culturally bound, but it is based on the dichotomy of thought/action which has as a consequence the articulation of studies of ritual around further dualities, such as the opposition between theorist and ritual participants, leading to an understanding of “ritual” as an arena that mediates thought and action, providing the ultimate cultural phenomenon where the theorist has access to such meeting point.
between cultural values and practice. Within such assumptions (exemplified, according to Bell, by Geertz’s approach to the study of ritual) the theoretical meaning of actions studied stems from the theorist’s *etic* interpretation, reflecting the theorist’s own concerns rather than ritual actors’ categories and the nature of their actions. Bell further acknowledges that “ritual is not the same thing everywhere; it can vary in every feature,” bringing our attention once more to the fact that the study of ritual has often missed *emic* discourse (ritual participant’s point of view). It is my concern in the interpretation I provide in this chapter to find a conceptualisation that allows for as much leeway as possible, one that is open enough as to allow us frame, and reflect upon, the kinds of actions and discourses considered without subverting or misrepresenting them too much (for perhaps human phenomena, like Lao Tzu observed about that which he referred to as “Tao,” is not something that can be named without loosing its grasp, or something that can be comprehended rationally).

Characteristics that are usually associated in scholarly studies with the phenomenon of ritual, and which have helped broadly define it within traditional scholarly works, are: repetition (that is, kinds of actions or events that are repeated, such as every Sunday), referral to that of “utmost significance” (the sacred), display of formalised (prescribed) behaviours, the claim of a supporting tradition that situates the origins of the practice far back in history or in mythical time, and intent in the actions performed (Grimes 1982, 55). Taking these characteristics for granted (as well as other characterisations that label ritual as religious, or inefficient or pathologic) can be very constrictive, as Grimes further indicates, when we wish to frame new performances as rituals. They may also be to an extent constrictive if we are to reflect upon secular events and behaviours in terms of ritual.

Schechner understands ritual as “efficacious performance,” that is, a performance that seeks to effect change, and to do so permanently (unlike play, as he states, which transforms “reality” temporarily, for as long as “the rules of the game” last, so to speak). Schechner highlights a characteristic of “efficacious performance” which will largely define the approach to ritual in the present study: it leads participants temporarily “into a ‘second reality’, separate from ordinary life” (2002, 45). Given the problems with scholarly approaches to ritual as described above, and the fact that I engage here with behaviours that do not necessarily fit orthodox definitions of ritual, but which have in common the creation, by means of action, of temporary frames out of the ordinary within the active desire of constructing a new social and political reality for
Euskal Herria, Catherine Bell’s focus on “ritualisation” within an interpretative approach to the study of ritual practice seems most suited to make sense of the different understandings of Txalaparta in relation to the Basque struggle. Bell’s approach is embedded within a larger orientation in the social sciences toward a focus on practice (which equally informs performance studies), exemplified, among many, by thinkers like sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, who argues that social structures only exist in so far as they are enacted, and reflects upon the construction of the former in practice (thus reaching far beyond the problematic, or somewhat reductionist and vague, though indeed useful, function of “entertainment” that Schechner ascribes to theatrical performance, for instance).

The concept of “ritualising” has been used with different connotations by scholars like Schechner (ibid.) and Grimes in his earlier work (1982), who seem to reserve the use of such concept for repetitive animal behaviour (including human seemingly instinctual or mechanical behaviour of similar characteristics) for no obvious purpose, or which may seem to be meant to be efficacious in certain circumstances, in tune with the use of the term in ethology (this is more so in Schechner’s work). It is not in relation to such theorisations that I use the concept of “ritualising” or “ritualization,” for the primary reason that I seek to avoid their greater (and not fully examined) speculative charge in relation to behaviours we know too little about. I feel that explanations based on psychology or biology tend to rely too much on imagined links taken as givens, such as links between behaviour and genetics, or between behaviour and imagined concepts, like the mind. Grimes in particular referred to “ritualisation” as “the issue of ‘genetic culture’” (ibid., 39) in his earlier work claiming “it has an instinctual, inescapable quality about it” (ibid.) and distinguished between different embodied attitudes in ritual, “modes of ritual sensibility,” where “ritualising” is different from the rest on the bases of an assumed biological nature that Grimes does not emphasise in relation to the rest of the “modes” in the same measure. I do not wish to ascribe to the assumption that “ritualising” is “the most” biologically determined of possible behaviours nor that other behaviours or embodied attitudes are more or less determined, or even different, to “ritualising” because of their more distinguishable social nature (notwithstanding the valuable insights Grimes offers in his work for the study of behaviours that intentionally establish frames out of the ordinary). The way I use the concept of “ritualising” does not seek to distinguish between different ritual attitudes, but rather avoid such classifications which may be useful for the
understanding of ritual, but constrictive to present ethnographic material that will always overflow theoretical classifications. Grimes further refers to “ritualising” as a kind of behaviour in which “meaning, communication, or performance become more important than function and pragmatic end” (ibid., 36), yet, for the purpose of interpretations offered in this dissertation, I am however concerned with efficacy as the focus of the kinds of performances discussed in this chapter. In later work, Grimes uses “ritualising” to refer to “the activity of deliberately cultivating rites” (1993, 24) and “ritualisation” as the process leading to “ritualising”. Though in it Grimes shows a certain convergence with Bell’s approach, I will not rely on his perspective, which is embedded in a liturgical advocacy I do not wish to engage with here.

Bell describes “ritualisation” as “a way of acting that distinguishes itself from other ways of acting in the very way it does what it does”; the distinction established by means of ritualisation is made, Bell adds, “for specific purposes” (1997, 81). Bell further explains some central points to her proposed systematic approach to the study of ritual-like behaviour:

1. Ritual should be studied in its context, that is, within the “full spectrum of ways of acting within any given culture … Only in this context can the theorist-observer attempt to understand how and why people choose to differentiate some activities from others.” The focus is placed on “methods, traditions and strategies of ‘ritualisation’” (ibid., 81-2).

2. Central to the particular kind of actions that constitute ritualisation (and indeed all actions for that matter) is their embodied quality; actions are generated by bodies “simultaneously defining (imposing) and experiencing (receiving) the values ordering the environment” (ibid., 82). Ritual agents, as Bell further elaborates, construct the ritual environment -by means of ritualising- yet are oblivious to their agency and “do not see how they have created the environment that is impressing itself on them, but assume, simply in how things are done, that forces from beyond the immediate situation are shaping the environment and its activities in fundamental ways” (ibid.)

3. Deriving from the above, ritualisation “tends to promote the authority of forces deemed to derive from beyond the immediate situation” [italics are mine] (ibid.)
In the interpretation provided in this chapter, I share these central points, excepting the assumption made by Bell that humans are the sole agents of the ritual environment constructed (an assumption that is central to practice approaches in ritual studies and which is held by most scholars). I feel this position derives from the hegemony of western science over ritual actors that I do not fully share. I have no reason to distrust claims to a greater reality or entity as a ritual agent “shaping the environment” (how such entity is “owned,” or “defined,” by individuals, and the performativity of such behaviour, is, however, another matter). I have no desire to neither impose a sceptical attitude on someone else’s practices nor define them according to such an (etic) approach. This of course has interpretative implications (especially from a practice perspective), but I will not deal with them here as this is not the purpose of this dissertation. There is great practical advantage in the assumption that (human) ritual actors are the sole agents of their cultural environment, but I prefer to be cautious. There are dynamics and realities at work that we do not know (as biologist Rupert Sheldrake acknowledges and attempts to explain through his hypothesis of morphogenetic fields\(^1\), or as can be experienced, in example, through Bert Hellinger’s phenomenological systemic approach in the field of psychotherapy and other areas\(^2\)). Rather than argue for one or another kind of agency, I prefer to leave the matter open. Furthermore, the assumption that ritual agents are oblivious to their creation of ritual constructs may not be completely valid when discussing the political rituals of the Basque Independentist Left. Bell’s focus on embodiment is one that I share nonetheless. I am concerned in this dissertation with certain actions and constructions, and with its immediate agents, and humbly acknowledge that there is a lot about existence that I do not know.

The kinds of behaviours this chapter is concerned with seem to be oriented toward the creation of a separation from the ordinary, in dealing with something of utmost importance. The scope is broad: Art is ritualising, or may be explained as such. Art is about behaviours that frame and set something apart from the ordinary (such as the behaviours themselves, in the case of the performing arts) as per a sense of taste that selects and elevates that which is named “art” above everything else (except, perhaps, above the “sacred,” when not identified also as “art”) within a moral-aesthetic order


(aesthetics could be understood, perhaps, as a kind of embodied morals of the senses). The acts of “art” isolate something for our reflection; they seek to bring something to our attention. These behaviours engender in themselves a form of ritualising (whether ongoing or frozen into objects). Music making may be thus regarded as ritualising (in tune with Small’s concept of “musicking”). Art, as Jorge Oteiza elaborates in his writings, is, or should be, efficacious: healing (or redemptive, as Seamus Heaney argues in relation to poetry). Furthermore, the Basque thinker claims its origin is “sacred” (art as sacrament, rather than metaphor). There is an act of acknowledgment of something of “utmost significance” at its source. The rest of this chapter shall engage with what this “something” may be, how engagement with it occurs by means of Txalaparta, and perhaps why it does so (this last endeavour is largely left to an active reader whom I ask to join me in an unfinished exploration). Regarding the purpose of healing, I concern myself with efficacious performance (in the sense advocated by Schechner) with regards to certain participants who, as will be shown in this chapter, do present understandings and constructions of Txalaparta that openly identify it with healing (both in a therapeutic and a spiritual sense –if such a distinction is a valid one), and which also seek to heal “listeners” and performers alike.

Schechner proposes a continuum of performance according to its main function (or most salient function – etically defined). At one end of the continuum he situates “ritual,” to which he attaches the purpose of “efficacy” (its purpose is to effect change), and at the other end of the continuum, theatre, in which the purpose of “entertainment” is most dominant. Schechner ascribes certain characteristics to both and indicates that no performance is entirely one thing or the other. For the purpose of this dissertation (and without going into a critique of the distinction he proposes, the characteristics he assigns to each type of performance, or reflections upon the vague concept of “entertainment”), we may substitute “theatre” for other performing arts spectacles, such as a concert of Txalaparta, for instance. Though for the purpose of this dissertation, both kinds of performances fall under the scope of ritual, in line with Christopher Small’s understanding of music events as a kind of ritual, the distinctions among performance purposes Schechner offers is useful and helps us organise the ritualising performances discussed in this dissertation: The scope of ritual practices explored here focuses on

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3 “Listeners” may not be the best term to use in relation to the live experience of a Txalaparta performance, since Txalaparta engages the audience much more than aurally, and visually, as the vibrations produced when the wood is beaten, for instance, are felt throughout the body, and the more so the longer the plank.
those more directly concerned with the gravity of the struggle and less with a purpose of "entertainment," that is, practices that are more openly politically charged. An example are political rallies and events in homage of political prisoners (the latter organised and attended by people (relatives, friends) who may or may not support the political line of the banned political coalition Batasuna or an armed resistance, and for reasons that also reach beyond the strictly political). Practices presented in this chapter are illustrated with examples that pertain mostly to my fieldwork research (though not always), and are presented not in a chronological order, but rather following a sequence that will be revealed in due course.

The tendency to ritualisation that I focus on in this section of the dissertation may be regarded as new, or rather as a continuation of a process that was already there yet is now attuned to the new social and political context: that “of utmost importance” has now changed, and thus ritualising in relation to Txalaparta is articulated differently; not only differently from the past, but differently in relation to different social agents, generations, and approaches to the struggle mostly within the Basque left.

In the rest of this chapter I engage to an extent with the research endeavour advocated by Bell: “a practice approach to ritual will first address how a particular community or culture ritualises (what characteristics of acting make strategic distinctions between these acts and others) and then address when and why ritualisation is deemed to be the effective thing to do” (1997, 81). In this section I also continue the engagement with several interpretative communities and individuals that I have encountered in the course of fieldwork.

Tendency to Ritualisation in Relation to Txalaparta

In the performance of Txalaparta Zaharra (the old style), the kinds of actions performed at the communal work domain (the manual pressing of the apple for cider making among several participants who take turns in an interlocking fashion), and some of the work materials, are framed for display, albeit differently, modified:

4 Beltran highlights the peculiarities of Txalaparta and explains them in musical terms (necessary and intrinsic to the argument that “Txalaparta is music” explained in the previous chapter), framing differences from the task of cider-pressing differently to an extent.
The objects, in relation to the makilak, as Juan Mari Beltrán points out (2004) are no more the kind of tools possibly used to beat the apple (unlike what seems to be the case of kirikoketa), yet they bear a resemblance. The plank beaten has not been modified, except thoroughly dried after it was extracted from the apple-press, soaking in apple juice, once the pressing job had been completed. Here the only change is that it is now out of the press, placed outdoors in front of the press house (Goikoetxea family), elevated from the ground by means of stools or chairs (or perhaps stones as per Severo de Aguirre (ibid.)) or baskets (the baskets that were used to carry the apples, and possibly for many other tasks in the farmhouse). If apples were beaten in the work process, it is now the plank, without apples, that is beaten. The plank has also been insulated from the stands for greater sonority (the insulating material, i.e. corn leaves, like the stools, is part of the farmhouse environment and has not seemingly been specially treated for the occasion). The overall physical structure on which Txalapart is performed is not named.

The kind of actions involved in the process of beating, also, seem to have been modified and subjected to new rules in comparison with the task of beating the apples: a relatively short performance piece; progression from a low volume to a crescendo and from a slow to a fast tempo; specific sonic/kinesthetic roles are prescribed for only two performers: Ttakun/Herren (as per the Zuaznabar’s nomenclature); a certain sonic structure within which the piece is improvised: increased rhythmic complexity by means of the interplay between Ttakun/Herren as the piece progresses, though it may decrease at given sections of the piece, but always leading to a resolution in which both players perform ttakun in a rapid alternative succession, where the distance between both strokes of the ttakun beat are increasingly reduced so that “it is not possible” to produce more beats in between them (players must “arrive to the impossible”) as JosAnton Artze explained the old txalapartari Miguel Zuaznabar used to say. An interplay between forces of order and disorder dancing on unpitched wooden sounds, culminating in a synthesis (appendix B), a new order at the peak of volume and pace –at the highest level of energy in the piece (resembling in its overall structure the basic configuration Gennep identifies in what he termed “rites of passage” (1960)). It was played at night, outdoors, in front of the cider press building (the Goikoetxea), after a communal meal attended by the family and work participants, amid rejoicing and drinking. As per Ramon and Pilar Goikoetxea, and Joseba Zuaznabar (who inherited the tradition from their own relatives, the old txalapartariak), those who did not know how
to play (even if they might be able to do it from watching or some informal practice) were not allowed perform unless either of the “official” txalapartariak from the cider farmhouse were absent for the performance, case in which the seasoned player would always perform the role of herrena, responsible for the rhythmic structure of Txalaparta, also relatively free to improvise, unlike the role of ttakuna, left to the novice.

These characteristics of Txalaparta Zaharra, the old style, already contained and provided important elements for the ritualising that emerged in relation to it among the youth that recovered it in the 1960s and that infused a new life onto it. Txalaparta:

- a link with an atavist past, so seemingly old yet “exotic,” as Benito Lertxundi stated (more so when preceded by the call of the ox horn, as used to be the case in the performances by the old Zuaznabar and the Zabalegi txalapartariak);

- experienced as a kind of ritual by those who discovered it (from Severo de Aguirre, at the end of the 19th C., who claimed the performance made the task of apple pounding “solemn,” to Oteiza, who described it as a “ritual, primitive rhythm” (Oteiza 1994 [1963], 132);

- the “funerary drum” that would evoke, from trot to gallop, as Urbeltz and others saw it, the horse that would lead the soul into another dimension;

- ttakun: an ancestral heart beat, “silence made audible,” as JosAnton Artze claims; a rhythm of the Basque people, as this txalapartari and poet argued. Ttakun, heard and recovered by a new generation from the environment of the baserri, the Basque farmhouse, regarded as the repository of Basque traditional culture (Zulaika 1988) and Basque sensibility;

- an ancient language, Euskara; the nation with the face of the mother; endangered. The call for its rescue.

- Txalaparta: a strange call, as Lertxundi stated; more like a magical casting spell capable of bringing at any moment, as he said he felt, the peoples from the past, those people, already complete and whole, as Oteiza dreamed of them while mesmerised by the void -that void that ended his sculptural search and which those prehistoric peoples had already encircled millennia before him.
One of my hosts while I was staying in Oiartzun (Gipuzkoa), a txalapartari, Ander, explained, as we were talking of Txalaparta:

It is like an evocation of the people of the caverns, I imagine them in the mountain, with their rites. Every time I hear it I get goose pimples. Look [showing me his arms], right now, while we talk about this.

Agurtzane, his partner, put the CD Sakanatik Arbaila Ttipira: “I feel my nation with this, I feel my people,” said Ander as Txalaparta played in the background, “that is why I have always wanted to play it” (fieldnotes, June 2006).

It seems Txalapartariak, as if they were shamans like those Mircea Eliade described, are entrusted with the task of moving the souls of their audiences, like their own, to another world, for the sake of bringing them back to a nation in search of its “lost identity”: Be it Ez Dok Amairu, or txalapartariak like the Sorzabalbere, from Irun, who devote themselves with reverence to Txalaparta, with the skill acquired over years of full dedication, and no more script or score than the story they wish to convey, like two bertsolariak in dialogue who are asked to improvise their sung verses on a theme. We may add the anarchist Txalaparta group I met in Nafarroa, “the Txalaparta bertsolaris,” as one of them told me (fieldwork 2003), creating, beyond any known religion, a most sacred space with their sounds, as I and the audience witnessed with awe outside and inside the Hermita de San Miguel in Arretxinaga (Markina-Xemein), also known as Hiru Harri (three stones) because of the three big rocks inside, around which the church was built: “they say there is telluric energy there,” the txalapartariak explained to me. I felt during fieldwork that those txalapartariak with a more clearly anarchistic outlook also seemed to have a more mystic orientation in their performances and discourse, versus technique based, logically oriented, more regular and intellectualised styles perhaps.

Improvised, wild, free Txalaparta, with the deep voice of the tree (“sacred tree” 5 that once rose from the Earth), alternated in the spectacles of Ez Dok Amairu with the

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5 The tree has been regarded as sacred in traditional Basque popular culture (as was the case in Irish and Central European mythology). This is exemplified by the Tree of Gernika, oak tree, symbol of Basque sovereignty, under which the ancient laws of Bizkaia were sworn by the Lord of Bizkaia and different kings. Today the president of the Government of the Basque Autonomous Community takes his position officially under this tree, which was always guarded by a gudari (Basque soldier) during the Civil War (Elosegi 1977). I was told by different participants that traditional popular assemblies (the political form of organisation of the Baztan valley until relatively recently and which still remains in the Lea-Artibai
silver bell sounds of the *tobera*, wrapped by Artze’s poems, by traditional popular songs and new ones, in Euskara; and Txalaparta in the centre, like an altar (as Lertxundi stated), encircled by the ancient dance of the *mutil dantza*, like a reclaimed *akelarre*\(^6\) from the hands of the terrible Inquisition into Basque “authentic” rites, perceived as “more Basque,” more “authentic” (if only, perhaps, for the values upheld and what it stood up against), than the Catholic Church could possibly be, the latter regarded by most participants in this research as an imperialist force engaged in an ongoing expropriation of both material and spiritual wealth, whether in Euskal Herria or i.e. Latin America, the common example put forth at interviews and informal conversations.

Ritualising: a kind of behaviour emerging from a sensitive body in practice of reverence for something core, non defined, and also embodied; a practice, leading outside of the ordinary, emerging from a “somatic mode of attention”? (Csordas 1993) as it turns toward that, more sensed than rationalised, which requires it (an endangered Basque nation) by means of behaviours and “objects” that are collectively understood as belonging to it: “It is for thousands of years that the artist works with the same intention that you can see, that you have been able to see in the making of this film [Pelotari]: the artist teaching others to pay attention” (Oteiza 1984, 11) (italics are mine). Arts practice seems to be, in Oteiza’s understandings, a ritualising with which the artist seeks to bring into people’s attention something of utmost significance; a ritualising that involves an existential search, a gazing into the distance, of which experimentation is part; an ancient past invoked and made present; a way of being, defended and passionately advocated by a man, Oteiza, lifting Basque morale with a scream, “*Quosque tandem!*,” and the strength of an *harrijasotzaile* (stone lifter).

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\(^6\) One other existing narrative which is upheld (it was mentioned to me by very few participants), imagines Txalaparta in the context of the *akelarre* allegedly celebrated in the caves of Zugarramurdi (seemingly non-Christian events that the Spanish Inquisition reinterpreted as witches’ Sabbath in the early 17\(^{th}\) century). Beltran (2009) points out that remains of lime kilns have been found in these caves which makes it possible that Txalaparta (possibly meaning “interlocking” of some kind) may have been performed there in conjunction with the celebrations (“lime weddings”) Barandiaran described (chapter 4 in this dissertation).

\(^7\) The anthropologist Csordas has coined the concept of “somatic modes of attention” (chapter one) to refer to “culturally elaborated ways of attending to and with one’s body in surroundings that include the embodied presence of others” (1993, 138). I use the concept of “somatic mode of attention” in a more broad sense than that proposed by Csordas, yet basically meaning the same (physical perception as a means to gain a knowledge, and make sense, of a social environment).
The invocation of soul (standing perhaps for “identity”) and sentiment, at once religious and artistic, as put forth by Oteiza (which resonates with feminist reflections upon art in ancient matriarchal societies\(^8\)), aiming at deep social transformation by means of the arts, as he advocated, impregnates an emerging ritualising in the emerging engagement with Txalaparta. As Oteiza argues, in relation to the first showing of the film *Pelotari* in Gernika in 1964, noticing that someone cried,

> When the true artist tells us something it is for something to happen to us, something that we ourselves need to find or remember. The one who cried did so because of the personal discovery he has experienced, possibly unconsciously, of the most intimate and now almost lost part of our soul, where aesthetic and religious values are the same (ibid., 10).

It does not matter here whether someone who cried at the showing did so for the reasons Oteiza stated, but that Oteiza would have cried for that reason, and that those artists who resonated with him, might too have cried for it. What matters is that such sentiment (unknown and vague to rational definition attempts but certain to s/he who shares in it) is or may be the impulse moving their practices, performances that were meant to be efficacious, performances that were efficacious.

Our Basque soul has been formed in Prehistory through this intimate union, from the arts, of the aesthetic and the religious. And how is the Basque soul? We are living today (or stopping to live) a situation in which it is necessary to ask ourselves these questions which are fundamental for us and to try and find them answers. How has our soul been made? How has it been decomposed? How can we recover it? (ibid.)

Oteiza sees in the separation of the aesthetic and the religious, which he attributes, in his *Spiritual Exercises* (censored in 1966), to the introduction of Catholicism and a “Latin, Mediterranean” style, “foreign to our spiritual structure” (ibid., 13)), the “decomposition” of the “Basque soul” and Basque personality. This Basque artist argued that the way to recover them could thus be effected by bringing both sentiments back into one again: introducing aesthetic education into the seminaries (Operation Seminary); promoting children’s aesthetic and religious imagination at once in play

\(^8\) An example are Heide Gottner-Abendroth’s attempts to construct a “matriarchal aesthetic” based on an analysis of myth and archaeological evidence (Bowman 1998).
(Operation child); rethinking again the preparation of artists (teachers) metaphysically and scientifically (Operation Contemporary Art) (ibid., 13-15). A religious sense of the sacred, child’s creativity, and contemporary forms, is what makes up the mix of a ritualisation that takes shape in Ez Dok Amairu and that would influence not only strictly artistic performances, but also, as it seems, would follow through into the more obviously political. There is an important aspect also in this kind of ritualising, a sense of the tragedy of the Basque struggle, as those involved will try to make sense of what seems an inevitable dynamic, that of sacrifice:

There is something in the depth of nations that defines us all as a single race and it is our reaction in front of the common destiny of death. In that community in which more strongly is that tragic existential sentiment defined, is where the artist will be better defined (Oteiza 1994 [1963], 153).

Joseba Urzelai (b. 1952), who was Jexux Artze’s Txalaparta partner for a short period of time in Laboa’s performances and recordings, spoke of a night festival in Ataun, early in the 1970s, still under Franco’s dictatorship:

*Txalapartariak* scattered around there, in the hills, in the early morning, with ten small bonfires, after a *gaupasa* [all-night celebrating]… (the festival, yes, it was very political -with banners, political chants…-, and Txalaparta fitted perfectly there). It was an awakening with Txalaparta and bonfires. The festival was from 10 in the evening to 1 in the morning, and then, at dawn, Txalaparta (interview, July 2006).

“I heard the txalaparta for the first time thanks to the ‘Baga, biga, higa’, the spectacle of Ez Dok Amairu…” explained to me Josu Zabala, one of the five members of the Basque rock group Hertzainak (1981-1993), then, he added, he heard it in Ataun:

It was a festival that lasted all night as it was normal at the time. There was a bonfire on a hill in front of the field where we were, there, with the full moon, all very mystical, very late at night, and from there Txalaparta could be heard filling the valley with its sounds, it was an impressive experience. Txalaparta put you in contact with something very deep, primitive, the secrets… (it is not that they were
secrets, but as all that was hidden…) Txalaparta was that, the identity, the recovery of the identity, of something denied (interview, June 2006).

Anthropologist Joseba Zulaika describes another experience of this event by a research participant who felt moved to make an important and serious choice:

One of the former members of ETA from Itziar told me that his having joined the organisation was intimately linked to a mountain experience during the festival of the Guipuzcoa town of Ataun. He had heard at dawn the echoes of the *txalaparta* that were coming from several mountain hills and, in an estate of intense emotion, he decided to join ETA (1988, 296).
Rhythms of Struggle

Nire aitaren etxea defendituko dut.
Otsoen kontra,
sikatearen kontra,
lakurreiaren kontra,
justiziaren kontra,
defenditu
eginen dut
nire aitaren etxea.
Galduko ditut
aziendak,
soloak,
pinudiak;
galduko ditut
korrituak,
errenteak,
interesak,
baina nire aitaren etxea defendituko dut.
Harmak kenduko dizkidate,
eta eskuarekin defendituko dut
nire aitaren etxea;
eskuak ebakiko dizkidate,
eta besoarekin defendituko dut
nire aitaren etxea;
besorik gabe,
sorbaldik gabe,
bularrik gabe
utziko naute,
eta arimarekin defendituko dut
nire aitaren etxea.

Ni hilen naiz,
nire arima galduko da,
nire askazia galduko da,
baina nire aitaren etxeak
iraunen du zutik.

I will defend
my father's house.
Against wolves,
against draught
against usury,
against justice,
I will defend
my father's house.

I will loose
the cattle,
the orchards,
the pine woods;
I will loose
the interest,
the rents,
the dividends,
but I will defend my father’s house.
They will take my weapons from me
and with my hands I shall defend
my father's house;
they will cut my hands
and with my arms I shall defend
my father's house;
they will leave me
without arms,
without shoulders,
without breasts,
and with my soul I shall defend
my father's house.

I will die,
my soul will be lost,
my children will be lost,
but my father's house,
will remain
standing.

(“Nire aitaren etxea” by Gabriel Aresti, from Harri eta Herri, 1960)

On the 3rd of April 2003 I attended a poetry reading with Txalaparta at a school
in which the curricula is taught entirely in Euskara (linguistic model D), in the outskirts
of the city of Irun (Gipuzkoa), “an alluvium area,” as participants explained to me,
meaning that it received massive waves of immigration from other regions of the
Spanish State in a relatively short period of time during the second half of the 20th century), which posed a serious (ongoing) threat to Basque language and culture. Different poems, from an assortment of Basque and Spanish poets (such as JosAnton Artze or Miguel Hernández), formed the repertoire recited by one of the teachers, Juan, accompanied by two txalapartariak. There was a casual informal atmosphere to the performance, which took place purposefully at the same level as the audience, leaving the stage behind unused: “we want to be near the audience … we want to be equal, that is the idea” (Juan). The txalaparta featured sheep skins covering the foam that insulates the stands from the three boards used (as well as two iron bars, toberak, that were incorporated for some of the poems). There was also a sticker at the front of the txalaparta facing the audience: “Gerrarik ez” (“no to the war”), as the invasion of Iraq had recently started (the txalapartariak I worked with in Iruñea were involved in various protests against the war at which they performed). Asier, one of the Txalaparta players, explained that they learned with the “txalapartaris of Irun” (the Sorzabalbere, advocates of improvisation): they had a few notes and made up signs, their own, jotted at given points on the poems, which became their score, placed over one of the planks for guidance. Copies of one of the poems (“El Bosco” by Rafael Alberti) were distributed among the audience (children’s parents, mostly mothers), so that they would participate repeating the refrain.

During the performance, Asier and Ekaitz played generally softly, with a low volume, accompanying the poetry reading with care not to cover Juan’s voice. At the end of the poems, they would increase the volume and tempo, closing the piece, but generally played little and seemed to function as a backdrop. There was an exception to this, however. One of the poem pieces clearly stood out from the rest for the unusual centre stage that Txalaparta was suddenly given: before Juan starts reading, Asier and Ekaitz play a piece that resembles the performatic roles, structure and dynamics of Txalaparta Zaharra, followed by the stark contrast of voice alone: “Nire aitaren etxea / defendituko dut”: I will defend / my father’s house. Txalaparta enters again and keeps playing all along the poem: Gabriel Aresti’s “Nire aitaren etxea” (my father’s house). “…[W]ith my soul I shall defend / my father's house” is followed by a short yet intense moment of Txalaparta: “burrunba motza,” “short clattering,” as they have jotted at this point in the poem with a squiggle like a spiral (appendix D) which means “with
strength, whatever comes out, but with strength” (Asier). Txalaparta goes silent ("isiltasunean"), underscoring the last strophe of the poem by means of voice alone:

\[
\begin{align*}
Ni \ hilen \ naiz, & \quad \text{I will die} \\
\text{nire arima galduko da,} & \quad \text{my soul will be lost,} \\
\text{nire askazia galduko da,} & \quad \text{my children will be lost,} \\
\text{baina nire aitaren etxeak} & \quad \text{but my father's house,} \\
\text{iraunen du} & \quad \text{will remain} \\
\text{zutik.} & \quad \text{standing.}
\end{align*}
\]

One last intense moment of Txalaparta closes the piece.

I asked Juan, why was Txalaparta so prominent for this particular poem:

It is an impressing poem, I love it. Watch it though, I would not sign my name to what he [Aresti] says, but the poem has tremendous strength and I love it. That's why I wanted the txalaparta to be very present there. “My father’s house” is a metaphor, it is all this, that which is euskaldun… It symbolises all this, taken to the extreme by Aresti in the poem. That father’s house is the Euskera that Gabriel Aresti in the 1960s defended with his life and that today is a flag of so many poets, writers and ordinary people (Juan, interview, April 2003).

“All this,” as seemed obvious in the context of the conversation, was Euskara and education in Euskara (the school), culture in Euskara, Txalaparta: now an island, in the context of Irun. His use of the term “euskaldun” (Basque speaker) to refer to things Basque (culture) further stressed the generalised understanding, among Basque nationalists of one or another political sign (though not so clearly regarding the institutionalised nationalism represented by PNV), of an intimate link between Euskara and Basque culture, where one cannot exist without the other (some participating txalapartariak maintained that Txalaparta had to be taught in Euskara for a real comprehension of what it is about). What was that, however, which Juan said he would not sign his name to? I did not ask, not because I felt I knew (which I actually sensed I did), but because, as I was eventually told by a few participants (chapter one), that was a

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9 The picture beside this section heading is the sign the txalapartariak used in their copy of the poem to indicate how to play at the start (appendix D). I am interested in the visual insight provided by the txalapartariak on what the struggle (“I will defend my father’s house”), or conveying the idea of defending “the father’s house” by means of improvised Txalaparta playing, may mean for them and how it is experienced by them, as expressed intuitively through a visual embodied scriptural depiction. I have not sought to interpret it, as I wish the reader to be free to perceive.
subject that people did not talk about for fear: “You can’t be asking that, people don’t speak about that, you never know whom you’re talking to” (fieldnotes 2006):

The armed struggle.

The documentary film *Euskal Herri Musika*, premiered in 1980 (Roldan 1997), not without some criticism as exemplified by an article authored by Santos Zunzunegi in the now closed down independentist left newspaper *Egin* for “forgetting today’s music and its influence in the popular struggle” (ibid., 339) could perhaps be regarded (despite Zunzunegi’s interpretation as described by Roldan) as the presentation of an emerging sensory discourse of engagement with the struggle in relation to Txalaparta¹⁰. This emerging discourse had also been introduced previously to an extent by the film *Ama Lur* (1968), as discussed in chapter two, the short film *Ez* (1977) directed by Imanol Uribe, and the latter’s long documentary film *El Proceso de Burgos*, released in 1979, all of them featuring Txalaparta soundtracks by the Artze brothers. The last documentary, about the Burgos Process in 1970 that brought the Basque struggle to an international level during the dictatorship, is particularly relevant for it openly addresses the armed struggle: Txalaparta soundtracks are introduced, after approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes of interviews with the main characters involved, when the trials are tackled by the documentary. A few seconds of Txalaparta introduce peak moments in the film narrative relating the trials, such as footage of world demonstrations in support of the ETA members on trial, the commencement and end of the trial (just before a sound recording of the moment when the trial proceedings are interrupted and the accused start singing the song of the Basque soldier (p. 305)), the theme of the prisons to which the accused are returned every day after the trial sessions. A longer Txalaparta soundtrack (more than 30 seconds,) performed with special intensity, plays while the

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¹⁰ Some participants in the documentary, including Oteiza (whose input seems evident in the identification of the religious and the artistic in the film), became very critical with the political line of the Independentist Left and/or the armed struggle. Oteiza, who admired ETA initially, became critical of it and HB years later, as evidenced by his prologue to the 5th edition of *Quoique Tandum* written in 1993. Some of the mature participants I interviewed or spoke to informally during the Spring and summer of 2006 who, while being socially and politically engaged from a left wing stance and showing a desire for an independent Euskal Herria (some of them former members of ETA), were critical of ETA and the Independentist Left coalition, used to mention ETA’s shooting of the ex-ETA leader Yoyes in 1986 (who had left the organisation years earlier and was understood to be a police informer by her former colleagues) as a turning point in their support. According to some participants who were critical of the independentist left, a more critical attitude toward “HB-ETA” had developed in recent years: “since the last 10 years ago or so, when they started putting ‘firecrackers’ to journalists and politicians, people started saying that ‘that wasn’t right’” (fieldwork, June 2006.)
death of the young protester Roberto Pérez Jáuregui, who died of police gunshot wounds on the fourth day of the trials, is presented in the documentary. Txalaparta soundtracks do not appear while figures involved in the trials are interviewed, but when footage relating to the events discussed is shown (with the exception of the funeral scene, at the end of the documentary,) thus focusing viewer’s attention on the core of the action.

Soon Txalaparta would be given a meaningful role in the kind of ritualising that developed in relation to the political coalition of Herri Batasuna and successive formations of the so called Independentist Left and, in particular, the armed struggle, as is explored in the next pages.

Though he was not at all impressed by the abstract and research plan I showed him in February 1999 for my MA thesis in progress (which outlined two possible musical aesthetics in relation to music and nationalism as presented to me by Amets (thesis introduction), focusing on Txalaparta within a left wing nationalist aesthetic), Juan Mari Beltran acknowledges in his 2009 publication the existence of separate aesthetics which he dates back to the mid 70s:

From 1975, when the division in tendencies within the nationalist movement took place, each faction sought its symbology and ways of expression, and also chose its aesthetics. We do not really know the reason, but in that fragmentation the txalaparta remained in the side of radical abertzalismo [Castilian derivation of the Basque term “abertzale,” meaning here “nationalism”]. The truth is that for some txalapartaris their primordial activities have been to perform at political events of all kinds, always within the environment of the abertzale left (Beltran 2009, 130).

The Txalaparta, about 20 years ago more or less [1980s]…, well, 90% of txalapartaris were HB [Herri Batasuna]. That is indeed a piece of data that is… scientific [meaning he has no doubt about it] (Argider, interview June 2003).

Argider, a participating txalapartari, provided me with his understanding of the socio-political context of those engaged with Txalaparta. Like most participants, he argued that this was not so much the case anymore –especially since, as I could observe and infer from my fieldwork research, the World Music industry is now, since the first years of the 21st century, introducing its own market and political dynamics into the
“world of Txalaparta,” in ways that “open it up,” which some celebrated, but were, for the most part, controversial, as briefly discussed in the previous chapter. Though Argider was very critical now of the armed struggle and its associated political line (that of the Independentist Left, exemplified by its first coalition HB (Herri Batasuna, meaning “union of the people”)), he explained to me that he was himself an HB supporter in his twenties, when he went on to study Euskara and “arrived” to Txalaparta. Argider offered me his view about the development work undertaken in relation to Txalaparta, which he portrayed as taking place mainly within two contexts: On the one hand, the “intellectuals,” as he referred to the Artze brothers and Juan Mari Beltran (he later added the context of dance groups, through which, to my knowledge, Beltran was actively involved in the promotion of Txalaparta; Ortzadar in Iruñea or Bizkaiko Dantzarien Biltzarra, the Federation of Dancers of Bizkaia, in Bilbo, are examples of this). On the other hand, Argider pointed out its development and spread within politics or in connection with political ideology (specifically, the ideology of the Independentist Left –“HB”) (Argider, fieldwork, June 2003). Eleder, born in the mid 1960s, 41 years old at the time of interview (June 2006,) ex-political prisoner from Bizkaia, illustrated, through his own case, the trajectory of the youth that got interested in Txalaparta within an independentist left environment in the late 1980s. He entered into contact with Txalaparta through his political activism, in relation to his attendance at demonstrations and other political events in Gipuzkoa during his early teens:

…we went to demos and so on, there… to the marches that are done for the prisoners…, and we started seeing txalapartas around, on the astoa [the commonly used A-shaped wooden supports, resembling workman’s table legs], the… (I don’t know the name in Spanish), the corn leaves underneath, and baskets… And I saw it and “look, look!,” I had never seen it before. I had seen the alboka but this…. We went around, to the villages, and you saw Txalaparta, pun! …Homages for people that…. for dead ETA militants, right? And the truth, the truth is that it was very moving! Man, I used to be very moved (Eleder, interview, June 2006).

He explained the social environment during his incipient political activism in the 1980s and early 90s, in the heavily industrialised, urbanised and Spanish-fashioned left bank of Bilbo’s Estuary (in Santurtzi specifically). Eleder started his contact with Basque culture through Euskara (like most participants), which he learned voluntarily as an adult, of which he explained (and as was evident in the interview) he was passionate
about, and became acquainted with Basque traditions through his activism and his girlfriend, also an *abertzale* left supporter, who was from a village that had been relatively untouched by industrialisation at the time: “…it is 80% euskaldun *[speaking of the past in the present tense]*, it is another world. There is no industry; here [the left bank] all of it is there. Here [his girlfriend’s village] everything is pretty; here [the left bank] everything is ugly. Here [the village] there are 30 inhabitants; here [the left bank] 30,000…” explained Eleder over an imaginary map on the bench on which we were seating, in the Etxebarria park, near the Arriaga theatre in Bilbo: “Here, in this kiosk [an elevated stage in the park], how many txalapartas have been played! Millions of txalapartas. It’s amazing” he said, while discussing the political rallies and homage events for activists. He described his youth in a manner that coincided with what I had seen so far among other independentist left youths in Nafarroa (mainly Iruñea) committed to Basque culture and the cause: “In an area like the left bank [in Bizkaia], a person that is committed with the left, you know, with that spirit, works [as a volunteer] in a thousand places, in social movements, in political movements, in union fight movements…, every where, in assemblies of the unemployed… We were everywhere.” A characteristic of the Basque movement for national liberation is the relatively young age of many of its most active supporters\(^\text{11}\) (many in their teens and twenties), a characteristic that in fact overspills the movement, since there are active youths and associations that do not (or which may or may not) inscribe themselves within the movement (boundaries are fluid), such as the *gaztete* movement with their autonomous youth assemblies (chapter three), free radios and magazines, environmental and human rights associations (and indeed Txalaparta workshops, or those I have attended), etc. Those *txalapartariak* in Iruñea I had worked more closely with who, as it seemed to me, moved in a more clearly Left Independentist social circle, explained that some people who came to their workshops were not of their political line or a clear one, however their experience of Txalaparta in terms of continued commitment, and of the circles of Txalaparta they moved in outside of Nafarroa, was perceived as being generally *ezker abertzale*. Eleder got together with other friends and they decided to start learning Txalaparta:

> In my village, Santurtzi, I got together with others and said “Listen, we have to bring a txalaparta here…” [*laughs*] and “yeah, let’s do it”; “my uncle has thrown away an oak beam from a farmhouse,” “ok, bring it along” … I took it to get it

\(^{11}\) For further information, see Ó Broin 2003, in bibliography.
cut and we got a wonderful piece of wood, and it wasn’t oak, it was a noble wood, African wood, it sounded so nice...! And with it we made three Txalaparta planks (interview, June 2006).

Eleder’s initial self-learning took place supported by, and within the milieu of, Euskara promotional grassroots work: “…then there was a…, the first ikastola in Santurtzi, which was an association and that, there we kept everything [the txalaparta planks and supports], and so on, they allowed us use the space, and so on.” Eleder and his friends learned, he further explained, from one other musician who had attended some intensive courses delivered by Juan Mari Beltran and who immediately organised a short course (of a few days duration) with Eleder and others:

…like this, for free and everything, right? Some of us started playing there and from then on we started playing Txalaparta [in public]… It was something simple, right?, it was the ttakun ttakun, to do the play of herrena and so on… We didn’t do techniques that are done now, we learned the basics … And all performances that were done, they were by myself and a lad that is now…. he is now…. well, he is…. a lad that is not here, who had to leave because… [this is a sensitive subject], also because…. well, escaping from the… the police, right? He is somewhere lost… [in clandestinity]. And well, he was my [Txalaparta] partner, and we always played together … the matter is that we had chemistry to play [together], and then, well, we always played together, him and me. In all the homage events [for prisoners and activists]: him and me. In all the [public] dinners: him and me. Rallies: him and me (interview, June 2006).

Like many other youths throughout Euskal Herria, as soon as they were able to play a little, they went out and played in the streets (not busking), for the love of it. As Eleder added:

Then, do you know what we used to do? We went…. we got bored…. maybe we were having a few drinks, the typical few drinks in the evening (we were young kids, we were in our early teens), and we’d get bored, and “hey, let’s get the ‘txala’,” we went up for the “txala” (the association [were we kept it] was above a bar [drink tavern]; under the bar, just the street, a common street, you know, with its shops and its bars), and we would put it [the txalaparta] on the footpath, and we played the txalaparta there. It was a pleasure. People stopped! Of course, and
it sounded well! We had already learned, and it sounded to die for. As the street was one of those with tall buildings, wow, the sound resonated throughout the whole street. And there was people who complained, and people who said “blimey, how nice! And what is it!,” you know? “And where did you get this from?” I am talking of almost 20 years ago, right? (interview, June 2006).

Eleder argued that at the time, when Txalaparta was not as well known as it is now, everyone who attended the political rallies (of the independentist left) and homage events was fascinated by Txalaparta, which gave the tradition an important thrust. Soon the youth would get one made with whatever materials were available to them (“carpenters would cut it [the wood] for the motherland” explained Erlantz Auzmendi, meaning they would cut the planks for free when they knew they were for a txalaparta (interview, November 2003)). They would learn the basic dynamics of the old style, and get playing immediately in the streets and mountains (I recall two boys in their 20s whom I met through a weekend Txalaparta workshop in Nafarroa, in 1999, who explained to me they taught themselves to play on park benches with some workman’s tools before they found out about the classes.) Eleder claimed that without the left abertzale, Txalaparta would not be as widespread and alive in the Basque Country as it is now, he added that an interest to play Txalaparta started to emerge in all areas where the left abertzale had its homage events, during the 1980s and with it a demand for workshops to learn the instrument:

I do not want to gift medals to anyone, right?, but it is a reality which is the reality of the political development itself of Euskal Herria … What happens is that we have Juan Mari Beltran, a man who has given everything, and in truth he has little to do with the left abertzale… What happens is that he is a teacher, a teacher on whom we have all based ourselves… Many of us who have wanted to boost the Txalaparta, or other instruments, we would not have had information without him and everything would have been much more limited (interview, June 2006.)

As stated earlier, a particular narrative, from those presented in the previous chapter, seems to be of particular relevance in relation to ritualising and the armed struggle: that which explained the origins of Txalaparta in terms of a function of communication, reflecting upon it as a calling device, often within a discursive
understanding of “music” (as regulated, celebratory, and sometimes equated with upper-middle social class and thus social structures of inequality) in which Txalaparta (more specifically linked to functionality and efficacy) does not seem to fit (or not fully,) depending on participants.
Call to Battle

Figure 5.1: Txalaparta performance opening the political rally for the presentation of candidates of the new Independentist Left coalition AuB, soon after the banning of Batasuna on the 28th of March, 2003. AuB (Autodeterminaziorako Bilgunea –“Platform for Self-determination”) would soon be banned also just before the local elections, and would be followed by subsequent political formations, all banned to date, leaving a significant part of the electorate disenfranchised. Source: Fieldwork, 5th of April 2003.

If you struggle for a series of things, links with a culture and with an identity of a people, and with your specific characteristics as a people and so forth, then, normally, I mean, you use as a weapon that which is…., I mean, what is yours … That is, if there is a sector that vindicates Basque identity, or the identity of the Basque people, or whatever, it will vindicate it with that identity, I don’t know how to say it, right?, with those characteristics of theirs that they want to save and to defend, right? In that sense it may have a claim sense, in the sense of practicing an instrument that is very, very much from that Basque culture, from that environment that one wants to save (Antxon, txalapartari, interview, February 1999).

As I was told by participants and could see in some audiovisual recordings (unfortunately only sections of the rallies, but never the whole event) Txalaparta performances always opened the rallies of the Independentist Left political coalition
(whose motto is Independence and Socialism), created in 1978 as Herri Batasuna (“Union of the people”), and which would change name several times, depending on the political juncture (i.e. for an increase in the membership of organisations and associations, as was the case in 1998, or because of the banning of its political coalition by the Spanish State, as occurred in 2003 with Batasuna, succeeded by AuB, also banned in 2003, and so on). As participating txalapartariak told me, they improvised a short piece that, in general terms, followed the style of Txalaparta Zaharra, in the sense of an improvised piece where both players progress by means of interlocking toward an increased volume and tempo, often ending the performance at its peak, though not necessarily attending to the prescribed roles of 

\[ \text{txakun} \] and \[ \text{herren} \]. The rallies also included, depending on their scale and motive (and with variations from a rally to the next according to some Askapena members), a display of cultural expressions regarded as inherent to Basque culture, such as \[ \text{joaldunak} \], carnival characters from the villages of Ituren and Zubieta (Nafarroa), also known as \[ \text{ttuntturroak} \] or \[ \text{zanpantzar} \], who have been ascribed the function of awakening the Earth from its winter lethargy (fig. 5.2), and other Basque carnival masks that march encircling the court of the sports pavilion where the rallies are sometimes held in Iruñea at the start of the political event, for instance (while the court is occupied by audience, which is also sitting on the terraces). Basque dances (in the traditional costume, but also in casual clothes in given occasions), perhaps an \[ \text{aizkolari} \] (wood cutter –whose activity is also a so called Basque rural sport, requiring of (and symbolising) strength and precision) and also, as in some occasion pointed out to me, a rock band or singer/song writer accompanied by guitar, could be part of the event (or some traditional Basque song, like the lullaby “\text{Haurtxo polita},” performed by a violinist), as I could watch and listen in one of the video clips of Euskal Herritarrok events kindly facilitated to me by some participants in March 2003. The incorporation of \[ \text{joaldunak} \] in a performance that also features Txalaparta (both opening the events herein discussed relating to the political and/or armed struggle) has at least a precedent in the bicentenary of the 18\textsuperscript{th} C. Basque historian, \[ \text{euskaltzale} \], dance and song

![Figure 5.2: Txalaparta (in the background) and \text{joaldunak} performance opening a political rally of the Independentist Left formation Euskal Herritarrok. Iruñea, Nafarroa. May 1999. Source: Video clip provided by a member of Batasuna, fieldwork, March 2003.}](image)
collector and revivalist, Juan Ignacio Iztueta, which was celebrated in 1967, in Zaldibia (Gipuzkoa), at which the Artze brothers participated:

We got together four or five couples and we positioned ourselves on the tops of the mountains that surround the village, a couple in each top. At five in the morning, before dawn, fires were lit on the tops and we started playing. When it began to dawn, the ttuntturros of Ituren started to come down the mountains, to help wake the inhabitants once below in the streets. When the ttuntturros arrived to the streets, we stopped playing (JosAnton Artze, in Beltran 2009, 111).

I was told by some members of Askapena (internationalist organisation which belongs to the loosely defined Basque Movement for National Liberation) that performances stepping away from traditional Basque culture had to do with the type of audience targeted at given times, or the element of the cause that was to be highlighted, i.e., a concert by a group doing a cover version of the punk rock band La Polla Records:

Why are La Polla’s songs included? Because with those songs and the lyrics of those songs, we claim the working class nature, or the more traditional left wing [character], which the abertzale left also has (Erramun, Askapena, interview July 2006.)

To further illustrate this point, during the Internationalist Days held in the 16th and 17th of June 2006, I attended an internationalist rally in Ezkaba12 (Nafarroa), at which there was no Txalaparta (to the surprise of some participants and organisers, who had told me there would be), but the Internationalist anthem was sung at the end, as well as the “Eusko Gudariak” (the rally included bertsolaris and a performance by some Irish singers from Northern Ireland.) Equally, a classical choir or a violin performance of a traditional lullaby, as mentioned earlier, made sense for Euskal Herritarrok, a coalition that encompassed a broader left wing political spectrum during the peace process juncture of 1998/99 and aimed at appealing to a wider public, as some Batasuna members explained to me.

An element that seemed to be recurring at the rallies regardless of scale, a part from Txalaparta, is bertsolaritzatza: members of the coalition or from its base of

12 The Ezkaba mountain is a location of special significance, as republican combatants were held prisoner there in tough conditions by the [Spanish] Nationalist forces during the Civil War.
supporters, also *bertsolarianak*, improvise sung verses in Euskara related to the struggle and the more specific purpose of the event, or to introduce a speaker. If a short Txalaparta performance has opened the rally, the song “*Eusko Gudariak*” (Basque soldiers), sung by political representatives and audience in unison (many with their left fist raised), closes the event. This song, based on a traditional tune for which new lyrics were written by the president of the Basque Nationalist Party section for Bizkaia, Jose María Gárate, in 1932, and which became the anthem of the Basque army soldiers during the Spanish Civil War, was adopted by the independentist youth in the 1960s. The song was made significant specially by the ETA activists inculpated during the Burgos Process in 1970 (Egaña 1996), and is always sung at events of the Basque Independentist Left:

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*Eusko gudariak gera*  We are Basque soldiers
*Euskadi askatzeko*      for the liberation of Euskadi
*Gerturik daukagu odola* we are ready
*bere aldez emateko.*   to give our blood for it.
*Irrintzi bat entzun da* An *irrintzi* has been heard
*mendi tontorrean,*     on the mountain top
*goazen gudari danok*   Let’s go, all the soldiers,
*ikurriñan atzean.*     behind the [Basque] flag.
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I was told by some members of Batasuna, in response to my queries relating the traditional (and not so traditional), generally Basque, performing arts displays that characterise their rallies, that matters of defence of Basque identity and cultural promotion were a priority for the coalition. They added that this political formation places great importance in cultural education and community building. This was also stated by other participants outside of the Independentist Left political line, who often stressed that, generally, those who are active in the recovery and promotion of Basque cultural heritage, largely at a grassroots level, as I experienced once and again during fieldwork, are, with exceptions, youth and organisations that identify with the Independentist Left. The support traditionally provided for activities of promotion of Txalaparta by councils with a majority of Independentist Left exemplifies this -as

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13 Euskadi was traditionally used to refer to the Basque Country. Currently the term Euskal Herria is mostly used, replacing “Euskadi” to avoid confusion with the Basque Autonomous Community, which only encompasses three of the seven Basque provinces that conform the Basque Country (Euskal Herria).
Eneko, a highly dedicated member, txalapartari and Txalaparta teacher, of the Txalaparta group Sestao TX (Bizkaia), states in an internet blog reply to comments by seemingly Spanish attendants from Madrid to the 22nd Txalaparta Festa of May 2008, who seem unfamiliar with the Basque situation and history of Txalaparta, and the grassroots nature of left wing independentist politics in Euskal Herria:

Iñaki [seemingly non Basque attendant commenting on the event, which he found uninteresting in terms of performance quality]: ...what I found most soporific and out of place was the political touch with a discourse by the event presenter, the mayoress … When in a musical and cultural event, a political issue has more weight, the result can’t never be good. Iñaki (Internet blog entry, 29 May 2008, Madrilen Txalaparta 2008-9).

Bea [seemingly attendant to the same Txalaparta Festa festival, also participant in the blog of the Txalaparta group from Madrid, Spain]: …Regarding the mayoress discourse, in truth, the theme had to do with the festival, the disappearance of two farmhouses that are very related to Txalaparta [the demolition of the Erbetegi-Etxeberri farmhouse, and with it the Goikoetxea’s cider-press, a major loss for many txalapartariak, to give way to a motorway], but it should have been defended by a different person, without political but rather cultural representativity. You are fully right, culture and politics is a combination with a result that is always manipulated (Internet blog entry, 1 June 2008, Madrilen Txalaparta 2008-9).

Eneko [Sestao TX member, Bizkaia, Euskal Herria]: … The Sestaoko Txalaparta Eskola [School of Txalaparta of Sestao] has performed in Hernani in 7 occasions, and in all of them the presenter has been the current mayoress of the town, upon whom now hovers a rapacious scavenger’s figure, which is the Spanish Justice [System]. For those of us who know Marian, she was not out of place at all.

Politics and culture should not be mixed?! Politics is, by definition, already mixed in ALL aspects of life. It is not by chance that the Tx Festa has been possible in a council like the Hernani one and not in any other. It is not by chance either that it is in Hernani where the teaching of Txalaparta depends of the council itself (Musika Eskola). For sure I do not expect from my council (Sestao) the attitude the Hernani one has maintained for 20-odd years … Leaving politics aside (though I still think it is not possible, in this world everything is politics), just to let you know that the Txalaparta Festa has
been with the same presenter from the start, when she wasn’t even a councillor…

(Internet blog entries, 4-7 May 2009, Madrilen Txalaparta 2008-9).

“For me [the link between] the Txalaparta and the [left] abertzale is very clear. What happens is that the Txalaparta belongs to traditional culture, and those things, when the identity is in danger, those things are in danger too, and then you fight to save them, and that is how it happens; it is not that it is done on purpose that Txalaparta and the abertzale coincide as they do” explained to me Gaizka, a dedicated txalapartari, over a beer in Iruñea (fieldwork, March 2003).

Political protests of the left seemingly tend to adopt Carnival forms in their aesthetics (which is possibly a general western trend rather than specifically Basque), thus taking such traditional cultural strategy of popular criticism as a reference, or recovering and claiming it as a legitimate form of popular participation in the political life of the community/country. Such a reflection upon Basque traditional culture is a trait that characterises the Independentist Left in their rallies and protests. This is illustrated, for instance, by the public burning in Bilbo on the 23rd of June 2006, of the 18/98 Macro-summary and other unwanted policies, to the sounds of Txalaparta, the day of the summer solstice (Aulestiarte 2006), establishing a link between the persecution exemplified by the macro-summary and historical large scale witch hunts carried out in the 17th century by the Spanish Inquisition in the Basque Country. The event followed the model of traditional summer solstice rites as a means to seek some kind of empowerment amid the siege, except that this was done during the day rather than at night, since its efficacy relied on people witnessing the act (trait that Hibbits identifies in what he terms “performance cultures”14 (1992)) rather than on the mediation of the supernatural.

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14 American Law scholar Bernard Hibbits argues that in pre-literate or semiliterate societies, the law’s enactment and transmission depends primarily on its -ephemeral- performance (in the sense of the performing arts), that is, in its embodied and sensual form, since the law is not written, or the value of its written form is yet secondary (or complementary) to lived experience (Hibbits 1992). Some of the characteristics of Law enactment in such “performance cultures” as Hibbits refers to these societies, are its dynamic qualities (importance of process), its social orientation, personal (message and messenger are seen as one in he process of enactment), and relies on different performatic strategies for its remembrance and factuality. Law enactment depends upon ritual performance. This quality of law enactment as described by Hibbits, is very prominent in Basque traditional society, exemplified, for instance, in dances that acknowledge or enact power such as the aurresku (salutation dance commonly performed in homage to the authorities or persons of special significance,) the kaxarranka (dance related to Leketio’s seafarers’ guild performed by the administrator of the guild or the patron, St. Peter, himself –when the dancer is dressed as this “ultimate” authority,) the traditional military dances, or the mutildantzai of
One of the members of a cultural group from Nafarroa which is very active in the recovery of traditional forms of expressive culture, including an engagement with Txalaparta, reworded, or completed, my reflections upon their work: “It is a work of recovery of the local culture” I stated, to what he replied: “Activation of social mechanisms; [working toward] popular cohesion” (Peio, fieldwork, May 2006). In relation to their work and engagement with traditional culture, another participant present (also the heart and soul of the same group) stated that “rather than political, it is social [work], what guides [us] is the social” (Josepe, fieldwork, May 2006). Among their volunteer work was/is the recovery of the traditional carnival of the Pyrenees, reflected upon as “pagan practices that the Church appropriated” (Peio., fieldwork, May 2006). Their work of recovery was framed in terms of “living tradition,” they aimed at recovering, in this sense, popular forms of doing: “as practice culture, not as shopwindow stuff”15 (Peio, fieldwork, May 2006). Peio exemplified this with one of the carnival practices incorporated and adapted to the present juncture of the struggle and world politics: “the puppet that represents all evils is taken [to the event], the bertsolaris blame him for housing speculation; Aznar for “courageous” for going to Iraq… [referring ironically to the Spanish extreme right prime minister who was in power in 2003 and lead the participation of Spain in the invasion of Iraq].” The relational aspect of their work for Basque culture, or a focus on human connectedness (and horizontal relationships), was one of the elements participants in Nafarroa and other groups I encountered (such as in Bizkaia) used to stress: “this is also useful for us to move, to get to know people, for people to see what we do… I see the txalaparta as a way to relate to people, to show what we do here, and talk about Navarre” (Peio, fieldwork, May 2006). Peio, like others I encountered in Nafarroa (mostly in Iruñea, where most of my fieldwork took place), explained to me the particular struggle of Nafarroa within the larger movement for national liberation: that “Basques are actually Navarrese, rather than the other way around” (since the borders and sovereignty of the ancient Kingdom of Navarre is what is reclaimed as historical foundations for a dreamed of independent Basque Country), and the specific tough plight of these Navarrese to preserve traditional culture, institutions, language and material heritage from its expropriation by the (españolist) Navarrist extreme right in power (chapter 1). One of the members of the

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Baztan (the relationship of the latter with power –(traditionally male) ownership of the public sphere-highlighted to me by Patxi Larralde.) The “Tribute of the Three Cows” in the Pyrenees, still performed today between the Roncalese and the Bearnese is one other example.

group explained that they have played Txalaparta at political rallies of the *ezker abertzale* (the Independentist Left), and that no matter what other political parties claim, “those who speak of popular culture and mean it are the [left] *abertzales,*” adding, of another Basque nationalist political party, that they were “interested” [seeking personal economic benefits], representing a “development that comes in the form of concrete [the building industry and associated land speculation], and forget the social aspect of [the valley in question]” (Josepe, fieldwork, May 2006). A *txalapartari* and active cultural revivalist from Bizkaia in his late 30s, somewhat disheartened when I told him my experience looking for a book about Ez Dok Amairu in Bilbo at an important Spanish bookshop chain (where I was asked if Ez Dok Amairu was a man, a writer or what), explained he considered himself *ezker abertzale,* and that for him it was important to keep local indigenous traditions regardless of whether these were Basque or not. He elaborated on a proposal he presented in the past for his local council to facilitate an “academy of folklore,” as he referred to it, where not only Basque, but the indigenous instruments of Spanish immigrants in the area (mostly Galician), could be taught.

I tried to meet someone responsible for the organisation of the political rallies of Batasuna in 2003, soon after this formation had been banned by the Spanish State. A participant in this research told me, just as she was leaving to collect from school the children of a pregnant friend whose partner was in prison, that the members of the organisation had gone into hiding as they were foreseeing their imminent imprisonment after the elections: “If I tell them you want to meet them to talk about Txalaparta, they’ll tell me to go to the beach, if you know what I mean.” Such a meeting was not feasible. Nonetheless, she asked on my behalf, and the reply she passed on to me was that Txalaparta was always played at the start of their political rallies since HB was created in 1978, the reason being that in the past “it was used to call the people of the farmhouses to get together to fight invaders, as a call to join in the struggle” (communal work, *auzolan,* to protect the community). “It was a call to get together.” I asked her, then, why there were *joaldunak* also at the start of the rallies, and another participant present stated: “Man, those, yes, those have been taken out of context” (assuming, thus, that Txalaparta was there in its appropriate context) (fieldwork, March 2003).
Ritualising also “solidifies” into images as symbols: I asked the director of the Basque publishing house Txalaparta (whose ethos seems to resonate, as per the books they publish, with a socialist outlook and the struggle for an independent Euskal Herria) the reason for using such a name, and about their logo: “the four makilas beating the planks” (as he described it) (fig. 5.3):

In the same way that the txalaparta is an ancestral and ritual communication instrument among Basques, our publishing house aims at doing the same with the books: to transmit messages, to summon readers to reading, to preserve the historical memory and Basque traditions, to make ourselves heard by our own and others, to bring our people into others’ attention, to keep the link between the new and the old, the memory and the future, the archaic (our language, customs, music…) with modernity … We identify very much with the name of the publishing house. I think it reflects very well the philosophy of our company (Jose Mari Esparza, electronic communication, July 2004).

Jose Mari Esparza’s reflection upon Txalaparta as a device for both communication and ritual at once, coincides with the understanding presented by those who ascribe to the narrative that regard Txalaparta as a calling device (as opposed to musical understandings). Ancestry, a summoning function and ritual (efficacy and solemnity –the seriousness and care required to deal with that of “utmost importance”), are brought together in the ritualising that more specifically emerges in relation to the political and armed struggle. I recall a conversation with some members of a group whose workshops I witnessed for an entire weekend in Nafarroa in February 1999. After the Saturday morning session, we went to a bar nearby to have some beers and the group started discussing and reflecting upon Txalaparta motivated by the research I was undertaking. Erlantz Auzmendi (more known as Perdi, from the renowned bikote Gerla Beti) complained that he did not find as lively an audience in the Basque Country as he

Figure 5.3: Logo of the Basque publishing house Txalaparta, on the right. The logo, on the bottom right corner of the book cover, appears here over what happens to be a Txalaparta performance at an event on support of political prisoners. The book in question: *La Plaza de Urbina*, a biography of ETA activist Iñaki Ormaetxea, killed in action, written by his colleague Andoni Cabello from prison (2004).
had encountered in Malaga or Sevilla (in Andalusia, south of the Spanish State), where people clapped and even danced to it: “here we have lost that natural quality where leather and wood rhythms call us to move…” he argued, highlighting in particular Nafarroa. Gaizka, who was Navarrese, argued that “in Navarre people is different, perhaps that is why we don’t dance to Txalaparta, here it is seen with a respect, in a more felt manner, with a…” he was looking for the words: with reverence (differently to the way Beltran argues Txalaparta was treated in the past, when, as he states he was told by the old txalapartariak, one of the Zuaznabar would walk underneath the plank amid an atmosphere of festivity and fun, something he always repeats in his articles (not without reason)).

In 1998 a political process was opened in Euskal Herria, inspired by the peace process launched in Northern Ireland. The process culminated in the Lizarra-Garazi Agreement (modelled on the Irish “Good Friday Agreement”), in which all Basque nationalist forces across the political spectrum joined together (and were joined by other organisations, some of them Spanish) for the common goal of a peaceful solution to the conflict and the advancement toward self-determination. A new political formation was created in September 1998 by the Independentist Left that included a broader spectrum of political agents: Euskal Herritarrok (“We the Basque People” or “We, Basque Citizens”). The new formation included a short 34 second video clip in their website featuring a Txalaparta performance (fig. 5.4): Only the arms of the txalapartariak, who are facing each other, can be seen interlocking as they play on a txalaparta made up of three planks. The performance, shown from a lateral view point, is accompanied by a spoken message in English by a female voice (it is also available in Castilian and French), some keywords in the message are presented visually in English, Spanish and French, superimposed over the image of the performance (keywords appearing at given times on the video are indicated in bold fonts in the text below):

Figure 5.4: Call for help. Video clip designed for Euskal Herritarrok’s website featuring a short Txalaparta performance. 1998 (Euskal Herritarrok 1999).
In order to let other countries know about our present situation, we are trying to inform and combat distortion. We want to give evidence of the informative manipulation of the Basque Country. It is a new way of fighting for us [“ways of struggling” in the screen], but we want the isolation caused by the wall not to become the wall of isolation.

At the end of the spoken message, txalaparta progresses for the 13 remaining seconds increasing the volume and tempo, which has been steady so far, resembling a traditional rhythmic evolution toward the end, a tturrukatun that supports the spoken message and seems to give the impression of reaffirming what has been said.

Figure 5.5: EH celebratory rally. Autumn 1998 (Euskal Herritarrok 1999).

Figure 5.6: Txalaparta performance at the closure of a celebratory EH rally. Autumn 1998 (Euskal Herritarrok 1999).

Txalaparta was often reflected upon in relation to a symbolic calling (or summoning) function and evocation of an ancient past in the context of the political work and the rallies, with possibly a more clear link established with the struggle at, for instance, the special rally held by Euskal Herritarrok in 1998 to celebrate the political process (fig. 5.5), where it also featured in the closure of the event. Unfortunately I cannot offer a description of the full rally (or ritual sequence), which took place at a large sports stadium, since I only had access to the recording of the closure and some short excerpts, de-contextualised from the sequence of the overall performance. These performances were presented in short video clips as part of a sequence of video and sound recordings of political speeches and decisive moments of the 1998-99 period, including interventions by Gerry Adams from Sinn Féin, and other material, packed in a
CD commemorating a year of Euskal Herritarrok: *Haize berrien urtea* (the year of new winds.) The event is mentioned here to offer a general understanding of the participation of *txalapartariak* at the political rallies of the Independentist Left (an in-depth exploration will be desirably undertaken in future work): The Txalaparta performers played at different moments of the rally providing, in one instance, a fast and energetic performance accompanied by several *irrintziak* (yodelling yells imitating a horse neigh) uttered by an *irrintzilari* in the centre of the stage, on a microphone. When I listened to the performance, in the context of my research desk at the University where I am based, I experienced a feeling of rapture that helped me imagine the sudden and increasing fit of passion the performance must have produced in the audience present (unfortunately, I could not obtain information as to the moment of the event at which this particular shorter performance took place in the rally). Other performances were also offered at this crowded event, including Basque dances in traditional costume (with an intense high tempo performance of Txalaparta as one of the dancers waved the Basque flag in the centre of the stage) and a choir performance. The closure of the rally, with the political representatives standing together at the stage, was initiated by the two *txalapartariak*, who performed facing the audience, on a txalaparta made up of several planks and no ornaments (such as sheep skins, which are sometimes used), located on the left far end of the stage (to the right of the candidates (fig. 5.6)). The Txalaparta piece started as Txalaparta Zaharra maintaining however a steady tempo and volume, soon progressing, after approximately 30 seconds, toward a lower volume, unlike the old style, to continue as a kind of underlying support for the tune that is introduced, played on a *xirula* (a short duct flute) and *ttuntun* (struck zither) by a performer on the traditional costume this musician figure wears at the Zuberoa’s masquerade. The tune is that of the “*Eusko Gudariak,*” which the audience of the crowded rally sings together with the political candidates, fists up. Some Basque flags are waved among the audience facing the stage and at the terraces, and *irrintziak* are uttered toward the end of the song intensifying the emotional heat at a moment of great hope.
created by a political juncture that promised a resolution to the conflict and the dreamed realisation of a united independent nation. Txalaparta is then intensified, increasing the volume and tempo. One of the candidates screams “Gora Euskadi Sozialista!” (“long live a Socialist Basque Country!”), to which the audience replies “Goral!” (literally: “Up!,” equivalent to “long live!” in English). Another candidate: “Gora Euskal Herria askatuta!” (“long live a free Basque Country!”), “Goral!” replies the audience again in unison. The txalapartariak keep playing, sustaining the emotional intensity of the interventions, “Gora Euskal Herritarrok!” (“long live Euskal Herritarrok!”), “Goral!” replies the audience one last time. Txalaparta speeds up progressing toward the tturrukutun as the audience is now clapping, ending with one last stroke by one of the txalapartariak. The audience gets ready to leave the event, greeting other people that they recognise here and there, while recorded “atmosphere music” is now playing (voices of a choir singing with no lyrics, synthesisers and Txalaparta sounds). The Spanish Government’s refusal to engage with the process and continued operations against the armed organisation ETA (detaining two of their negotiators), as well as a breech in the union achieved among Basque nationalist forces, meant an end of the Lizarra-Garazi agreement and ETA’s unilateral ceasefire. The Basque resonance with the Irish struggle and peace process (which will emerge at different points in this chapter) will nonetheless continue.

The rally I attended in Iruñea in April 2003, a smaller scale one, at a demanding political juncture with little to celebrate for the Independentist Left, marked by the banning of Batasuna and showcasing the rising from the ashes, so to speak, of the formation reconstituted as AuB (Autodeterminaziorako Bilgunea), did not have such a rich display of performances: The event was opened by a joaldunak march encircling the sports pavilion at which the event took place, and by a short Txalaparta piece performed without prescribed roles but resembling, in its dynamics, the old style. The txalapartariak, two girls in their late teens and early 20s respectively, who struck me as

16 Unfortunately I could not obtain information as to this last piece of music.
quite humble and approachable when I spoke to them later, belonged to a Txalaparta group from a working class area in Iruñea, a neighbourhood with a sizeable independentist left wing support, as I was told. The instrument, made up of four boards, featured sheep skins covering the stands (a member of the audience explained to me that the txalaparta usually features sheep skins in the Iruñea rallies (fig. 5.1)). After the Txalaparta performance, a short session of *irrintziak* followed, as well as *bertsolariak*. Though the *txalapartariak* would not be performing again at the rally, the instrument remained on the stage for its whole duration, as a backdrop to the speeches and rest of performances ( alas a non intentional one, according to some rally organisers and *txalapartariak*.)

The first speech intervention is offered by one of the members of the brigades that went to Iraq to act as human shields at the onset of the invasion, who gave an insight of the situation on the ground in the Arabic country. I soon recognise some of the young *txalapartariak* I have met at one of the informal Txalaparta workshops I have attended in Iruñea, our eyes meet and we smile at each other waving our hands. The speech about Iraq is followed by another about the struggle in Euskal Herria: “Aznar is doing here what the US is doing in Iraq…” My companions’ toddler walks off and loudly greets another baby (I have not come on my own, but with some independentist left supporters who kindly and patiently deal with my questions.) After the speeches, a magician, dressed in black, appears on stage, to the soundtracks of the slow theme “Devotions” (*aurresku* tune with Txalaparta rhythms), of the record *Lezao* (by Tomas San Miguel, with Gerla Beti as *txalapartariak*). From a green bag, the magician makes the Egunkaria appear –the only newspaper fully in Basque, which had been recently closed down by the Spanish Government (a court sentence absolved it in April 2010, as it happened also with the newspaper *Egin*, closed down much earlier.) After much clapping by the audience, the magician introduces a red, a green and a white scarf into the bag: he pulls out a Basque flag, in what is a very emotive moment, followed by more clapping and one last performance by a singer. Finally, the political representatives gather on the stage for a photograph, however no candidates are publicly presented yet: “to keep our weapons hidden,” says the Batasuna spokesman for Nafarroa, Pernando Barrena, “but on the 25th [of May] you will all have the opportunity of voting AuB,” to which he adds that they won’t accept “interferences from Aznar nor ETA.” With all the representatives on the stage, the *Eusko Gudariak* is sung by all attendants (most people with their left fist up, sometimes the right one, but I observe exceptions to this). Next, the call and
response formula follows, where the audience replies with “*Gora!*” to each of the three prescribed cries by one of the representatives, similar to the previously described rally (substituting “Euskal Herritarrok” for the name of the new coalition). AuB would be banned soon afterwards before the elections, yet Independentist Left voters still voted with banned AuB ballots as a protest, some of them turning up to vote with tape covering their mouths (some showing the colours of the Spanish flag on it) to demonstrate against their disenfranchisement by the Spanish government, and witnessed by several volunteer citizens inside and outside the polling stations, to make sure no further transgression was undertaken by conservative formations and/or individuals in charge of foreseeing the voting process. “The Death of Democracy” is how Eoin Ó Broin refers to this ongoing political juncture in the history of the Basque struggle (Ó Broin 2003). This scenario would be repeated again with each new Independentist Left political formation on the occasion of the next elections, as still is the case with the formation “Sortu” at the time of writing.

Identity. I have been born in a country that doesn’t even exist. Thus, along life, each of its sons runs the risk of being detained, deported or simply shot by the genocidal ones who ordered its non-existence. “It is forbidden to dream with the identity, the unity or the independence of this country under capital punishment,” proclaims an edict placed on the doors of the customs houses and prisons, as well as over frontier posts and execution sites. And of course, once dead one doesn’t exist any more or anything: one is transformed into a final corpse that must be circumspectly taken to the cemetery; while the silent pavanas for the deceased infants of a ghostly people are the only thing allowed by the authorities of a country condemned to non-existence (Légasse 2002, 75).

Amets, through whom I encountered the discourse of Txalaparta as “young and revolutionary,” stated: “I am not a ‘nationalist’, who is a ‘nationalist’ for being French or whatever; I am Basque, it is you who labels me as a ‘nationalist’, if I am one it is because they are against me being Basque” (Fieldwork 1998). “We are going to be less and less nationalist every time, and more ourselves, full stop. A Spaniard is Spanish and doesn’t have to be demonstrating it…” (Peio, fieldwork, May 2006.)
Some participating txalapartariak mentioned to me that they (or Txalaparta) were being stigmatised by the conservative right, who did actively politicise culture by denying or hindering indigenous Basque culture in Nafarroa. One other txalapartari told me, in a similar vein, about a newspaper article whose author stated that “you txalapartaris have the planks and your hands stained with blood,” to what he said he would reply: “well, invite us to stain them with pie.” Discussing with him the inclusion of Txalaparta in political events of an independentist left character, he pointed at the picture of a homage event for some political refugees murdered by GAL, at which he performed: “it is not that I want to play there, they make me play there” (fieldwork, February 1999).

The harp figured in the Irish coat of arms, and the txalaparta in the past called people to fight in Euskal Herria. Today, the arpeggios and rolls of those two music instruments cast to the wind of History the traditional IRAETA zortziko for Basque-Irish musicians … In his prison’s infirmary in South Africa, Nelson Mandela heard it for his 60th anniversary and smiled. Asked by the doctors about the reason of such unexpected smile, Mandela asked them to be quiet and just said: “IRAETA’s zortziko…” He later explained to them that in the Europe of the white people there are human beings as stubborn and indomitable as the blacks in Africa who ceaselessly combat French-Spanish-English colonialism, and that is what the Basque-Irish Zortziko sings (Legasse 1990, 18-19).
Marc Legasse, independentist and anarchist political activist, pioneer in the organisation of Basque nationalism in Iparralde, writer and important reference for the youth of the 1960s and 70s, published a fiction novel in 1978 entitled *Las carabinas de Gastibeltsa. Concierto barroco para txalaparta* (“The Gastibeltsa’s carabines. Baroque concert for txalaparta”). Using the kind of style that would later be termed as “magic realism” in relation to Latin American literature, this is an impassioned novel that exposes Legasse’s libertarian nationalist sentiment through the extensive use of metaphors. The author, an unapologetic advocate of armed resistance, entitles the chapters as the movements of a Baroque concert, where txalaparta, I presume, is the rebellious, anti-colonialist, anarchist spirit that overspills into an unburdened imagination, as free as the wind and as wild as the horses Legasse’s evokes at the end of the book:

...E.T.A. militants have inherited Gastibeltsa’s carabins, and it may still be seen today, in the beach where the last Picandia was shot, some wild horses galloping in the wind (Legasse 1995 [1978], 136).
The Gastibeltsa’s carabines, as some Batasuna supporters explained to me, is “an emblematic book, fundamental to understand the Basque struggle”: “We, the ezkerabertzale [Independentist Left] are very anarchist at heart” (Margarita Ayestaran, fieldwork, March 2003). Sociologist Justo de la Cueva explained to me that the anarchist movement has not had much weight in the Basque Country, though independentists tend to be “anarchist in spirit” (rooted, as he and other participants stated, in Basque traditional culture): Batasuna, as one other member put it when explaining their organizational style, functions “like a people’s assembly”; “it is not organised as a political party,” she stressed to me, and spoke of a political party gathering where they happened to be “the most organised”: “Batasuna is an anarchy that works” (fieldwork, May 2003). This reminded me of the oftentimes that, as stated in the previous chapter, Navarrese participants emphasised an anarchistic nature of Tzialaparta (those who defined themselves as anarchist and also some who were of a Batasuna line –and quite anarchistic I felt). An analogy between the nature of the instrument and social values appreciated by participants was often stressed by them. Eleder, ex-prisoner and supporter of Left Independentist political formations, expressed this in relation to the value of auzolan invoked by the latter:

For me it [Txalaparta] symbolises a little the heartbeat of all this, right?, of what we are going through here. The Txalaparta, I think that when the left abertzale took it also as an instrument from the folklore from here and so on, it also represented a little the abertzale way of feeling, which was…: the txalaparta is played between two people, and the beauty of the txalaparta is that if there aren’t two people you cannot play it, and we are already speaking of a common task, right? … then, without a combination [of beats from each player] you cannot work, you cannot move on, right? … then that is a little the rhythm the left abertzale has had for forty years, right? –it comes from before too, but anyway, for forty years… Then, it was a little the simile of the left abertzale (Eleder, interview, June 2006).

As I was trying to figure out why the independentist and anarchist political activist and writer Marc Legasse had depicted a single txalapartari rather than two in one of the illustrations of his book of political reflections El zortziko de IRAETA para arpa y txalaparta (“The IRAETA zortziko for harp and txalaparta”), some Irish friends immediately replied that the partner was the Irish harper (fig. 5.9). The understanding of Txalaparta as a symbol of the struggle (and specifically the armed struggle) is a salient
theme that seems to have been very prevalent until relatively recently in the south of Euskal Herria, as I was told by participants (with a few exceptions who disagreed, among those I discussed this with) and which I was told was still mostly upheld by txalapartariak in the north, where the Txalaparta scenario was still unfolding in terms of expansion. Amets, with whom I encountered a preliminary discourse of Txalaparta as “young and revolutionary” in 1998, mentioned to me as significant the fact that an ETA commando was named “Txalaparta” (seemingly active in 1990-91). A participating txalapartari, who had spent five years in prison for alleged membership to ETA, explained to me that there had been at least two commandos with that name, and that there could have been perhaps more, though one of them was particularly famous (I tried to explore the possibility of talking to some former member of such commando unit but I did not succeed). He stressed that the commando names used to refer to something significant for the members, such as the names of Basque mountains (anthropologist Zulaika dedicated a section of his 1988 book on Basque Violence to the importance of nature and the mountain imaginary for ETA militants –there was also a PNV section of mountaineers who used to hold their meetings at hard to reach mountain places and so did ETA). He recalled a cell called “Txakun.” Another participant who had spent 20 years in prison for his membership to ETA, stated that the name was given by whoever was in charge of the creation of commandos (or the primary contact for the commandos within the organisation) to identify them, downplaying the possible relevance the name might have (at least for him). The scenario has changed now, however by 1999, when I initiated research on Txalaparta for a previous Master’s thesis, an internet search with the keyword “Txalaparta” offered very few pages. With the exception of two websites I encountered, reproducing information from Juan Mari Beltran’s articles and Josu Goiri’s book (or from hear say), the rest were related in some way to the struggle (such as the radio channel Txalaparta Irratia, based in Paris and part of Radio Pays).

The understanding of Txalaparta as a call to battle is possibly the narrative most relevant in the spread of Txalaparta during the 80s and 90s –at least in relation to the rallies, and indeed in the identification of the tradition with the struggle through its performance again and again at the different events of the Basque Independentist Left. Adrian, accompanied by a colleague (both organising members of Askapena, the former
in his late 40s or early 50s, and the latter, Erramun, also a bertsolari, in his late 20s or early 30s), explains:

It is a kind of reveille, a call to attend to what is coming next. As it is… There are two ekitaldi formulas, so to speak, that we have at least used, especially in the small villages –not in the big city, but in villages-, one thing is what is the reveille: you go through the villages, with the trikitixa [small diatonic accordion], calling in the morning …, rising people…

Erramun: …with the triki [colloquial abbreviation of trikitixa], with the pipes…, the dultzainas, or…

Adrian: The dultzainas… You go around through all the streets of the village. People get up, start getting out, and, well, you finish where the ekitaldi will take place … And then, the last call, so to speak, or definitive call, right?, is, would be, the Txalaparta, which can be heard the same as the triki, but from a [fixed] place. It has…, with the reveille you have to walk through the whole village, right?, but the Txalaparta can be heard in the whole village without moving from there, right? Then that is the place to which you are calling for people to go to. It is a kind of call in that sense of [announcing] something is going to take place there [he speaks poised and confident, with a strong voice]. That at the start. And at the closure, in some way, man, it is not usually used so much for the closure.

Erramun: No, at the closure it usually is the “Eusko Gudariak” and… well, of course, very political, yes, right?...

Adrian: Sometimes it [txalaparta] is used for the closure, but no, not so much. And in any case, if it is used for the closure, I think it has a very similar function to the “Eusko Gudariak” or to the “Gora” thrice, right?, of…, and besides finishing, it always finishes with an acceleration, to create that emotion oooooooof [imitating the crescendo as he speaks], to create the tension, sssssss, at the end: “toh!” Ready: “pam!” [banging the table at the same time], it’s over, right? And then the others to dinner, or to the bar, well. Uh… I think that is uh… at most that attempt to create the emotion, the catharsis, the final catharsis of the ekitaldi, and from there, to the bar. That is used at the end, yes.

María: And what do you…, I mean, how would you, or do you explain the use of elements from the folklore in the ekitaldi?

Adrian: Let’s differentiate folklore from culture! [I had forgotten his earlier explanation as to why folklore was the wrong term to use. At one instance, earlier
in the interview, Erramun became close to saying “folklore” to refer to Adrians’s “popular culture,” but immediately corrected himself mid sentence. I felt Adrian was very positioned in relation to the content of his terminology and was not going to easily accept being surrounded by discussants who had not fully integrated his definitions and understandings.

**Maria:** Oh! Well, OK! All right, let’s do it, yes! Folklore would be a bit the museum aesthetics, right?

**Adrian:** Folklore, yes, it is degenerated culture, and with a marketing function. Uh… marketing exclusively. Marketing at a touristic level, marketing at commerce level.

Adrian presented an elaborated discourse exposing the threat to (Basque) popular culture (as in culture created by the community rather than by institutional or commercial agents) presented not only by what he defined as Spanish and French State imperialism, but also by the dynamics of capitalism (globalisation, though he did not use this term). He addressed in this manner not only the anticolonialist struggle for independence but also socialist concerns as the inseparable ideological unit that characterises the Basque Movement for National Liberation.

…The definition of what culture is and is not is also being centralised, right?, through the mass media, television, right?, through the economic media, right? That is, all what is the development of the capitalist system as such is destroying or has practically destroyed culture already, right? There is a culture and it is Yankee culture, which is the one that defines what is in fashion and that which doesn’t sell, right? And then there is some peripheral attempt that often borders with the folkloric, as marketing … But what culture itself is has been destroyed, but through those two means: One, the directly imperialist question, or sub-imperialist, in the case of the Spanish kingdom, the French Republic; [the other], the developmental model that has been imposed here also –not imposed, but that has been adopted as part of Europe, right?, with all the industrialisation, de-ruralisation and the centralisation process of all what is the cultural life, through a mass media that it has also destroyed. Then, if one wants to fight, and is fighting, as much against one thing as against the other, often both mixed together, or not very well delimited whether you are against one… or whether the action, your struggle, is against one or the other, right? –because they are obviously
complementary- obviously, what is logical is to recover that which is being lost, and that may be one of the reasons why a Txalaparta is used rather than an organ!

Both participants, however, provided examples where non threatened musical instruments, styles or repertoires were used in the rallies.

I felt Adrian’s eagerness to differentiate between tourist performances (what Adrian termed as “folklore”: a marketing mediated culture understood as profit oriented and therefore non legitimate) and popular indigenous culture, was related to a major concern that I often encountered in relation to Iparralde: the replacement of Basque language and Basque expressive art forms for what is seen as market fabrications resulting from the commodification of the Basque north coast (French State) by the tourism industry.

“There is a lot of variety, it’s not always ‘jack, queen and king’ [the same performances and sequence], what happens is that there are things… For me, for instance, to renounce to utilising elements of Basque culture in the ekitaldis… I wouldn’t do it. I wouldn’t do it, but anyway...!” stated Erramun. “And why wouldn’t you do it,” I asked: “Because it is part of us” (interview, July 2006.)

Pierre, a txalapartari from Iparralde who discussed Txalaparta in relation to the struggle very candidly with me in June 2006, claimed a very direct link between txalapartariak and the independentist left within the struggle: “It is only logical, what is more programmed and serious will be of more interest for the right wing (the txistu score, on the right), and the freedom of expression of Txalaparta will make more sense to those

Figure 5.10: Stage exhibiting graffiti containing political claims at the 1989 Txalaparta Festa. Source: Extract from the video Txalaparta Festa 6 Urtetan (Ttakun Ttan Ttakun Txalaparta Taldea 1992).
of the left, it is only natural. I have also seen some who have played Txalaparta and will most probably vote PNV [the centre-right Basque Nationalist Party], like with everything, but generally Txalaparta goes with the abertzale left.” This tendency was stressed to me often in relation to the scenario in Iparralde at a “street level,” at the time in 2006, though not so much anymore regarding the south. Pierre presented the performance of Basque culture as the performance of the nation itself: “We are all abertzales [nationalist] because there is no aberri [mother land]. Those who claim that they do culture but not politics are sticking their finger into their eye, because culture is politics. In the ekitaldi, as we are not a state, we have to demonstrate the culture that unites us,” hence the popular performing arts display at the rallies (Pierre, fieldnotes, June 2006). He further stressed that “in the Basque Country, all the political is based on the cultural, because we have nothing else … Committing to Basque culture is eminently political.”

If traditional culture made its way into political rallies (or the political “yielded” to it, as Adrian argued), the more openly political also made its way into the festival, as mentioned in chapter 4. This may be appreciated, for instance, in the video footage of the Txalaparta Festa of 1989 recorded by the festival organisers, where all the stage performances took place in front of a backdrop featuring political graffiti that reported what would a few years later become the political scandal of GAL (Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación –Liberation Antiterrorist Groups), which were illegal paramilitaries created and financed by the Spanish Socialist Government in collusion with Basque political agents contrary to the Independentist Left during the 1980s. By means of GAL, the Spanish State eluded its obligation to legally establish whether those it considered suspect were guilty, and to further abide to existing legal procedures typical of a State of Law that aims at protecting citizens’ rights. “It is a war,” as some participants described the situation. If culture is part of life, the violence of the struggle is too, like death: “PSOE: Hiltzaile; EA, PNV, EE: Laguntzaile” the graffiti read (PSOE: Murderers; EA, PNV, EE: collaborators” -where PSOE was/is the Spanish labour party, in power at the time; PNV was/is the Basque Nationalist Party, EA was/is an independentist centre-left excision from PNV; and EE, a Basque nationalist left wing party.) Whether the graffiti were painted for the occasion or happened to be there on the chosen wall makes little difference in terms of its performativity. In the video of the festival, the camera stops still for a few seconds in front of what is thus made a meaningful reminder also in the video edition: the writing on the wall, of which festival
attendants and organisers have been mindful all along in their “entertainment” oriented performance (figs. 5.10 and 2.25 in chapter two).

Rallies and demonstrations described so far, as I was told by different participants, nearly always featured Txalaparta, though curiously none of those I attended in the summer of 2006 in Iruñe (in relation to the Internationalist Days organised by Askapena in Nafarroa and a crowded demonstration on support of political prisoners in Donostia) included a Txalaparta performance, to the surprise of those (including an Askapena event organiser) who had assured me I would witness them. What I felt at the time, arrogant or self-important it might seem, is that perhaps my presence at such rallies had something to do with it\(^\text{17}\), as I seemed to be causing discomfort among some txalapartariak who were concerned about my interest in the presence of Txalaparta at events related to the Independentist Left (the para-Txalaparta that concerned those working for its “normalisation” as “music”). This apprehension was openly expressed to me by some anarchist txalapartariak. I felt that it was acceptable to bring up the connection between Txalaparta and the political events if it was them who did it, but not if I showed interest in it, inquired about it, or was seen piling up (independentist left aligned) Gara newspaper clippings on the table (at Jokin’s flat, one of my txalapartari hosts) for the purpose of this research. A member from a cultural organisation of Iruñe also eagerly tried to portray an image contrary to the current scenario (he had played txalaparta in the past and certainly did not identify with the independentist left at all). Concerns about my interest for Txalaparta in connection with more overtly political events were also expressed to me by a prominent txalapartari who became confrontational in relation to this matter (other txalapartariak with whom I discussed this attitude commented that his reaction might well have been motivated by a desire to protect the ongoing cultural revival work, from the ruthless political siege).

\(^{17}\text{This would be a clear instance, if my feelings were correct, of the extent to which the researcher influences and is contained in her research outcomes.}\)
Political Prisoners

One night in July 2006, at the end of a stroll along the Kontxa Pasalekua, beside the beach in Donostia, I was attracted by the celebrations held and organised by the neighbourhood of the old quarter (mostly Independentist Left, as I was told by different participants during fieldwork). Banners displayed here and there exhibiting political claims, the flag requesting the repatriation of political prisoners (a map of Euskal Herria in black in the centre of a white cloth, featuring black arrows on the sides pointing toward the map, often with the text “Euskal Presoak Euskal Herrira” – “Basque prisoners to the Basque Country”). Basque rock music, beer, and outdoor dining completed the scene. There were people of all ages at the tables, and groupings of young people here and there. I walked into the port, as I heard sounds of Txalaparta coming from a gathering of what seemed to me abertzale and/or progressive left youth (a predominance of punk and some rasta hair styles, the characteristic clothing with broken colours, or strips in striking colour combinations –i.e. red and green, predominance of purple, T-shirts with political motives\(^{18}\)…. “everyone wears a uniform in the Basque Country” (Artizar, fieldwork 2008)). They were standing and sitting in folding chairs in a kind of tent, watching a film on a screen. It was a short-film festival organised by people from the neighbourhood, as I was told by one of the audience members. On the screen: Feet filmed from above, belonging to a circle of people; one by one each pair of feet put on a set of shoes from the centre, as a female voice spoke in French about, as it seemed to me, a theme related to the struggle (my French was not good enough to follow it): “liberté” was repeated often, especially when no more shoes

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\(^{18}\) Some abertzale participants challenged this perception, claiming there wasn’t a single aesthetic that would identify them.
where left, but a void at the centre: “freedom, freedom, freedom…” to a Txalaparta soundtrack. Intrigued, I introduced myself and asked about the film. I was taken to the girl who had brought the video on behalf of the film makers: it had been made by Basque female political prisoners in a French prison who were only allowed film from the waist down. The mediator explained she would speak to their relatives to see if they would give me a copy of the video or tell me more about it; I gave her my mobile number but never got a call back.

I felt, from my fieldwork experience up to 2006, that, with some exceptions (like anti imperialist protests in relation to the attacks in Iraq or demonstrations in relation to the closure of the Basque language newspaper *Egunon Egunkaria* in 2003 by the Spanish Government), there seemed to be a pattern: Events or performances (in the performance studies broad sense of the term) relating to the armed struggle (ETA activists) or political prisoners, seemed to have Txalaparta, whenever sounds where used; or rather it seemed that when Txalaparta was used in events of a political kind other than party rallies, it was in relation to activists and political prisoners.

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_564_ (Lyrics of "564" by Hertzainak 1989)

The preceding song was entitled “564” in reference to the number of political prisoners at the time, in 1989, when it was composed by the popular Basque group Hertzainak, a rock group created in 1981 and dissolved in 1993, that, as one of its members explained to me, introduced a punk philosophy in the country “to speak about things of this country, from within this country…, and mainly trying to be critical with,
or sometimes against, this country … We were basically in the alternative world of the 80s, right?, which... that was an explosion, right? An explosion that created loads of fanzines, free radios, gaztetxes, occupations [squatting]… and so forth, right? We were a little around that movement, and well, with our attitude or with, say, with our songs what we were trying was to give a critical view of the whole of society but… a bit more from the point of view of the street…” (Josu Zabala, interview, June 2006).

The song piece opens with Txalaparta in what may be described as a binary rhythm, and after a few seconds the tune and then the song enter in a ternary rhythm. The Txalaparta eventually merges with the song’s rhythm to an extent, in a fluctuating manner, and continues for the entire piece, of approximately 2.17 minutes duration. The song was written by Josu Zabala, one of the members of the group, with the arrangement for acoustic guitar by Vixente Martinez, from the group Oskorri. The txalapartariak, Arantza and Kopi, friends and followers of the band, played on a txalaparta made up of three untempered planks, as Josu recalled. A participant in this research, a trained musician and percussionist, who spoke with dislike of the Independentist Left, brought up this song in an interview, claiming it was a failure because Txalaparta did not blend properly with the rest of the music (June 2003). This view was upheld by a few participants who were critical of the Independentist Left (as Borja claimed, comparing its use in this manner to a “flower jar,” an ornament), yet the song was considered beautiful by txalapartariak I met in Iruñea, who loved it. These txalapartariak, and others who liked it, seemed to understand quite well the iconicity of Txalaparta in the composition. “This song is beautiful! Now it should be ‘750’ or so … It was the song of the time, damn. That was the most romantic song… We all know the lyrics, of course!” said Eleder from Bizkaia (interview, June 2006).
That recording was a success, I think, because it was something that was practically improvised. The txalaparta did not have to be rhythmically joined with the song. We didn’t ask them [the txalapartariak] to do something that is now so much in fashion, which is to transform the txalaparta into a rhythmic instrument, into an instrument that is used to keep the rhythm of the songs (something that has been done historically, and I am not against that, I mean, it is another way of utilising it, right?, and already in those times it started being used as a rhythmic instrument). We did not want it to be like that, we wanted it to be something loose, like an authentic txalaparta. Yet I think both things, the arrangement of the guitar, the song and the txalaparta, joined together in a magic manner, which still surprises me, because without being inside the rhythm, being something absolutely free, it has…, it immediately takes off and emits a melancholic air, right?, that I think, well, that it married totally with the spirit of the song (Josu Zabala, interview, June 2006).

I asked Josu what moved them to compose the song:

It was me who composed that song, a song that I composed one night, a New Years Eve, the typical New Years Eve that you have been left as a grass widower, you get a hell of a binge… I lived in Gamarra, four kilometres away from Vitoria…, you got the binge in Vitoria, of course, and you have to come back really late and you don’t feel like taking a taxi nor… nothing! You decide to go home walking…, four kilometres…, with an amazing fucking cold … Well, I think they are… well, the ideal conditions to compose a song. Fundamental: You are alone… A second point that at least for me has been helpful in my trajectory… -many people criticise these things, but well! And I do understand, right?, but… at least for me it has been helpful sometimes- it is to be a bit smashed, but not brain dead, of course. And the third element, which is fundamental, is to have something to say, something that suddenly forces you to tell a story, right? Then I already have the two first conditions practically sorted: I am already on my own, I am already leaving home, I mean, it is six o’clock in the morning, or who knows what time, may be more, I am alone, I am not fully dead, I have decided to have a walk to wake up a little… and, after 20 minutes…, when walking by…, almost leaving the city, in the last blocks, I see a poster that reads “564,” and there are a lot of small prisoners painted there, right?, like trying to
reflect 564 prisoners. That is all that is written in the poster … The poster belonged to the ... well, in those times it would have been the Communist League, Sixth ETA … When I arrived home I wrote it all [the song], and to sleep. I wrote everything in half an hour, I had already thought of the lyrics… Those 20 minutes of a walk are the 20 minutes in which you have been thinking about it, and when you arrive home, you pour it before going to sleep the binge, and the next day you find the necessary notes to remember the sensation of the previous day so that you can then make a demo, or show the song (interview, June 2006).

Josu explained the song did not follow the kind of songs they did in the group and thus deserved a special treatment: “it wasn’t a rock song, to say it clearly, right? It was more a song of a “folky” kind…” I asked why did he not want to make it a rock song, why did he feel it had to be “folk”: “Because of the type of rhythm, the type of rhythm makes a combination of…, it is a zortziko but played with triplets, so that it is a mix of zortziko but which could be a waltz, that is, they are two rhythms that are completely quite far from the rock style, right?” I insisted: “why did you choose those kinds of rhythms and not rock rhythms…, it could have been done just the same, right?”:

I can’t tell you. All I can tell you is that I was plastered, that I had seen a poster, that I was walking by it and that… that is what came out! I mean… that is what came out, I mean I wasn’t… When I started walking and that, I wasn’t thinking that I was going to make a song. I did not decide to make a song. I mean, in such moments you don’t decide to make a song. The song comes. Or it doesn’t come … I don’t know. It came out with that music and… well, surely for some reason… Well, and then you start with the theme: I had already decided to do something…, well, I had not decided, but it came, something of a popular, or folkloric style, right?, say the melody itself even, and of course the rhythms on which the song is based (interview, June 2006).

Josu Zabala then explained the relationship with txalapartariak Hertzainak already had: they used to invite txalapartariak Kopi and Arantzaz to play just before their rock concerts, as support performers (as they used to do also with colleagues who were bertsolariak). Trying to offer an insight into the reason why Txalaparta was included (which he insisted was part of that unexplained inspiration), he added: “…possibly

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19 The zortziko, regarded for a long time as typically Basque, is a dance rhythm in a double compound metre.
because of the same former reasons [he had already given] and because I think that Txalaparta has a very special sense of evocation…” Josu, who knew Txalaparta mostly through Ez Dok Amairu and the work of the Artze brothers, added the following reasons (which I break up in bullet points, highlighting key sentences in bold):

- “That instrument has something: at the same time that it was practically disappeared and a big stranger in this country, it quickly became a kind of symbol of the country, because it possibly is of the kinds of instruments… (to call it something, because I am not sure if this is exactly an instrument, right?, or something other!) Uh… musical instruments in the country…, it possibly is the one that most differentiates us from the rest of cultures there are in this world … It is something that is very defining of what is Basque…

- “It has another characteristic which for me is wonderful, which is that it is an instrument that one person alone cannot play. It is something that happens very few times in the world of music, right?, that two people interact to make the instrument sound. And besides they interact, let’s say, in equality of…, that is, it’s not that one is blowing the bellows to make the organ sound! No, it is not about a mechanical help, but about the creation of the rhythm itself, or of what is being played, of the music.

- …Besides it also has the fundamental theme that, well, the Txalaparta is a way of calling, it is a way of calling. And besides, normally the function of Txalaparta is usually to make joyful calls, that is, invitations to celebrate. In our case it was a bit the opposite …” (interview, June 2006).

Josu thus highlights, in Txalaparta, a setting of boundaries, a unique and to an extent unequivocal symbol of “Basqueness.” He also points out the equality of terms of two players in the interactive construction of the rhythm, where a player alone cannot perform Txalaparta, but rather simply “drums,” or simply percussion, like other participants stated (if ttakun and herren had different sonic roles in the old style, both were still necessary for the piece to occur, equally necessary). These are reflections upon Txalaparta as a tradition that contains and constructs a social reality that stems from equality in practice. Perhaps representing also an equal interaction in the creation of a socio political reality? A people’s assembly in the form of rhythm? A tradition that
stems from relationships of equality \(^{20}\) and which further constructs them as essential for the creation of a single line of sound, as participants used to point out. More relevant is the fact that such relationships are singled out and highlighted as significant by participants themselves, like Josu Zabala. The latter, in tune with a discourse shared with other participants, also singled out the view of Txalaparta as a device for summoning to celebration, turned, by the conflict, into summoning for sad occasions: matters relating to prisoners (or as will be shown later, funerals).

I did not want that the txalaparta kept the rhythm of that song! The point was that it was a song to be listened to!, something very different of what we used to do, which was songs, let’s say, to make joints!, or to vibrate, or I don’t know, right?, to… “dance” (I don’t know if that’s the word, because in this generation no one knows how to dance!) … This song has been made with all the intention, trying to respect that txalaparta looks like a txalaparta [in sound] and that it individually remains a txalaparta. That is, the txalaparta track had to sound like a txalaparta and not like a rhythmic pattern that is collaborating with something else … It had to be something absolutely independent of the song … it floats within the song …

**María:** You mean [that you wanted] the txalaparta to have its own voice, independently of what is the musical guideline of the song, or something like this?

**Josu:** Yes, yes, However... uh... an acquaintance, a stranger, they meet, they start vibrating and once something goes up, another thing goes down, but suddenly here they join together and… it is like a..., yes, there is a kind of, let’s say, of..., for me it is something of..., a song, or a tune, or an instrument, float one above the other, they are floating one above the other, right?, they are not stuck together, I mean, they are vibrating, very close, meeting and separating, but the separations do not sound like ruptures, right?

**María:** You wanted that type of communication [between the txalapartariak] to exist there also between the txalaparta itself and the song like, or…?

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\(^{20}\) The interlocking in the work of pounding did not need a hierarchical relationship among pounders, unlike was the case, for instance, with the building work after which Txinbilin-Txanbalan was played, as per Jesus Ramos’ research (there was a boss leading the team, implying a different work organisational structure to that of the apple or furze pounding, which might have been the reason why Txinbilin-Txanbalan, as collected, was not performed as interlocking among many, but by a single performer).
Josu: Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. Creating a little… uh…, two rhythms and two worlds, right? Two worlds that vibrate there a little at once, or that every now and then they syntonise, but that never bother each other, right?

María: And when you say “two worlds,” what would you say those worlds are?

Josu: Well, one world, a world of free, absolute, interpretation, without a determined tempo; that is about the txalaparta, which besides varies its rhythmic development as it goes along, right? They start in a binary manner, but then it is also transformed, I mean, it kind of follows the natural evolutions, which are aleatory and do not follow a pattern from start to end, right? That is, the txalaparta is an instrument that evolves freely, right?, it is something very free, and it meets a slow song that, well, that does not evolve freely, it already has a rhythmic pattern, or rhythmic patterns, it has…, well, a determined tempo… let’s say it is now something within a corset if you want … Then it is something that is, let’s say, very constricted, mixed with something that…, a very ordered thing with a very anarchic thing, somehow. That is a bit the idea of that mix, right? And I think that, well, all this has a lot to do with that which the song tells, somehow. It is a song of which I am very proud, which is something [feeling proud] I find hard to achieve.

Though participants guided by more mainstream western conceptions of music and with seemingly little time or understanding for “street” txalapartariak considered, as stated earlier, this song to be a musical failure regarding Txalaparta, the iconicity of Txalaparta was in keeping with a kind of ritualising that, as explained in the previous chapter, not everyone could understand. Josu Zabala offered further insight into what it would have meant adapting Txalaparta to the rhythmic patterns of the song:

It would be not respecting the txalaparta, I mean… Let’s see, I clarify: [it would be] not to allow txalaparta be as it is, right? It is not like I am against the use of txalaparta also as a rhythmic instrument, right?, but I think that a song of that kind, with that theme [political prisoners] that tries to be…, to get to people and to dig in the insides of a lot of families in the end, right?, and of people who is suffering a problem in this country, uh… I think that I had to be very, very respectful with the origins of…. I mean, with the instrument, which represents this country a little, right? It’s a little…, the txalaparta, right?, that is many beats, that is…, every beat is an individual! I somehow dream that there are 564 beats in
that song, and that is a little what the song tells also, right? It is 564 beats in our heart, the heartbeats are those [Txalaparta] beats, right? There is a metaphor between the instrument, the lyrics … First of all, the super euskaldun [character] of the instrument. Second reason [for having Txalaparta in the song]: That hadn’t happened before in the world of rock, a song with Txalaparta had not been made from the world of rock, it was something still to be done, somehow … And then, there was a kind of metaphor among the lyrics, the heartbeats, the beats, the call, the changing of the traditional sense of the Txalaparta from something very happy and that calls to party, to use it in a different context (Josu Zabala, interview, June 2006).

On the 29th of March 2003, I attended an event in Iruñea where Txalaparta featured in that other context that Zabala spoke about. It was a demonstration organised by Etxerat (association of Basque political prisoners’ relatives and friends), and the support of Askatasuna (association of support for Basque political prisoners), and other organisations such as TAT (Torturaken Aurrkako Taldea –“Anti-Torture Group”). The demonstration was in support of the political prisoners Koldo Kareaga and Bautista Barandalla, both of them with terminal illnesses that, according to Spanish penal law and prison regulations, should grant them their release on parole, which was not happening. It was also a demonstration against torture: 90 cases of torture by Spanish police were reported that year, often by detainees while held incommunicado (period of detention for up to 5 days without presumption of innocence or cameras filming the interrogations, ignoring the recommendations made once and again by the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture21). Demonstrators also reported other prison policies, specifically aimed at Basque political prisoners, despite the official denial of their political status (as to avoid the acknowledgment of the political question and thus a political solution to the conflict, as participants pointed out), imposing a heavy burden on them, their relatives and their community. Reported prison policies include, for instance, killings of prisoners reported as suicide by prison authorities despite the strange circumstances in which the bodies are found22; de facto life imprisonment; dispersion policies, which

21 One of the most well known cases of torture in the last few years is that of Gorka Lupiñanez in December 2007, who suffered a brutal treatment while he was held incommunicado and whose picture, taken soon afterwards, has been widely broadcasted by the media and in Internet.

22 In March 2006, for instance, the Basque political prisoner Igor Angulo was reported to have committed suicide in his prison cell: he was found hanging with his hands tied; contradictions in the official reports were highlighted by the organisations Askatasuna and Etxerat.
participants report have claimed the lives of many relatives on the road; or the constant moving of prisoners from a centre to another, time at which beatings by the Civil Guard in charge of the transportation are the norm (an ex prisoner explained to me he had been moved from prison 55 times in 20 years).

The demonstration started at 6 in the evening at the Anaitasuna sports pavilion, where political rallies are usually held in Iruñea, and marched up to the Paseo de Sarasate, a central promenade, where a stage equipped with a Public Address system had been set up. I had seen the event advertised in posters on the walls on the previous days, and one of the groups of txalapartariak whose workshop I had attended the previous week told me they would be performing at it. The txalapartariak explained to me they did not charge for their performances at these events: their contribution was, like that of most people there, on a volunteer basis. There was some expectation since, as it is norm, the event had been forbidden by Spanish authorities, but seemingly some kind of authorisation was obtained at the last minute.

When I met the txalapartariak, they were still trying to decide who was going to play at the opening of the event, after the march, despite having already decided it at the workshop I attended. The older member of the group, Kemen, took the lead and put himself forward to play with Jone, one of the girls. He later explained to me that he wanted to play because it was a very moving event and I got the feeling in fact that it was a few of them who wanted to get up there and play at such an occasion. Kemen and Jone arranged beforehand what they would do: they would start with Txalaparta Zaharra (as they usually did in their public performances), and then “rhythms” (improvisation on the basis of structures learned and rehearsed at the workshops) until one of the organisers gave them a hint of when to finish. The promenade was filled with protesters as far as my eyes could see, men and women, young and old, families with children. There did not seem to be uniformed police present (they were possibly undercover), unlike at other protests I witnessed during that period. Those carrying the two big banners exhibited at the head of the march positioned themselves in front of the stage (but not on it) facing the audience (“Heriotz zigorrari ez!” –“No to the death sentence!”- and “Koldo, Bautista ETXERA!” –“Koldo, Bautista HOME,” in red fonts at the bottom) and to the left of the stage (“Mendeku eta gorroto politikari ez!!” –“no to the politics of hate and revenge”-, and in red fonts: “Koldo, Bautista ETXERA!”) (fig. 5.14), creating an empty space in the centre. At the other end of this space, Etxerat set
up a table for the petitions and a big poster resting on a bench, depicting a scene of torture, with a banner behind attached to two lampposts: “Barandalla, Kareaga, Kalera; Kartzela Politka = Exterminio” (“Barandalla, Kareaga, into the street; Prison policy = Extermination). The txalapartariak were manning the table and collecting signatures, on the request of Etxerat organisers, against the practice of torture to Basque detainees by Spanish authorities (fig. 5.15). Two couples, made up of a boy and a girl in traditional baserri attire, held a picture of one of the prisoners each, at either sides of the banner held in front of the stage (figs. 5.13 and 5.14). The backdrop stage poster showed the pictures of the prisoners and the logo of Etxerat (resembling an oil lamp held by two hands), with big letters at the top: “Heriotz zigorrari ez!!” (“No to the death sentence!”), at the bottom: “Etxean eta bizirik nahi ditugu!” (“We want you home and alive!”). After Kemen and Jone’s performance, Kemen lifted one of the makilak pointing at the pictures of the prisoners while protesters clapped. I could see he was visibly moved as he approached us, greeted by friends. The txalaparta remained on the stage for the entire duration of the performances and speeches: A singer who accompanied himself with a guitar and performed a protest song in Euskara was then followed by a bertsolari (Gabi Basañez, recently released on bail, at the time of writing, after his detention together with other members of Askapena earlier in 2011), who initiates a song for protesters and then abandons the stage, leaving everyone at the crowded promenade singing: “ator, ator, etxera...” (“come, come home...”), requesting the repatriation of Basque political prisoners. Gabi Basañez improvises some verses on stage in relation to the event and a representative of Etxerat initiates the speeches, requesting the release of the prisoners and that Spain abides by its law.

Participants at events related to political prisoners are brought together by their disagreement with the infraction of human rights and legality in relation to the former,
the belief that prisoners cannot be excluded from a peace process, and the fact that, as stated earlier, political prisoners may be their relatives, or friends, or friends’ relatives, and so on (I was given the example of Andoni Egaña, a well known bertolari champion who does not align himself with the independentist left coalition, yet has participated at many events in support of political prisoners (Erramun –Askapena, interview, June 2006)). Participating txalapartariak may not necessarily be in agreement with the political line of Batasuna or the armed struggle, but support the activist in his quality as a human being and member of the community, friend, relative: “I may contribute with money for a cucumber, but I am not a cucumber,” as Jokin explained to me in relation to signing petitions on support of political prisoners or playing at funerals of political prisoners and activists in general (Fieldwork, May 2004).

Figure 5.14: Banners requesting the release of political prisoners. Iruñea (Nafarroa). Source: Fieldwork, 29th March 2003.

Figure 5.15: Txalapartariak from the Txalaparta group were actively involved in the event collecting signatures against torture. The banner reads, in red fonts: “BARANDALLA, KAREAGA KALER” (Barandalla, Kareaga free –literally “to the street”). In black fonts: “KATERZELA POLITIKA = EXTERMINIO” (prison policy = extermination). Source: Fieldwork, 29th March 2003.
Figure 5.16: Poster by TAT (Torturaren Aurrako Taldea – “Anti-Torture Group”) for the collection of signatures against the torture of Basque political prisoners. Source: Fieldwork, 29th March 2003.

Figure 5.17: Bertsolari Gabi Basañez improvises some sung verses in relation to the protest. Source: Fieldwork, 29th March 2003.

Figure 5.18: The txalaparta remains on the stage after opening the rally at the end of the march. Source: Fieldwork, 29th March 2003.
Homage Events for Released Prisoners and Deceased Militants

Other events of a political nature that feature Txalaparta are the ongietorri (meaning “welcome”) for released political prisoners, and the funeral or farewell ceremony at which deceased activists (including those other than ETA political activists) are paid tribute. This takes place along other performing arts depending on the event and its specific circumstances: the aurresku (Basque traditional homage dance) in casual street clothes\textsuperscript{23} or traditional costume (generally a txistulari provides the music), bertsolaritza, and ox horn blowing (adar), are also common performances of tribute at these events, for instance. The adar was also played before the Zuaznabar or the Zabalegi’s Txalaparta performances, and incorporated by many of the new txalapartariak to their sessions.

The chance of attending an omenaldi (homage event) related to the struggle did not present itself to me during my fieldwork stays, therefore my sources of information in relation to this subject are informal interviews, informal conversations held during fieldwork, press news (as primary sources) and secondary sources.

I was told by different participants that there was not a set sequence of given performances that is always repeated at the ongietorri (welcome event), but that there is variation in the kinds of performances that may or may not be included and the manner in which this is done (this, however, does not preclude the existence of a pattern that participants may have overlooked in their focus on variation). Bertsolaritza is common, as well as welcome speeches by different groups to which the released political prisoner used to belong before, including friends and family; irrintziak, singing the “Eusko Gudariak,” and the three “Gora!” formula, close the event. This is then also followed by the removal of the released prisoner’s picture by her/himself from the wall in the local tavern. Txalaparta, which opens the event (and may close it as well as per Eleder, June 2006), is rarely absent. Pierre (the txalapartari from Iparralde mentioned earlier),

\textsuperscript{23} Karlos Sánchez points out that left wing independentists have introduced changes in the traditional aesthetics of the dance, which is especially noticeable at the funerals of the Basque Independentist Left: the dancer is often dressed in casual clothes, thus eliminating formal differences in relation to the rest of participants (including audience). As Karlos Sanchez states, this fades away the dancer’s image of dance specialist into anonymity, conveying the idea that it is the whole community that is participating in the homage of the dance. This aesthetics provides the dance performance with a sense of improvisation, Sanchez observes, thus increasing the feel of “spontaneous sincerity of the homage.” Other changes Sanchez points out are the incorporation of women to dances traditionally performed by males, and in particular the aurreskua (salutation dance) in its male version being performed by a woman if the deceased is a man (Sanchez 2004). Unfortunately there are no studies available to date on funerals for deceased female activists.
explained that for him the *ongietorri* is a “cultural *ekitaldi*” even though it takes place in a political *ekitaldi*; he added it is the same in an *aberri eguna* [day of the motherland]: “when I play I am putting into it the reason around which the political claim is articulated” (fieldnotes, July 2010), in tune with the improvisation strategy used, for instance, by the *txalapartariak* of Irun, as explained in previous chapter. He further added:

> When I play to welcome someone that comes out of prison, someone who may not have heard anything about his culture for 7 or 8 years, who has not seen his mountains, who has not heard of his people, of what he has fought for and he loves…, I put all that which he hasn’t had in the Txalaparta, and I offer it to him (interview, July 2006.)

I asked a young *txalapartari* (19 y.o.) whose father had still many years left in prison, about performing at a homage: “it would be a pleasure to play at an *ekitaldi*…, even more so at an *ongietorri*…” He was very sparing in his words. I told him what Pierre explained to me, for his reaction: “Yes, yes, it is… [silence, only the background music of the *Herriko Taberna* – “People’s Tavern”- can be heard; his eyes lost somewhere beyond] For me the *ongietorri*… The txalaparta is a traditional instrument there is in Euskal Herria and…, like this…, the prisoner is a…, also a militant of Euskal Herria, then it is…, as it is a very old and traditional instrument, it is a pleasure for him and for us” (Mattin, interview, July 2006).

*Homage Events of Farewell for the Deceased*

Cries were increasing as people were getting closer to the Arenal square (Bilbao), people’s reception was getting warmer. The txalaparta sounds brought on everyone’s tears. Our ancestors’ communication instrument was Josu’s voice, the sender of his political message in memory of his image.

The above excerpt, from a text published in the now defunct magazine *Punto y Hora* (cited in Goiri 1996, 51), describes a moment of Josu Muguruza’s funeral in Bilbo, in November 1989, which was attended by a large crowd. The deceased, editor of the independentist left aligned newspaper Egin and newly elected Herri Batasuna MP to the
Spanish Parliament, was shot in Madrid by Spanish paramilitary agents the night before he was to take his seat.

Members of the independentist left coalition (which always counted with ETA’s public support at election time), suffered armed and bomb attacks since 1979 up through the 80s and 90s by paramilitary organisations (such as GAL, seemingly supported by the Spanish Civil Guard, at least in relation to the assassination attempt against sociologist Justo de La Cueva and his wife Margarita Ayestaran in 1984, as claimed by the latter.) This made the conflict very real and immediate for all involved.

GAL activities started by the end of 1983, only a few years after the creation of the Independentist Left coalition Herri Batasuna, with the kidnapping of the political refugees Joxean Lasa and Joxi Zabala. Several attacks by this paramilitary followed in the coming months and years, up to the end of 1986 roughly, with a result of 27 killings of political refugees (ETA activists) that included also politicians, journalists and people unrelated to the political movement who were nearby at the moment of the attacks or who were kidnapped or killed by mistake, mostly on French state soil. Though GAL activities were only officially uncovered in the mid 1990s, when the remains of Lasa and Zabala were identified in 1995 with obvious signs of torture that shocked not only Basque but Spanish society, opening the scandal that would put an end to the Spanish labour party in power (PSOE) (favouring the extreme right), the Basque Independentist Left was already aware of state collusion and the nature of GAL while it was operational, reporting it continuously. It was in such a climate that Txalaparta featured in the funerals and homage events of farewell for deceased ETA activists and other members of the independentist left during those decades as well as in the more recent case of the killing of ETA activist Jon Anza (Txalaparta would feature as well in funerals for personalities related to Basque culture since the late 1960s.) Txalaparta is also present, together with other cultural expressive forms, at anniversary celebrations of deceased activists, such as those in memory of Argala (José Miguel Beñaran), historical member of ETA, or the Gudari Eguna (“day of the fighter”), annual remembrance of all Independentist Left combatants who have died as a result of the Basque struggle.

…[W]ith issues related to ETA and the dead and all that, ETA’s dead, the homages, these that are done in villages and that, the Txalaparta has always been like something very present, people has always related it to mortuary rituals.
Txalaparta is always played, it has been very much like that until recently at least, very linked to that. Now I think there has been another expansion of Txalaparta (Rafa Egiguren, interview, July 2006.)

Despite the expansion of Txalaparta in the south of Euskal Herria beyond the environment of abertzale left events in the last decades, I encountered participants in 2006 who still largely identified Txalaparta with it or who felt people generally did. As a musician’s event coordinator explained, in relation to the difficulties with getting concerts for Txalaparta in the Spanish State, within a world music industry scene (in 2006):

…Whether it is difficult especially because it is Txalaparta stuff? Not in Euskadi. At a state level yes, it would be difficult. Yes, and I am going to tell you why … Because there is… -it is something that bugs me, right? Because there is a…, how would I explain this. Let’s see, you know how politics are here, everything is politics. You buy a cinema ticket and it is politics. I mean, here they politicise everything. Then, the Txalaparta is very politicised, in the sense that when you hear a Txalaparta already the first thing that comes to mind is a homage event for a prisoner. It is mathematical. I am serious. I mean, you start playing Txalaparta down there [the street] tomorrow and I assure you that 90% of people thinks and says “Damn! Who has been released!” It’s like this. I mean, it is amazing. Then it does have that political shade above all the Txalaparta. Why? Because it has been used a lot for that (interview, May 2006).

Another participant who used to play Txalaparta in the late 70s and 80s, and who was mainly involved in the promotion of Euskara, explained to me with annoyance that it was about 10 years ago (1990s) or further back that Txalaparta was already played in all prisoner funerals and that if you played it you were likely to be identified with a “whole political line” (interview, July 2006.) In her anthropological study of funerals for ETA activists and members of the independentist left coalition (Herri Batasuna) from 1983 to 1985, the late Begoña Aretxaga focused on the homage events that took place in Iparralde (north of Euskal Herria, in the French State) during a time of GAL activities (which took place predominantly in Iparralde), observing differences between funerals for armed activists, that she stated would have taken place in previous years in the south (Christian), and those for political refugees (persecuted by the
Spanish Government for alleged ETA membership) killed in Iparralde, which would introduce (in some cases) incineration of the body and Txalaparta (Aretxaga 1988). Aretxaga observes a preponderance of the mother figure in the symbolic ritual construct of the homage events at which the religious funeral is absent (incineration also substituting burial of the dead).

According to Aretxaga, although the ceremonies incorporate a degree of variation from one to the next (as different participants insisted to me in 2006 with a wider time range in mind than the scope of Aretxaga’s study24) the sequence of events, images and some symbols were the same in the homage events at which she participated in Iparralde in the mid 1980s. The Basque scholar presents, as an example that is illustrative of such events, the case study of the funerary homage to political refugees Bixente Perurena (known as Peru) and Angel Gurmando (Stein), killed in February 1984 in Hendaia (Iparralde) by GAL: The homage took place in an enclosed space, a pelota court, which Aretxaga identifies as a general trait for these events25. Aretxaga offers a description of the event that highlights an array of aural, visual and behavioural metaphors (symbols): There was, next to a side wall in the court, a table covered with the flag depicting the “Arrano Beltza” (“black eagle”), symbol of the Kingdom of Navarre. In other cases, the Basque flag may be the one used, according to this author. Independentist left events generally feature both flags, sometimes including the less old Navarrese flag (chains over a red background), claiming visually the historical origins of the Basque Country in the ancient kingdom. Offerings of flower wreaths and bouquets of carnations and red and white roses also covered the table, as well as a tree seedling. This symbolises, as Aretxaga explains, that the dead is the seed that will flower. This symbolic object may be a different item depending on the deceased, however, as the author indicates, such as a stone, for strength and endurance, or a makila, as a metaphor of the continuity of the struggle, as in a rally race, i.e., in the Korrika, it is a metaphor for Euskara. As a backdrop, behind the table, there was a Basque flag on the wall and next to it (either besides or underneath), the pictures of the deceased, above a banner that read: “Herriak ez du barkatuko” (meaning “the people will not forget.”) Aretxaga continues her description:

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24 One of the txalapartariak with whom I discussed this, Eleder, ex political prisoner and left abertzale, explained to me that an element that was recurrent in the funerals was Sorozabal’s Funerary March.

25 Aretxaga relates the fact that the space is enclosed to the special circumstances of the homage organisers, themselves political refugees.
…the notes of a Basque music group launch the homage. The song says that the militant is not dead because he is a seed from which flowers, verses and new patriots will rise. Once the song is over, the relatives enter with the militants’ remains and walk toward the table among the sounds of the txalaparta and clapping by attendants. This instrument has the evocative power of the ancestral … It is the moment in which, in the “Beltzena” pelota court, Stein’s mother and Peru’s wife carry the ashes in their hands. They station themselves behind the table, beside the [other] relatives, facing the audience, and both lift the ashes above their heads at once, showing them to attendants in offering attitude. During this moment, the sound of Txalaparta is intensified. After this, the relatives sit in a space reserved for them behind the table. While the audience stands in silence, a dantzari (dancer) in street clothes dances an honour “aurrezku,” a dance of salutation and recognition, in front of the dead. The “aurrezku” is followed by the intervention of two bertsolaris (Aretxaga 1988, 44-45.)

Begoña Aretxaga notes that in the funerary rituals, the Txalaparta increases the emotional climate, emphasizing the moments which are considered most significant26 (such as the lifting of the ashes of the deceased activist,) as seems to be the case in the political rallies and other events relating to political prisoners, when Txalaparta is used at other moments apart from the opening of the event, at which Txalaparta is also emotionally striking, according to participants’ and my own experience. The txalaparta described by Aretxaga is composed of stands which are chestnut tree baskets upside down, separate enough to allow for very long boards (2 to 3 meters she claims); the isolating material between the stands and the boards is described as maize leaves or sheep skin, and the boards are at least two and made out of different woods. They are generally played by two men with two distinctive roles: “one keeps the rhythm and the other one makes the variations” (1988, 44). In this description, the type of Txalaparta, both in its physical and aural form, seems to evoke an aesthetic connection with tradition and rural life: baskets rather than carpenter table stands, i.e.; maize leaves or ship skins, rather than leather stripes for instance; and long wooden planks (which produce greater vibration) and the prescribed roles of itakun and herren, are elements that belong to Txalaparta Zaharra (excepting the sheep skins.)

26 Aretxaga states that Txalaparta also helps communication by attendants, but does not explain how or what she means by this.
The song improvised by the *bertsolaria*kiak that sang after the dancer at Peru and Stein’s *agurra* (farewell homage), translates as follows into English:

That our brothers remain alive/ Beltzenia is a witness. / We have received great applause / also deep tears / and we are pushed to continue / by the dead fighters’ strength. / They may hit us, / they may kill us, / they may kill us, / but we will not give up / until we together free Euskadi (Aretxaga 1988, 46).

This was followed, as Aretxaga further explains, by a jota, a dance type found in Nafarroa and which Stein, Navarresse, was fond of. A poem about the wife and daughters the latter has left behind, “and the mother, ‘the woman beloved above all’”, is recited “by a female voice.” Next, some children, girl friends of Peru’s daughters, “recite some verses about the militants and their death, finishing with the motto ‘Herriak ez du barkatuko’ (the people will not forgive).” After a colleague of the deceased praises their human and political disposition, “finally a person of especial significance intervenes, the refugee ‘Peixoto’. This historical militant, who after having suffered several attacks was seriously disabled, is for the attendants a live symbol of resistance. His presence is sure in all funerary ceremonies of Basque refugees and his words, as in this case, are always meaningful: ‘We are neither Spanish-Basque, nor French-Basque, we have our own mother and we will not give her away’ [words extracted from an article in *Egin* newspaper]” (Aretxaga 1988, 46.) The description of the ceremony ends with the “funerary march” and the singing of the “*Eusko Gudariak*” by participants at the event.

As stated earlier, participants with whom I discussed farewells to the deceased in relation to the Independentist Left, stressed that these could vary greatly from one to the next. With regards to Txalaparta, Pierre put the case of Txomin Iturbe (charismatic ETA leader deceased in 1987), whose funeral, which was televised, featured 5 or 6 txalapartas.

In our interview in June 2006, Eleder explained there were two ways of finishing the performance at the homage event:

There have been many ways of finishing [the piece]. A way of finishing which was more poetic, which was that of “zas!”, with full intensity, then you somehow started producing the beats more separated and so, more softly, and in the end you end up in a soft manner, right? And “tak” [said softly, with a low volume,
with care], and it stayed there, right… I think that the last beat was the beat of silence.

He then added:

Then is the other way where you raise [the volume and speed], you raise, you raise [saying it very fast], and in the end, “pa!” , right? Those are the ways there are of working at a political level, right? And what does it represent? That for me has always been a heartbeat, a life heartbeat, of Txalaparta… **Where there’s Txalaparta, there’s life** (interview, June, 2006).

This subject matter was a delicate one for it openly referred to *txalapartariak* participation at homage events of deceased ETA activists, and I was only able to discuss it with few participants. One other participant who elaborated on his performances at “*heriotzak*” (deaths), as he called such ceremonies, explained that though he liked playing inside the church for enhanced sonority, “normally the priest does not allow the Txalaparta to enter in the… [church], at least here in Hegoalde,” thus being restricted to performing at the entrance or exit of the funerary mass. Nonetheless, most of his performances were at *agurra* homage events where the ashes of the deceased are scattered in the mountains or the sea (sometimes a river,) “a lot in Jaizkibel” (mountains between the south and north of Euskal Herria), moments at which the intensity of the Txalaparta performance is increased. He explained at such occasions he played *Txalaparta Zaharra* (the old style),

…but besides, with the solemn character that the thing has, I mean, for me the solemnity is more important than [the txalaparta being seen]… I liked the idea of not having a stage of any kind, I mean, that the “txala” could be heard and be present but not seen … because, of course, in those situations the story [meaning “the Txalaparta”] becomes a focal point, even if it is in that minute you are playing, it becomes a focal point somehow, people look and is attentive to what all in a sudden two people are playing … (Edorta, interview May 2006).

Edorta further explained that despite his preference for an invisible but audible Txalaparta, “they usually want the [visible] presence [of Txalaparta] right there” (interview, May 2006). The visibility of Txalaparta, thus, is important, increasing the sensorial experience of its performance within the overall context of the event. This participant highlighted that during the fewer funerals with burial at which he
participated, it has been when the coffin, covered with the Basque flag, is taken in procession through the streets, the moment at which Txalaparta is particularly present, right from the moment the coffin carriers enter the public space of the street, and for as long as the procession lasts.

…when you put up an event like this, what you are seeking after all is for all the people that go there to feel it. I mean, I don’t know. A bit to feel in a collective way the pain it has caused you that one of yours has been killed, or that one has died in prison, or taken his own life, or whatever. (Erramun, member of Askapena, interview, July 2006).

Ritualising in relation to the struggle seems to embed Txalaparta in a universe of metaphoric behaviours that seek to reclaim popular (and Basque) traditional culture as a model of popular or active political participation. After I brought up, in my conversation with Askapena members Adrian and Erramun, the criticisms I had heard from anarchists who had been former supporters, Adrian explained partly the rationale of political rallies and other events organised by the so-called left abertzale in the following way, from his vantage point as rally organiser:

Any event in the Church is exactly the same, it is a liturgy. … [T]here are, let’s say, there are always two forces in that, right?, one which wants to maintain something, let’s say, just as it has been done always, something fixed, right?, tradition; and another force that tries to change, develop, make it better, make it… different. Then, one cannot be without the other. If you suggest that, well, that we now forget everything traditional completely, all these schemes…, well, then you can make an event that is completely original, new, different, but it looses absolutely everything, because it is not an event anymore, now it is something absolutely different, no one identifies with it anymore. The people that is there must have a…, must know what they are going for! It is not a happening, which, yes, that can be something totally unusual! We are not talking of a street theatre happening… … For something to be an event, right?, both forces must be there, on the one hand what is known must be there, that is, the traditional. But for that not to become just an absolutely empty routine, there must be innovations. And I think that applies everywhere. There’s no other formula. Where do you put the
weight? Sometimes it is put more in the variations, in the new, but always maintaining a structured basis. And other [events] have become so petrified that there is nothing there to go to, right?, because it is absolutely fixed and without anything new at all, so that you go and already know what is going to be there. Therefore, things are done between those two extremes: once a bit more like this, and another time a little more toward the new. Besides, there’s no other way of doing it! (interview, June 2006).

The ritualising that takes place in relation to the struggle evokes and enacts structures of social self-empowerment developed by the ordinary people, across time, by means of expressive culture. Whether it is expressed by the joaldunak awakening the Earth from its winter dream, metaphorically now the Basque nation perhaps, bertsolariak providing social commentary, or Txalaparta calling for auzolan at the crucial times of the struggle, these may be regarded as the embodied sensual enactment of the law that Hibbits (1992) attributes to preliterate and semiliterate societies, and which perhaps is not so much restricted to such societies, but to environments where active social participation outweighs voyeuristic or passive consumption, for instance. Reflection upon traditional forms of self empowerment seems to imply a search for it in the cultural specificity of a people. It is not simply a matter of equality (socialism), but something more is at stake. Something has been lost (or taken) and it shall be recovered and protected: that expressive culture that is metaphorically recreated and reassembled at the rallies and other events related to the struggle belong with the ancient institutions that granted the Basques their independence. Adrian (from Askapena) reflected upon tradition in the events so far described as necessary, so people “identify with it” and “know what they are going for”: it is not only a matter of reclaiming popular participation in community matters, but Basque specific ways of doing it, legitimised by a long practice (tradition). Participants used to state that the values of equality they strove for were contained in Basque traditional culture as in-built mechanisms aimed at preventing the expropriation of popular power and resources, and which granted Basques the degree of autonomy enjoyed before the abolition of the foruak. But ritualising, for much that it is rationalised a posteriori by the scholar or the Basque left independentist ideologue, queried by the former, seems to be above all a matter of sentiment, “deeply felt sentiment.” Perhaps symbolic behaviours (and ‘symbolic’ objects as behaviours too), speak, past the intellect, to the “ensouled” body that lives and “dies for” (whether understood as the individual’s unconscious, or some shared
collective form of it); perhaps such behaviours emerge from, as well as influence, that body, both social and individual at once.

Considering Richard Schechner’s understanding of ritual as efficacious performance, as earlier in this chapter, brings us to the role and “function” of the txalapartari in those events that mark critical moments of transition in the life of the political activist and the armed resistance militant. Edorta put this eloquently at our interview in May 2006, offering an insight both on the expectations put on the txalapartari by the community and the contribution of the txalapartari to such critical events, from the perspective of someone who has performed at them:

**Edorta:** ...myself, as soon as I was capable of doing two consecutive ttakuns and an herrena, and an hutsune [leaving one’s “playing interval” empty, or not producing an expected stroke], I was already playing in the street. I mean, the txalapartari normally, as soon as he can do... the first workshop he has and this and that, he has an obligation. He’s got an obligation of... I mean, yes, it is true that the people that learn Txalaparta, in the beginnings surely almost everyone, (until very recently, I think, until it [Txalaparta] has entered in the music schools, until it has been conceived as a musical instrument... -that has happened in the last few years-) ... we all have had to put up with homage events, and if you didn’t want to go to the homage, then you went to the funeral, and if you didn’t go to the funeral, then… But the way of playing, people has always played in the street, and always in that totally symbolic way, I mean, the “txala” is very much of that, but very much of that until very recently. ... Without counting the big people that have done many things for the “txala,” but the txalapartaris who are street-like a bit, very few have taken it because of the musical stuff, very few. Most... Txalaparta has a huge symbology. In fact, I don’t know if it is something cultural, only cultural, or because Txalaparta represents an old community... It has a very mysterious something, no one knows exactly where it comes from, nor from when…, but very distant references have always been spoken of, very distant, from the times of the Romans even … I don’t know, many things have been said…, even Oteiza has said many more … But from there, in the streets, what is in the street, pff!, a really strong symbology. And I think that... yes,

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27 The actual word I translate as “obligation” is, in colloquial Castilian, “marrón” (lit. “brown”), used in this context with the meaning of putting up with a chore.
because of all that cultural and ancestral stuff, and so on, but mainly because of the sound. And I think it is…

**María:** Because of the sound?

**Edorta:** Because of the sound of that instrument. For me the “txala” does have something in that ritual sense, it’s that..., I mean, it’s the expression that most people use: “Fff! It makes my hair stand on end.” I mean, the sound penetrates in such a way…! Especially when it is real wood, when it is..., when you have a plank of two meters and a half, when… Of course, now in the street: “pppppp…” [imitating a very fast tempo] other kind of rhythms are played and other things, right?, but when they played there “putun pun putun” [the old style], I don’t know, such a powerful, such a real, and such an internal story emerged, that most probably many of the people that were there, most probably they must be the people that can perceive the most that something of… I think that it is something very strong, the Txalaparta is something very strong for the people that has felt it as ritual. It is true that later on rituals have become customs, and customs later become..., and of course, in many homage events “ti tin tin” [expressing routine]. But when you see a pair of good txalapartaris, with a good txalaparta, in any kind of homage, whether it is..., or well, or above all in..., well, in weddings too—it is much more cheerful and that-, but in funerals…! I mean, I have played many times in funerals… (well, “many…” yes, I have had to play many times), but I have felt, I mean, mothers, fathers, children, grandparents, of everything, whoever it is, I mean, [people] who have never seen a “txala,” nor do they have musical concepts nor anything, but to start crying, but in ways which are very… pff! It has, it has a lot of that, and besides it’s very real. And besides, it’s very visceral … For me, the sound..., for me… pff!, is a..., the sound itself is primitive already in itself, it’s wood, it’s… “goxua” [“sweet” in Euskara], I don’t know how to call it, it’s sweet..., it’s powerful, it’s very internal, it is..., Txalaparta has a lot of that. And I think that they are things that most probably those who feel it at a homage won’t be able to describe them may be, but if you’ve played it lots of times you just realise that people react in that way, that people say: [breathing in and exhaling deeply and noisily with a freeing sigh] “Thanks!” I mean that it’s cool, and you get..., and..., and..., and..., well, I don’t know, it’s that me, most of the memories I have are very strong, in that sense. And for me the main motivation has been to have been able to play...
the homage events], because, of course, later, little by little, it’s years, it’s obligations…, often they are obligations, because often they are obligations, and you have to…

**María:** “Obligations” you mean of having to play in such circumstances or…?

**Edorta:** Yes, yes, I mean that often they are that, but many other times they are “hey, whatever, this and that, and there is a dinner, and there’s…, because a prisoner has been released, or whatever, and come to play, whatever,” and pum, and of course, at the beginning you’re excited, and then it… But of course, perhaps that weekend you have something, or you have…, or you don’t feel like it, or whatever, and of course, as we were very few txalapartaris…

**María:** Yes, you had to…

**Edorta:** We were but, but…! [complaining]. But then when they were..., that is, I mean, that when you felt like saying “Ff! Yes, yes, I’m going to go because I feel like it,” I mean, right?, and I have felt that a lot, and I have gone [there] with the “txala” very often to offer something very powerful … I mean, I knew that I made people feel things that most probably had nothing to do with musical concepts but which did have all that, right?, and pf!, and for me, what has filled me the most very often, for many years, has been that. All the musical concept has come to me afterwards. I just didn’t have a clue about music…” (interview, May 2006).

For **txalapartariak** like Josu Goiri, as I explain later in this chapter, or Erlantz Auzmendi and his students (at least those I met in Nafarroa, of an anarchist orientation), who offered a transcendental view of Txalaparta as a rhythm of transformation, the txalapartari seems to be (especially with regards to their descriptions of Txalaparta Zaharra), a kind of shaman (like the zamalzain, the hobby horse dancer of the maskaradak of Zuberoa, another character that evokes, like the txalapartari for adepts of this narrative, the “Basque totem” of the horse). Allen Feldman and Eamonn O’Doherty, authors of *The Northern Fiddler* (1979) do not hesitate in framing the figure of the musician they reflect upon in their work, the figure of the fiddler in the rural Irish society in which it was found, as a shaman, testifying to the importance of Eliade’s work on shamanism in the changing messianic times of the 1970s. Characters that seem to hold a central position in the performing arts of traditional rural communities (reflected upon as ritualistic customs, that is, as behaviours that transcend a mere
function of “enjoyment”), and who are regarded by the youth that goes back to them and writes about them as repositories of a wisdom that must not be lost, are given, with the imagery handed down by Eliade (as was the case of Urbeltz), the special category of shamans. Regardless of their role in the past, they are now (for they are taken as such) shamans. Whether we use this appellative or not, the txalapartari, as evidenced so far throughout this chapter, seems to have performed a key role in the ritualising related to the ezker abertzale and the armed struggle (an armed struggle perceived, as stated earlier, as necessary sacrifice, as the ultimate offering and act of generosity a member of the community can do for it: risk -give- his life), sustaining those moments of higher relevance with their rhythms, aiding his community at times of difficult transition. From the political rally, to those events that mark the life and specific struggle of an activist (activism, imprisonment, release or death), the figure of the txalapartari is considered, as exemplified by Edorta’s words, necessary (which of course does not mean that all txalapartariak would perform at such events, nor that those who perform are necessarily always supporters of the armed struggle). The txalapartari is also perhaps taken for granted to an extent as an unconditional or especially committed activist, as perceived by Edorta.

Participants often expressed, in a way or another, a uniqueness of Txalaparta that had more to do with the efficacy of ritual than with joy or “entertainment”:

“…For me, there is nothing like the txalaparta to expresses certain internal feelings and emotions, whether they are happy or sad, individual or collective… For a homage, to celebrate a victory or regret a defeat, to offer a welcome or sing a goodbye, to thank, to congratulate someone… In all these occasions, the sound of Txalaparta traps and unites together performers as much as audience” (Beltran 2009, 13-14).

2006 Ceasefire

Allusions to the theme of sacrifice for the sake of continuity of the community are constant in the songs, poems and speeches offered at the homage ceremonies for the dead in relation to the struggle, as Aretxaga exemplifies in her study: “They kill some, like Xabier [Perez de Arenaza], because they defend their father’s house. Those who die like him are people’s martyrs, who have fought and fight for us, and for those who
follow us, to be liberated” (cited in Aretxaga 1988, 50-51.) The film Euskal Herri Musika, discussed in the previous chapter, offers an example of this theme as it is interwoven with traditional expressive culture.

Sacrifice, Freedom. Txalaparta.

In March 2006, ETA declared a total ceasefire to facilitate a process of negotiation to end the conflict, which generated great hopes among participants. This was the second total ceasefire declared by the armed organisation after the failed peace process of 1998/99. ETA’s video announcement of the ceasefire, broadcast on the 22nd of March, features Txalaparta soundtracks. Seven or eight seconds of Txalaparta rhythms give way to the important announcement by a spokeswoman in the middle of two other ETA activists, with a commanding determined voice, first in Euskara, then in Castilian. White scarfs cover the activists’ faces completely, only featuring two holes that seem shaped as angry eyes, contrasting with their black tops (featuring ETA’s crest on the left of their chest, and the Basque coat of arms, the “zazpiak bat,” on the left arm) and black berets (the traditional txapela). They are sitting behind a table also covered with a white cloth, featuring the Basque coat of arms at the front. At their right, the Basque flag hangs from a pole; at their left, both flags of the Kingdom of Navarre (the “arrano beltza” flag and the less ancient one featuring chains on a red background); in the centre behind them, the snake wrapped around an axe, symbol of ETA (fig. 5.19):

“the serpent for cunning intelligence and the axe for bluntness” as I was told by some participants (fieldwork, March 2003). The video announcement ends with approximately 2 minutes and 10 seconds of Txalaparta performed over a backdrop of evoking rural, bewitching sounds, provided by synthesisers (Egurraren Orpotik Dator..., by
Joxan Goikoetxea and Juan Mari Beltran (1993)), while the text of the announcement is shown in the screen:

Euskadi ta Askatasuna has decided to declare a permanent ceasefire from the 24th of March, 2006. The aim of this decision is to promote a democratic process in Euskal Herria to build a new framework in which our rights as a people are recognised, and which ensures the possibility of development of all political options in the future. At the end of this process, Basque citizens must have the say and the decision on their future. The Spanish and French states must recognise the results of this democratic process, without limitations of any kind. The decision we Basque citizens make on our future will have to be respected. We call on all agents to act responsibly and to be consistent with the step taken by ETA. ETA calls on the Spanish and French authorities to respond positively to this new situation, leaving repression aside. Finally, we call on Basque citizens to get involved in this process and to fight for the rights as a people which are our due. ETA expresses its desire and will for the process which has begun to reach its end, thereby achieving a truly democratic situation for Euskal-Herria, ending the long years of conflict and building a peace based on justice. We reaffirm our commitment to continue taking steps in the future in accordance with such will. Ending the conflict, here and now, is possible. This is the desire and the will of ETA. Long live a free Basque Country, long live a socialist Basque Country, ceaselessly until independence and socialism are reached (ETA’s ceasefire announcement, March 2006).

The unilateral ceasefire, against the backdrop of a campaign of police detentions (as has been the case during past and current ETA ceasefires), was officially ended by the latter in early 2007 (despite an attack on the Madrid airport in December 2006 claimed by the organisation). According to statements by the currently imprisoned Independentist Left leader, Arnaldo Otegi, in 2009, the Spanish Government refused to endorse “an agreement proposal designed by the international observers, by the representative of an important European State” to what he added that “…The abertzale left, ourselves, accepted the proposal [after making a semantic change, as he explained later], and the Spanish State did not” (Gara 2009). If the video announcement of 2006 featured Txalaparta soundtracks, their announcement of a new ceasefire in September 2010, however, did not, but rather some kind of background piano music I was not able to
identify, and which did not seem to bear any reference to Basque traditional nor popular culture, nor does it feature for more than a few seconds at the start and the end, apparently bearing little significance in the ritualising involved except, I understand, for that which is omitted: Txalaparta (visually, the Basque coat of arms is also absent.) As explained earlier in this dissertation, I could not help but wonder if recent research attention (including my own) had anything to do with these omissions of what seemed obligatory presence of Txalaparta. I felt in 2006 that members of the Independentist Left were very aware of my interest in the relationship between Txalaparta and the Basque Movement for National Liberation. I attended events at which I was assured by organisers there would be Txalaparta, yet there was not. When I asked, I received evasive replies and I could not help but wonder was my research endeavour introducing changes in their ritualising.

As shown so far, Txalaparta does not only feature at events of an overtly celebratory kind, but also at events specifically organised in support of social and political causes. I tried to make sense of this in my conversation with Josu Zabala, in terms of a link with a movement of resistance that I felt I was discerning in relation to Txalaparta and perhaps an “independentist left” (the concept of Independentist Left is colloquially used to refer to such political option, rather than an ideologically plural independentist community with left wing leanings). Zabala, who felt I was talking about the banned political coalition, reacted strongly:

Why fighting for what is yours has to be identified with a political option! Come on, even for pissing in the street they tell you that you belong to this or that political line, come on! Enough that making culture is identified as making politics (interview, June 2006).

In recent times, within the tougher international frame of reduction of civil liberties after 9/11, and more specifically with the invasion of Iraq, persecution of the Basque Movement for National Liberation was taken to the extreme, with a wide array of Basque associations, not only social-political, such as Jarrai (and its successors

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28 ETA’s video announcement of January 2011, making the ceasefire permanent, and its more recent announcement declaring a definitive total cease of its armed activities on the 20th of October 2011, did not feature any music (the Basque coat of arms is not present either on the ceremony of these announcement) (ETA 2011).
Haika, and then Segi, youth organisations of an Independentist Left political line), but also Basque media (radios, the all Basque newspaper *Egunon Egunkaria*, closed down by the Spanish Government amid serious allegations of torture by Basque detainees, and recently cleared of all charges), people related to the promotion of Euskara or a number of well known Basque cooks, had been detained and sent to court by the Spanish Government accused of membership or collaboration with the armed organisation ETA (see 18/98 Macro-summary in glossary). Zabala reflected upon Txalaparta in terms of an “instrument” which had been recovered at a time when being Basque was persecuted: he argued he would see the drive to recover things Basque as environmentalist though applied to culture, that is, as fighting for (working for) a Basque cultural environmental area, an identity (interview, June 2006). Josepe and Peio, young *txalapartariak* actively engaged with the recovery of Basque traditions for the present and with revitalising the local youth culture and community (involving the reporting of land speculation threatening the environmental and cultural nature of their valley) put their engagement with Txalaparta, and that of other equally engaged youths (as those I met in Bizkaia or Iruñea) as social engagement involving volunteer work in/for the community above all, rather than “political” (in the sense of working for the sake of a party line). The Txalaparta groups I worked more closely with in Iruñea used to stress the importance of returning the fruits of what had been gained in the group (personal development in terms of skills and knowledge gained) to the community, in the sense of contributing to community building (not only regarding the group itself, but the larger community in which the group is embedded, in terms of neighbourhood, city/town/village, and Euskal Herria29). In other words they expressed a commitment to *auzolan* (communal work). This also meant that what had been received for free, ought to be returned also in a voluntary disinterested manner. An example, among many, of this cultural grassroots work and its communal dimension is offered by the reconstruction of the old *tolare* by the youth group Jo ala Jo and other youth of the area, keeping it active for cider production at a small scale, and embedding it in different cultural events at which the link between the work of pounding the apple and *kirikoketa*, considered a “variant of Txalaparta,” is presented to audiences with an educative goal. Participating *txalapartariak* offered Txalaparta performances at events that, beyond political party alliances, sought to protect Basque culture (i.e. Euskara, as is the case with the all Basque Country rally race Korrika for its support and promotion) and

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29 The “think global, act local” motto.
fundamental civil rights such as the freedom of expression (i.e. demonstrations in support of the Egunon Egunkaria), or anti-imperialist demonstrations (for which one of the groups, with anarchist leanings, had built a mobile Txalaparta). It just so happened that, more often than not, participants in this research ascribed to the Independentist Left, within a larger progressive left orientation that, according to an ex-prisoner participant from Iruña, encompasses people of different views (“from communists, like a group within Batasuna, to different forms of anarchism, libertarian ideology, D’Urruti line…”), but who are articulated around certain important axis points very strongly, this participant added. “There’s no point wasting energies in defining a plural movement within the left, the point is grassroots work at neighbourhood level and national construction” (Joxe, fieldwork, June 2006). With this he described the general independentist left wing community (encompassing many interpretive communities), rather than what is the so called Independentist Left (of a more Marxist-Leninist orientation as per my understanding). He further clarified some of my doubts: “Trotskits don’t love us, Marfa” (Joxe, fieldwork, June 2006.)

“Ritual Criticism” from the Wider Spectrum of Left Wing Independentists

I encountered in 2003 a critical discourse in relation to the rallies of the Independentist Left that I was not familiar with and which I regarded as a lack of understanding of the nature of ritual (especially when upheld by individuals who regarded the independentist left political formation as suspect) as well as a tendency to “keeping in check” constructions of power by means of ritual by the left (in tune with the de-sacralising, “rational,” position held by Juan Mari Beltran, i.e.) Such critical discourse was initially expressed to me by Bixente, a member of Eguzki Bideoak (an independent volunteer organisation of audiovisual technicians concerned with freedom of expression and independent media journalism, linked to the free radio Eguzki Irratia) who was very critical of the armed struggle. He was not impressed with my desire to study the aesthetics of the rallies (not unlike my host and other anarchist txalapartariak from his group who became rather uncomfortable and openly annoyed -as well as rather suspicious- about this), as I found out while he was showing me a video of Batasuna which he kindly copied for me: “But, do you know what they are singing!” he said, as participants of the rally started singing the “Eusko Gudariak”; “do you have any idea of what they are saying?: ‘We’re ready to give our blood…!’” He stated that he used to be
a fervent supporter and regular attendant at rallies when he was younger, indeed ready to give his blood for Euskal Herria, but now he had changed his approach to the struggle and felt revolted at the idea of killing as a means to achieve goals. I soon learned that there were many more people who identified with the tenets of the independentist left and were engaged in countercultural anti-imperialist capitalist activities (civil disobedience) and support for prisoners (often either relatives or friends), but who had moved away from it with regards to the issue of violence (such as my txalapartari host in 2003 and other txalapartariak from his group). Bixente stated, as part of his criticism, that the rallies were very repetitive in terms of aesthetics and tiring. “It stinks at this stage” he stated, commenting on the customary use of Txalaparta at the rallies. He added he found the whole aesthetics and sequence of the rallies boring and worn out, which I feel had to do with a suspicion of processes of institutionalisation. Indeed, Jokin, who defined himself as a radical anarchist, had expressed in some occasions, with pessimism, in relation to the abertzale coalition, that they would become institutionalised, “a party like the rest,” loosing that which made them stay close to the ground, to the people: “It is seen but it is not heard.” This observation in relation to Txalaparta was shared, in a contradictory manner though, by other txalapartariak who openly ascribed to the Independentist Left political formation. These young participants would complain about the use of Txalaparta in the rallies (often limited to a short opening performance of a few minutes), yet expressed on different occasions a strong sense of pride and satisfaction in serving the cause and their community through their performance at such events: “It is an honour to play there,” “it is a pleasure,” were some of the comments I heard in relation to it (fieldwork, 2003-2006.) As stated in the previous chapter, I often encountered the statement that “Txalaparta is music” and eventually realised that a certain discourse was being addressed and challenged, that which regards Txalaparta as a calling device in particular. I felt this was primarily Juan Mari Beltran’s advocacy joined by the younger generations of txalapartariak who owe what they know to him and gratefully look up to him. Such txalapartariak, as is the case of the aforementioned independentist left supporters I met in Iruñea, regarded the txalaparta performances that opened the rallies and homage events as too short, and explained such constraint as a lack of appreciation for it.

Eleder, though he had played at different homage events, he argued against the understanding of txalaparta as a calling device:
I recall once that we were talking about that in jail and I was fighting for…, I claimed my space [as txalapartari]. I said that the txalaparta deserves some respect as an instrument, because there are people who is dedicating their life to its research, and that it is a musical instrument, it is not a drum. It is a musical instrument that produces music … (interview, June 2006)

He further explained an incident at an ongietorri at which he argued with one of the organisers for a greater presence of Txalaparta:

…we were there playing and one told me -besides a friend of mine-…, a girl said from below “Eleder!” [as to stop], and we had only been playing two minutes! And then I came down [of the stage], I went to her and told her “Look, you must know that the Txalaparta deserves a space in the homage and anywhere,” I said to her, “because it is an instrument that must…, that we are also fighting for, just like we are fighting for Euskal Herria, … for whatever, right?, but it must be given its place. I think it deserves its space. …You must respect this. Otherwise, next time there won’t be a txalaparta.” “Damn, Eleder, bloke, come on! [imitating her voice], damn, in fairness, one ends up putting up with everything” and so forth, right? The typical, right?

I discussed this criticism made by txalapartariak, of Txalaparta not being recognised as music in the rallies, with Erramun and Adrian, members of the internationalist independentist left organisation Askapena:

Adrian: Yeah, but one thing is a political ekitaldi [rally in Euskara] and another thing is a concert. If you organise a concert, right?, a txalapartaris’ festival… like it is done here [in Gazteiz] for a day, man, there are different txalapartas playing for three, four hours, right? There, yes, but a political ekitaldi is a political ekitaldi! It isn’t a concert! It isn’t… and you can’t put there a symphony of Txalaparta! Why? Because what is ultimately important is the political side!

Maria: Of course, the message that is meant to be… [transmitted]

Erramun: And not only that! …Prisoners, when they write something, they are told: “Hey! Write something brief!” If they write a letter of five pages, go and read that at the ekitaldi! Man, it is great, but… five pages! May be two prisoners write [to be read at the rally], then the one from Askatasuna goes up to talk, then a relative
goes up to talk, then there has first been Txalaparta, there are *bertsolaris*, and you end up with *ekitaldis* of more than an hour! If the weather is bad and it’s minus zero degrees, it isn’t funny! And since, on top of that, we are already converted those who are going to attend, then what matters is to go to an *ekitaldi* that has enough political content and that doesn’t overwhelm either…

**Adrian:** [Txalaparta] shall take you, as we have already said, ultimately, to the final catharsis.

**Erramun:** …But like for *bertsolaris*, come on, you sing three verses! I mean, two or three verses! You’re not going to start singing twenty verses there! There have been *ongietoris*, for instance, that depending on the personality of the prisoner, they have to come up to talk… the people of the AEK [organisation for Basque alphabetisation of adults], because he or she was a teacher of Euskara, the people of Batasuna because he or she was also a Batasuna militant, the people of whatever because this or that, those of the neighbourhood because he also moved a lot in the neighbourhood, uh… the family, the group of friends, the… whatever! Damn, there is no…, you can’t get up there to… not even ten minutes of Txalaparta, nor ten minutes of *bertsolaris*, not even the imprisoned friends’ letter because s/he has been released: “Hey, now you’ll be outside having a bloody awesome time, and this and that!”, ok, but don’t write ten pages! I mean… And that [restricting the letter length] may look like… “damn, but… this is the way I’ve written it!”, “No, you may have written it like that but… it is a bugger!” (interview, July 2006).

What would happen if Txalaparta was omitted, or when in fact it is? Eleder presented, as an exceptional case that he could not understand, the example of his own *ongietorri*:

…when we were released, in my *ongietorri* there was no Txalaparta! I got very cross! [I laugh] I got very cross! I mean, I have been playing the txalaparta in all the homage events… In my town, in Santurtzi, we may be up to 60 or 70 prisoners in history [referring to the current struggle], you know, that is a lot! … I have had to put up with all the homage events for prisoners, and mate, to get there to the homage, mate, and Txalaparta not to be there… There was *dultzaina* and these things, but there was no Txalaparta, and it bugged me. For the record. Take note of it (interview, June 2006).
He also added, in relation to the current moment, showing a general trend of critical reflection upon the rituals of the Independentist Left among both supporters (though not all) and non-supporter participants in this research:

I think that in the end playing Txalaparta in relation to the homage theme, the abertzale theme, got too cracked [in the sense of a cracked record that keeps playing the same section on and on], right? …Now, to put a Txalaparta in a homage event, at this stage… it bugs (interview, June 2006.)

It struck me when I saw two txalapartariak from Iruña, both synchronised, cameras ready to catch it in time for posterity, spitting on the txalaparta they had just been rehearsing on, amid excitement and rejoicing (fieldwork 2004). This struck me since, after my interview with Erlantz Auzmendi in November 2003, I had become very aware and observant of the treatment given to the physical instrument by txalapartariak. “It is a chalice,” Erlantz stated at that interview, demanding a profound respect not only for Txalaparta, to which he attributed a sacred character, but also for the physical instrument itself: “from not allowing a glass to be put on top of it –it’s not a table!- to even have a little prayer before playing.” Intrigued I asked these txalapartariak why did they spit on the txalaparta. One of them explained that their sweat (the sweat of hard work) also falls on the boards when they play, that the wood was also something organic, like their saliva, and the latter was part of themselves: “What? Is the txalaparta more important than me?” he added\textsuperscript{30}. This seemed to me attuned to the left wing aesthetics of their group, from a working class neighbourhood in Iruña (of a ezer abertzale majority, I had been told), who combined a great dedication to Txalaparta, commitment to the cause and a stress on values of equality, from an abertzale perspective, with a constant rejoicing in transgressive behaviour and fun loving attitude (possibly more related to the “communitas” condition (Turner 1969) that immediately emerged as soon as these young men got together). This was also combined with environmentalist principles of respect for nature and the cultivation of a certain sensitivity in men, as already stated in the previous chapter, incorporating the element of play in their outlook and behaviours as much as in their aesthetics, and transgressing

\textsuperscript{30} This was similar to what Amets had said to me in 1998 when we discussed Euskara and Txalaparta (as a living tradition) versus more conservative perspectives on culture. Using the comparison of a museum object versus one that is used and “incorporated to yourself” (Amets), I argued that using it could kill it and get it dirty, to what he replied he was dirt too (like the “dirty” object because of usage), “I am human and the object is a human product, is it more important than me? It is to be used, for the living, that is the Euskara that is alive.”
also conventional male behaviour. If they felt honoured and proud to contribute as txalapartariak in the homage events, demonstrations or political rallies, they also seemed to display a suspicious attitude when it came to ritualising behaviours and attitudes that reminded them in any way of the behaviour protocols (perceived as distance) of conservative sectors of society (linked to social structures of inequality) and the religious establishment they experienced and perceived as an instrument of oppression.

As an outsider, I perceived a prominence given to Txalaparta in the fact that it remained on the stage, in the centre behind the speakers (political representatives, etc.), once the opening performance was over, and for the duration of the rally. I was told by some txalapartariak from Iruñea and also by some members of Askapena who kindly participated in this research (two of them, bertsolariak, but none of them Txalaparta players), that this was not intentionally planned or thought out. The members of Askapena, in particular, offered a very demystifying discourse (showing the kind of approach that txalapartariak complained about, as discussed later on in this chapter):

“Myself… from the point of view of just an organiser … in truth, right?, the only way I see it is that if it remains there is because… first of all, because there is no need to put it away [laughs].” I insisted, “there, why is it not necessary [to remove it from the stage]?”: “Crikey! I don’t know, just like you don’t remove a music stand! I mean, I see that like a yoke, right? May be I am desecrating the altar! [Alluding to the Ez Dok Amairu approach to Txalaparta] But… I mean… [laughing, then a pause, time to get serious:] I mean, no, uh… I haven’t… I have never seen it like leaving Txalaparta above on the stage and… [it being] the Santa sanctorum of… I don’t know … Well, the people of Ez Dok Amairu departed from a theme that was very, very, very, very… I don’t know, of going to the roots, of taking culture and renewing it, then in that sense the txalaparta perhaps was for them, in their imaginary, indeed something like that, but in the imaginary of the people that is in an ekitaldi that [significance] is not there. Well, I would be very surprised [if it was]” (Erramun, interview, July 2006.) Others provided reasons of practicality: it would be too disruptive to start removing the boards and stands before the rest of the performances (bertsolariak, guitarist, speakers…) Though non-intended, I feel this presence may have an influence on audience perceptions of Txalaparta, though I could not confirm this. As I was told by some participating
txalapartariak who openly ascribed to the political line of the Independentist Left in Iruñea, their decision to learn Txalaparta was influenced by seeing it played at the political rallies and other events. Berezi, member of one of the groups I worked with in Iruñea, explained that she wanted to learn to play since she was 9 years old, her parents used to take her with them to the ekitaldiak and she liked Txalaparta from watching and listening to it at such occasions. She looked up to performing at the ekitaldiak.

Some participating txalapartariak regarded the incorporation of Txalaparta in the political events of the independentist left (or the rare occasion where Txalaparta may have been sought for a PNV or EA event) as a kind of disregard for Txalaparta (while no comment was made on the incorporation of a guitar, or a bertsolari for instance), a dynamic that seems to happen in relation to musicians and ritual, where these strive for recognition beyond the ritual function that constrains them to adjust to a larger “symphony” of prescribed behaviours for the sake of efficacy.

**Ibon:** …The political prisoners came, the txalaparta into the street, to the train station, or to the cemetery, and so on, and no, the Txalaparta is not only that, right? It is ok that someone uses it for that, but really the Txalaparta is much more.

**Manu:** What’s more, if they had used it for that, but they had used it well…! With a more serious approach and more… I don’t know, then people would not remember the Txalaparta as a programme element, right? It is a long time we left that because we believed that the approach was not correct, not on the part of the institutions nor on the part of people, right? The Txalaparta is the Txalaparta, and it must be treated with respect.

**Ibon:** Of course, I remember once that they called from Pamplona also, right?, that it was for a meeting for…

**Manu:** Garaikoetxea [former president of the Basque Autonomous Community –three Basque provinces out of seven- and member of the Basque Nationalist Party who eventually excised from it creating Eusko Alkartasuna in 1986 –more to the left and independentist].

**Ibon:** … And of course, listen, uh… “nothing, it’s to play one minute, or two minutes, ok?, when he comes in and so on, right? and…” Pfff. These, this people, who do they think they are, right? I mean… With the high concept I have of the Txalaparta, this is like… *[a short laugh of offence]* … Then I remember I was
told that of “and how much will you charge, and so on…” “One hundred thousand pesetas,” of those times! … And he tells me “but that is a bit expensive, isn’t it?” [we laugh] … And the war we have always had with the institutions has always been that a bit, right? (Interview, June 2006).

If sacrifice as necessary for continuity (survival) seems to emerge as a central element in the ritualising more closely related to the struggle, which incorporates Txalaparta as a necessary element (at least until recently), an allusion to the theme of honour, a relevant dynamic in the struggle of loyalty to the dead, may also be identified, perhaps, in the common slogan “herriak ez du barkatuko” (“the people will not forget”).

After discussing the rallies and the significance of Basque culture for him, Pierre said in a burst of emotion, at the end of our interview (June 2006), just as he was leaving:

What’s more, I’ll tell you one thing, when I was 17 years old I was presented with two aukerak [choices]: to follow the military arm or the cultural arm, both arms from the same body. Well, now it is very clear to me that the cultural arm does not come out of the body but from the heart.

“Why did you not go for the military arm?” I asked.

“Because the other is more constructive!”
Rhythms of healing

“Be water, be water.
When you learn to be water, you will find water”

(Marlo Morgan, *Mutant Message From Down Under*)

An important axis point in participants’ discourse was the theme of violence, which I initially wanted to avoid for its general overuse to deflect attention from the question of self-determination by different political agents. However, this theme proved to be much more than a discursive strategy by politicians and intelligentsia. If it emerged as “necessary sacrifice” on the part of those involved with the armed struggle or those who felt that it was unavoidable at the given juncture, it also emerged as unethical and indefensible in others’ discourse. For some participants violence was necessary to defend the cherished nation under attack (defensive violence was presented as a response to offensive violence). For others it was regarded as something polluting that compromises individuals’ humanity and the very possibilities to attain shared goals: “the goals are the means.” This point of difference became very salient in the discourses and practices relating to Txalaparta of some of the txalapartariak who have participated in this research. The theme was brought up by participants themselves or, as stated earlier, is identifiable (or which I interpreted as such) through participant observation and study of available audiovisual documentation. Oteiza, who admired the first ETA, became critical of it and the Basque Independentist Left (Herri Batasuna) years later, as evidenced by his prologue to the 5th edition of *Quosque Tandem!* written in 1993. Some of the mature participants I interviewed or spoke to informally during the Spring and summer of 2006 who were critical of ETA and the Independentist Left coalition (these were socially and politically engaged individuals from a left wing stance who also longed for an independent Euskal Herria, indeed some of them former members of ETA)

31 I do not intend to state that a consideration of the armed struggle, or violent means, as unavoidable or necessary, equals a consideration of such avenue as desired or appreciated by the sector of the Basque independentist left community that engaged with it. In fact, its choice was often expressed to me as a painful one by those who condoned it. This may be exemplified by ETA leader José Miguel Beñaran (known as Argala), who stated that “No one, including us, likes the armed struggle. The armed struggle is nasty, it is tough. Because of it, one goes to prison, to exile, one is tortured; because of it one may die, one is forced to kill. It toughens the person, it hurts her, but the armed struggle is necessary to advance” (Beñaran in Casanova 1999, 160).
ETA), used to mention ETA’s shooting of Yoyes in 1986 (a female ETA leader who had left the organisation years earlier and was understood to be a police informer by her former colleagues) as a turning point in their support. According to some participants who were critical of the Independentist Left, a more critical attitude toward “HB” [the Independentist Left] and ETA had developed in the last decade: “since 10 years ago or so, when they started putting ‘firecrackers’ [bomb attacks] to journalists and politicians, people started saying that ‘that wasn’t right’” (Agurtzane, fieldwork, June 2006.)

Txalapartariak who openly expressed concerns with the armed struggle, with some exception, seemed to have a more clearly mystical orientation in their understanding of Txalaparta. But I perceived nonetheless an element of mysticism, or spirituality, to refer to it in some way (in seemingly different degrees, and not always explicitly) in most participating txalapartariak (regardless of their open ascription or not to the Independentist Left.)

The concern with violence from a stand represented as spiritual emerged more clearly in relation to the discourse of two renowned txalapartariak I interviewed and on whom I will focus in this section. One of them was Josu Goiri, the other was Erlantz Auzmendi. Both of these txalapartariak have not only offered Txalaparta performances and engaged in various projects relating Txalaparta (among other performing arts), but they have also delivered Txalaparta classes, thus influencing other performers with their views.

Erlantz Auzmendi, who presented, as stated in chapter 2, a transcendental and mystic understanding of Txalaparta, explaining that before a concert, “before going ‘to mass’” (as he exemplified the sacredness that performing Txalaparta had for him), he would seek quiet to pray, offered an inter-spiritual approach, so to speak, to Txalaparta that included Christian religiosity and the “red Latin-American tradition” as he called it (“Txalaparta in mass with Indian feathers, if you know what I mean” (Auzmendi, interview, November 2003)). He was very critical of the generalised atheistic approach of the ezker abertzale and Marxists in general (assuming it contrary to a spiritual disposition). Erlantz explained he had been “hooked up” to this he called “mystical Txalaparta” by JosAnton Artze, whom he regarded as a kind of priest, also as explained earlier in chapter 2. If the left wing nationalists he was critical about rejected the idea of an authority above looking down on people, he looked up to heaven in search for The Father (as he often called the “Great Spirit” in his speech). “We’re angry with God,” he
explained impassioned, as he argued for a need to leave the Ego behind, and for the arrival to a state of “no judgement”: “When Marx said that [‘religion is the opium of the peoples’], what he did!” he stated with agitation, “and the *abertzales* are still with that idea!” I found a curious parallelism between the spiritual understandings he expressed, nonetheless, and that which Marxists look up to: he argued for purification through many life times (in tune with different Eastern traditions), and that a gifted friend had told him that, if in this world there is free will and suffering, the ultimate stage of the soul is one where there is no suffering, but no free will. That last world, reminded me of many left wing participants’ reflections upon Cuba, which many make a point of visiting at some stage in their lives.

The interview I had with him in November 2003 helped me understand the approach of his former students, the more mature anarchist group of Txalaparta I spent time with in Nafarroa, critical of the armed struggle: “In Euskal Herria the heart is hardened by the lack of spirit generated by violence” he explained, adding that “80% or 90% is a patriotic [*abertzale*] Txalaparta,” an approach to Txalaparta that he did not sympathise with, at least at the moment of the interview (a time of detachment from his previous life as a *txalapartari*). Erlantz, in tune with the anarchist approach of those *txalapartariak* that, among others, learned with him, showed a suspicion of nation-state frameworks (regarded as a necessary stage to protect the Basque nation by the independentist left, openly defined) and expressed his support for a non-ethnic, but rather administrative nationalism, as he put it, “that every little piece [rules itself] as it wants, that’s how I see it” (interview, November 2003).

Txalaparta is a change to a better state, it means change, … its rhythm is a vital pulse that leads you to balance, it is a rhythm of balance. It leads to healing, to the improvement of the person (Erlantz Auzmendi, fieldwork, February 1999).

Evoking the transition from the horse trot to the gallop as a means of bringing forth transformation, whether on matter (from apple to cider, from limestone to lime) or spirit, Auzmendi’s view, shared by other participants, brings us to the efficacious type of performance that Schechner explicitly understands as “ritual” (this is more so in the case of Josu Goiri, as I will explain soon). Whether effecting change was explicitly sought or not by means of Txalaparta, these participants expressed and intuited potentiality for it in the act of playing: Jokin, for instance, explained to me that for him Txalaparta had a kind of magic, that it was for him like “a communication with another
dimension, something special” (fieldwork, March 2003). Jokin handed me an article by Koldo Aldai (honorable txalapartari, as Erlantz Auzmendi regarded him): Herencia Sagrada y Nueva Era en Euskal-Herria (“Sacred Heritage and New Era in Euskal Herria”). In it, Koldo Aldai advocates the advent of a new era of love and union for Euskal Herria, which he argues is contained in a Basque heritage that can be traced back to a bygone Atlantis. “Koldo Aldai is a journalist, a friend of mine, he writes in magazines from the world of us, people who are into the spiritual. He runs El Portal Dorado [portaldorado.com, a website that publishes articles and initiatives related to “healing, spiritual life and solidarity”]. He is into the Mexican Indian tradition” explained Erlantz Auzmendi, who at some point in our interview framed my research endeavour about Txalaparta with reference to Carlos Castaneda’s work on the Mexican Yaqui Nahual he called Don Juan. “He [Koldo] spent time with the old ones [the old txalapartariak]” (Erlantz Auzmendi, interview, November 2003).

The txalaparta awoke in me an ancestral memory. Its sound catapulted me to an old atmosphere that was lost in time. The sound of the planks was a fulminating journey to that forgotten place… Time had not erased so primitive a language, so ours, so deep in our identity. Spirituality is not a world apart, it is simply and plainly a deep connection with all that surrounds us; of course, a close bond with our beloved mother Earth, ama-lurra. Is there anything more spiritual than that sound that emerges from the tree’s heart and that sings and venerates the whole of nature and its Origin?

To play the txalaparta was like the activation of an important part of our DNA, an instant connection. It was to encounter a sound, like a password that allowed us enter into a very, very distant Euskal Herria, and thus reassert our identity, our past, our close and intimate bond with nature…

When I play the txalaparta in some festivity, in some gathering by pure chance, since I don’t have a txalaparta anymore, that memory is activated and it makes me feel like at home…” (Koldo Aldai, electronic communication, June 2011).

Erlantz advocated a “military Txalaparta” as a “symbolic tool” for the “non violent struggle for our historical demands,” inspired by the story of Txalaparta sounds scaring away the Romans, similarly, he stated, to the well known legend in the Spanish State of the “Bruch drum” (which tells of a young boy who scared away an
overwhelming French army with the rhythms of his drum magnified by the echoes in the mountains, giving the impression an immense army was going to face them, during the Peninsular War of Independence against the Napoleonic forces in the 19th C.) “Once we went to play to prison, to play for common prisoners (from outside),” he then added, explaining this was part of a demonstration, and that there were, as he said, 150 Civil Guards protecting the wire fence of the building. They played Txalaparta for 30 minutes in front of the police, he explained, “we lost the notion of time (you lose the notion of time inside Txalaparta). I raised my head and I saw they had left! I saw that as ‘Wow! I have disintegrated them!’” He argued that “it produces fear, well, apprehensiveness, in front of such strong sound.” One of my hosts in Iruñea, one of Erlantz’ former students, argued something similar as well: “Txalaparta is always played in peaceful demonstrations” he stated, adding that he had a friend who claimed it calms the police down (something not all participants agreed with), that at a demonstration where the police started charging against people, she and her colleague started playing and everyone calmed. He added though that he was not so sure about this himself, “sometimes it does make the police nervous.” He explained, reflecting upon his own experience:

Txalaparta joins people, it gets people together under one goal, it focuses people. When there is a demonstration and you have the police there in front of you, scary 2 metre guys with the shields and the helmets, guys who can send you to hospital with one hit, Txalaparta gives people a unity (Jokin, fieldwork, May 2003).

Erlantz Auzmendi explained further what he actually meant with Txalaparta as a “symbolic tool”: “Gandhi made a symbol out of the spinning wheel….,” he stated, evoking the Indian Independence Movement: a symbol of the “awakening of India,” “…and we thought that that was the role of Txalaparta,” he argued, claiming the use of Txalaparta for peace. “If you are open, it [Txalaparta] takes you to mysticism, to the spirit, because you are doing the same as when we were One, one with everything, and that already died,” he stated with pessimism, “but recently, we are giving a privilege to the mind that it does not have” (referring perhaps to the recent trends towards literacy and composition in Txalaparta?) “If you are open to life, in the sense of the Spirit, the Txalaparta, because of the connection it has with the Origin, takes you through that path,” he added.
“How to generate the recovery of the myth, of the ritual, magic-ceremonial, character of the Txalaparta…” Erlantz wondered. “If we could join my attempt [for peace] with Koldo’s and Josu’s… that would be strong, and it would be strong because of that, because it is ritual. It is very difficult to trivialize the power of Txalaparta. It could be a movement like Elkarri” (Elkarri, a “social movement for dialogue and agreement,” as it defines itself, was created in 1992 (changing in 2006 to Lokarri), to help facilitate a peace process.)

When I met Jokin at the 20th Txalaparta Festa in 2006, we caught up with each others’ lives since we last met, two years earlier. Jokin told me of spiritual work he was currently undertaking with a shaman (though I cannot recall if he referred to her like that), and spoke of past life regressions and karma:

She says that we are not from here, that when we came here there were people living here already, and that we occupied them and oppressed them, and took their land (fieldwork, May 2006).

This approach seemed to be in stark contrast with the article by Koldo Aldai that Jokin once handed me three years before (where one of the sources quoted claims that “the imposing mountain range of the Pinares [Pirinees], in the deserted Euskaria, gave secure refuge” [italics are mine] to the Basques, one of the now landless ethnic groups from Atlantis32 (1995, 8). I interpret this approach, or performance, as a sign of Jokin’s scepticism and boredom with discourses of victimhood, giving way to a definition in which boundaries between victim and perpetrator blur. Perhaps the aforementioned ritualising in relation to the struggle fulfilled, among other, the function of allowing the community that sees itself under siege to sacrifice the lives of others, while maintaining innocence.

The concern with violence was also expressed by the txalapartari and author Josu Goiri (b. 1963), whose involvement with Txalaparta, to which he “arrived,” like many other participants, through his interest for Euskara in his early 20s, has developed in conjunction with his experience and interest in music therapy. As stated earlier in this

32 Performances inscribe, wittingly or unwittingly, other parallel performances, as nations resonate on each other’s quests in their search for solutions to their conflicts. A whole dissertation could be written only on these New Era reflections.
dissertation, Josu Goiri’s approach to Txalaparta is embedded in a personal intuitive embodied reflection upon a Basque universe of meaning, as presented in his 1996 book about this sound tradition, that has taken a spiritual healing orientation. Some of the authors that inform his approach, based on references he recommended to me in order to improve my understanding and own thirst for the subject, are Deepak Chopra (The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success, 1994), James Redfield (The Celestine Prophecy, 1993), Marlo Morgan (Mutant Message from Down Under, 1995) or the Sufi Hazrat Inayat Khan (The Music of Life, 1983). “You should meet my friend John O’Donohue, he’s written a book entitled Anam Cara” (Josu Goiri, fieldwork, May 2006).

When I met Josu Goiri at his baserri in June 2003, I had an idea from his book on Txalaparta and from our chat in Hernani at the Txalaparta Festa, of his work in the area of music therapy with mental health patients, and also of his mystic approach to Txalaparta, but I did not know the extent of this. After the interview he granted me, which included some of his students, I was invited to join their workshop in the soundproof room of his house. The group (two men and two women in their 40s, and Josu) decided to show me some of the work they do with sound. They placed three wooden boards of approximately two meters of length a few inches off the floor supported on two thick pieces of rubber foam at either sides, and asked me to lay down on it: my spine had to be straight. “What are you going to do to me!” I asked with a nervous laugh as I lay on the planks, and Cristina, one of the women, touched my face with an affection that disarmed me. That was no fun. I felt confronted by something important, one of those old wounds that sometimes we have and we cover up without hardly knowing their extent, or why. They switched off the lights, lit a few candles, and with two sets of makilak each, the five of them placed around me, they started gently beating the boards in an interlocking fashion, sometimes touching me with the makila rather than beating on the planks. I reached a very deep level of relaxation very soon, to the extent that I thought I was going to float, if hadn’t been because Felix beat the wood right above my head every now and then, making my skull vibrate against it, bringing me back into consciousness every time. I lost track of time and it is impossible for me to estimate the duration of this ‘massage’ ceremony, but they confirmed it was much less than what I thought (five, ten minutes perhaps.) “Shall we play the horns for her?”

33 I was never able to write this experience, which I framed both as research and personal as the rest of my experiences in the field, in my fieldwork diary, and I do not know why –I finally jotted it down in 2008.
After this experience with Josu and his group, and after everyone else had left, Josu kindly agreed to answer some more questions, though he explained that in order to understand, I should empty my mind and meditate regularly. He kindly shared with me an understanding that, in tune with Hindu and Sufi mystic philosophies, regarded sound (or rather vibration, energy in motion), as the ultimate reality on which all matter is based; a reality that, like an ocean, bears us, like waves that emerge from the surface and to which we shall return (as Ana, one of the members of his group, further explained the next day). As Ana spoke, the pictures of an old UNESCO magazine that...
had always intrigued me since I found it at home as a child, *The Images of Sound*\(^{34}\), danced in my imagination: materials that, through the impression of given vibrations upon them, would adopt shapes of structures found again and again in nature (so called fractals). An ocean of life, she added, life that is love: “everything is alive, everything, also the stones” (fieldwork, June 2003). Erlantz Auzmendi would tell me the same later in an interview in November of the same year.

When we love and allow our selves to be loved, we begin more and more to inhabit the kingdom of the eternal. Fear changes into courage, emptiness becomes plenitude and distance becomes intimacy (O'Donohue 1997, 31).

Josu stressed the communication established by the *txalapartari* with matter by means of Txalaparta (mentioned by JosAnton Artze in his poems), and the power of Txalaparta to transform:

…there is also a deeper connection, which is the communication with matter, with things … there is a transmission of vibration, or communication through vibration with things, by means of Txalaparta. …[the instrument]’s objective is not to produce tuned notes, but to create harmonics, which is something normal in ancient musics, right?, that of the didgeridoo…, these kind of instruments do not give concrete pitches but create a bang of harmonics, and they create a resonance, in order to create a vibrational communication (interview, June 2003).

In our chat, after the experience with sound, the theme of violence, which was of concern to him, emerged in Josu’s discourse. I felt, when he spoke of violence, that it meant “anger” (an energy of anger perhaps, whose consequence is/may be violence). This was expressed in relation to what Erlantz referred to as “patriotic” Txalaparta. The next year, at the 18\(^{th}\) Txalaparta Festa, in May 2004, Josu performed as part of the outdoor concert programme with his group. People of different generations were presented on stage in a semicircular arrangement (“like all the family gathered in the living room, with the grandmas and so on,” as Kemen, who was sitting beside me, told me,) performing a kind of soothing music that included two txalapartas and Josu on the keyboards (among other instrumentalists). At certain points of the performance Cristina, who had a metallic pestle on her lap, would produce a sharp shimmering reverberating

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sound. After the performance, I went over to Josu who confirmed that yes, this all had been intentionally designed to transmute violence for love. Josu explained that the Russian mystic George Gurdjieff, among other, claimed that the octave leap has the effect on listeners of increasing their body vibration, thus helping them reach more spiritual states. The representation of several generations peacefully sitting together and playing on the stage was purposeful too. The previous year, Josu Goiri gave me his also transcendental views of the 17th Txalaparta Festa, dedicated to the influential figure of Jexux Artze, who had passed away some months before. “Jexux was the patriarch, he had done records [the first one exclusively of Txalaparta, with Andoni Aleman], he had opened breaches…” explained Josu, adding that he had been a kind of nexus among all generations. He explained that in the last years before his death, the Artze brothers had stopped attending the festival, as well as the families of the old txalapartariak generally speaking (even though members would perform), Erlantz had not attended the previous one, and he (Josu) would only attend on occasion… Josu observed that because of Jexux’ death, they all (excepting Erlantz Auzmendi) had been reunited at that particular festival, as a kind of farewell from the next “link” of txalapartariak. The first link, he explained, was the old players; the second was the Artze and Beltran; a third link was Perdi, himself, the Sorzabalbere from Irun, and other peers; “and the next link is now the Txalaparta with drums, the universal Txalaparta, to say it somehow, I mean, the Txalaparta open to all percussions…,” that of a globalised world (interview, June 2003). With Jexux’ departure, a cycle had been closed, Josu Goiri explained, and a new one had been opened, marked by a generational gap, which he exemplified with his observation at the festival that the older generations were seated at the left (facing the stage) and the younger ones apart on the right (not only at the outdoor concert, where this was likely determined by the prescribed places allocated to the different groups at the preceding dinner, but also at the talk by JosAnton Artze two days before). He acknowledged he had difficulties connecting with the youth, “the fourth generation” (November 2003).

“Are you a shaman?” I asked Josu Goiri in June 2006. I had been teaching a subject on Anthropology of Ritual for postgraduate students in university and was lucky to meet someone through the course, Sinead, who was into spiritual healing, and put me up to date in matters of “New Age” spirituality (to call it something). The people she called “shamans” were not simply into a kind of spirituality network, or mere facilitators of workshops of “regression into past lives,” spiritual healers, or ritual
specialists of one kind or another, but were described by her in ways that intimated some kind of heightened intuition and perhaps some special unusual ability. “If you want to call me that, fine, but that is what you are calling me” he said, refusing being labelled. Finally he took me out of my researcher’s misery at trying to define him: he explained that he was presented as a shaman by the organisers of a spiritual gathering he had attended recently.

“Are you based on Hinduism?” I also asked Josu, more informed, as I was now about philosophies that place sound at the heart of reality. “I am Basque,” he replied with a smile. I then suddenly realised that, in fact, he always articulated his understanding of vibration in relation to his own experience of sound and Txalaparta, as well as in relation to the Earth in Euskal Herria, and Euskara, woven with the Basque interlocking tradition:

“I think [Euskera] is another especial component when teaching Txalaparta, there is a special vibration” Josu had explained to me in June 2003, as he also argues in his 1996 book on Txalaparta. Goiri pointed, in his reflection on a special sensitivity to vibration that he attributed to txalapartariak, to an affinity with the Earth (a view not so farfetched with regards to txalapartariak like Oroitz, in the previous chapter, who explained he experienced Txalaparta as the Earth’s heartbeat): “Txalapartaris have been able to perceive that…,” Josu Goiri explained, referring to telluric energies in places of Euskal Herria. “…and have been able to transmit it,” he added in relation to the references made by txalapartariak to Basque natural enclaves in the titles of their recordings, CD covers, the group names, and so on (i.e.: Lezao, a cave with “powerful energies” and also the name of a record by the disappeared bikote Gerla Beti with Tomas San Miguel, or the places of Oreka (incorporated to the name of the Txalaparta bikote Oreka Tx) and Okabe, also a Txalaparta theme by Oreka Tx).

…Of course, sound is a vibration, nothing more, isn’t it? The energy that can take you to produce that vibration [sound] that you have deep down, but when you connect with that external vibration, something pops off, right? Something becomes magnified by... by a hundred, right? … when you are inside, merged with that sound you produce… it’s like… for me it is an incredible experience! (Klara Badiola, interview, July 2006.)
Klara Badiola, theatre and film actress, who learned to play Txalaparta with Andoni Aleman and Jexux Artze, disclosed an experience of Txalaparta I resonated with. When I first played Txalaparta, in particular, I was struck by a feeling of interior resonance that fascinated me, and even simply witnessing others play, I felt that the deep vibrations from the plank echoed inside me. Klara then spoke of the embodiment of sound, and in particular about the embodiment of Txalaparta:

For me this is one of the sounds…, of course, it is a plank, it is pure Earth, it is not elaborated, it is what is, what the Earth gives us without us having to do anything, right? And that was… so, so primitive that it connected me with the most inner part [of myself] I mean –how could I say this- instead of it being only emotion, it also connects me with instinct, let’s say, what we have most inside, right?, that is, the most…, we’re born with it, right?, it is…, it connects you with an instinct … it is a matrix sound. … This connects me with the Earth, but with… inside the Earth. I mean, there are sounds that take you and elevate you … This, instead, drags me from here [with her hands in her stomach] down, down, it connects me, pa!, it connects me with the Earth, and wants to go out to the Earth … It is like that, may be because it is percussion too, because percussion has a lot to do with gut … It is a feeling…, I don’t know, I can’t explain it very well, right?, but it is very physical for me, very, very, very physical … that was Earth, Earth, Earth. Besides, I remember we used to go to play Txalaparta to the mountains… And there it then was…! [the ultimate]” (Klara Badiola, interview July 2006).

May your senses gather you and bring you home

(O'Donohue 1997, 105).

The Earth has a spirit, the mother who bore us! (Erlantz Auzmendi, interview, November 2003)

The relevance of the mother figure that caught Begoña Aretxaga’s attention in her study of funerals of deceased ETA activists and that others have pointed out in Oteiza, or that emerged in JosAnton Artze’s narration of his “discovery” of his country, as he put it, through his language, when he decided to write to his mother, whose language, as he explained, was Euskara (Ama Lurra, mother Earth, so often mentioned by
participants), that relevance, also emerged in Josu Goiri’s greatest gift to me: “Mothers are to be blessed, they are our matrix.”

The sound of the drum brings us consolation because it brings us back to that time when we were at one with the mother’s heartbeat. That was a time of complete belonging … P. J. Curtis, the great Irish authority on rhythm and blues music, often says that the search for meaning is really the search for the lost chord. When the lost chord is discovered by humankind, the discord in the world will be healed and the symphony of the universe will come into complete harmony with itself (O'Donohue 1997, 98).

In the beginning of a world all the matter which will eventually form a complete whole is already in existence, but in a state of chaos. It is not that any new thing or world or being is to be created, but that there shall be a rearrangement of all the parts until the whole is complete … The upheaval of nature, the great unrest, the world revolutions, the shedding of bodies, and the separations and divisions among men—all these things are caused by the parts of the whole trying to stay in a place to which they do not belong. As soon as man is in his own place he has peace… (Inayat Khan 1983, 3).

“…Another thing I learned, that has been very, very, very useful later (to be an actress right?, well, I presume it is good for everything) which is that, because it is played between two people, you have to listen.” Klara explained how she experienced this listening as a giving and taking:

…you would start listening… then you take that ‘right, I take it, and I return it to you’, and if you have someone beside you capable of collecting that from you and return it to you, you gradually listen…. you feel that the energy is then like this, like this, like this… [separating her hands gradually from each other] until you have to stop! Look I’m getting… [goose pimples] (Klara Badiola, July 2006).
In Goiri’s and Erlantz’ discourse (and that of others within this line), as well as in relation to authors Goiri quoted, interaction with the environment, both social and natural, and different states of consciousness, are generally explained in terms of energy, with a focus on the now, unconditional love, striving to accept everyone as they are and everything as it is; flow of energy ("negative energies are the energies that are blocked. Energy, if it moves, it’s always positive" Josu stated); connection with mother Earth, and the belief that the social order mirrors individuals’ internal state, therefore working on the latter (and above all oneself) is necessary to improve the former. A cultivation of one’s specificity within the given place of belonging (Euskal Herria) was also regarded as necessary. Like JosAnton Artze, whose reflections upon universals is closely interwoven with a Basque universe of expressive culture and other customs, deeply rooted in Euskara, Josu also anchored himself in the world as Basque. Juan Mari Beltran did too, in his advocacy of the now so fashionable “fusion,” but with a twist: among the rich local traditions of Euskal Herria, as he put it, that fascinate him (in response to fusions with somewhat foreign African and African American rhythms, diluting the Basque traditional music moulds, that is, Basque musical specificity, or in other words, intracultural vs. intercultural fusions). Erlantz was however an exception to the trend in relation to Euskara, which he told me he did not speak at the time of the interview.

Gaizka, a txalapartari from Iruña (Nafarroa), who was always extremely helpful and supportive of the research I was undertaking, mentioned to me his engagement with what is known as “Universal Energy” (brought up by my own interest in it, since I had started a course on it in Ireland at the time): a kind of healing practice that relies on the practitioner’s contact, with an empty mind, with the person who seeks help and about which positive effects have been reported; one of the conditions, apart from daily meditation sessions with a still mind on the part of the practitioner (which I
was unable to do however much I tried during fieldwork, a reflection of my anxiety and the fear that “emptying” my mind would cause me forget everything I had to record in my diary), is that treatment has to be offered for free and that no one can be denied treatment if they ask for it. Gaizka told me he was in 5.1 level of Universal Energy (there are different levels that are achieved gradually as the practitioner progresses in his/her preparation), and explained he did not want to progress to 5.2 level, at which treatment is done by distance, because he enjoyed dealing with people, seeing their faces. This was a recurrent theme among those txalapartariak I worked with, especially in Iruñea, the love for people and interacting with people. I indeed was very struck by the levels of solidarity and closeness I observed and experienced among participating txalapartariak and other people from their environment, especially in Nafarroa. “We like the idea of play, the mystic connotations the Txalaparta may have, of going to the mountains and hearing ‘ta tan, ta tan, ta tan...’ explained to me an abertzale txalapartari from Nafarroa after we left some village celebrations on his request, prompted by an atmosphere of heavy drinking (and drunk male harassment), loud heavy music and no care for social or political issues –“for the problems of this country” as he put it, “I’m not into this” he added. His colleague explained that “there are people who can play on four planks and can do fancy rhythmic stuff, but for me [what matters] is a bit the essence, the ttakun...”

If Erlantz Auzmendi did not show perhaps much trust at the time of interview (November 2003) in what he called “patriotic Txalaparta,” that which was performed within the ritualising of the critical moments of the struggle already explained in this chapter, I encountered a more open and confident discourse from Josu Goiri, who, equally concerned with the issue of violence, always stressed a sensitive disposition in those attracted to Txalaparta toward healing vibrations (whether places identified by the trait of telluric energies, Euskara, or Txalaparta itself), and their important contribution to healing. In relation to the current ETA ceasefire (declared in September 2010\(^{35}\)) and renewed opportunities for a peaceful resolution to the conflict, with the banned Independentist Left coalition Sortu having officially declared a commitment to fully democratic means and a call for all violence to stop (facilitating new party alliances and the creation of the finally legalised Bildu coalition), Josu Goiri explained:

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\(^{35}\) ETA’s ceasefire, announced in October 2010, was declared permanent in January 2011 and followed by the announcement of a definitive cessation of its armed activities in October 2011.
My opinion is that within the *abertzale* context, the txalaparta has helped that environment vibrate and become more flexible so that energies and other elements do not clash, facilitating the search for more tolerant and integrating situations (electronic communication, August 2011).

**Let the Circle Be Wide**

Let the circle be wide ‘round the fireside
and we’ll soon make room for you.
Let your heart have no fear,
there are no strangers here,
just friends that you never new.

(Lyrics of “Let the Circle Be Wide” by Tommy Sands).

Participating *txalapartariak* looked up to Ireland, whose peace process Basques have been trying to replicate since at least 1998. Seized by this dynamic, part of the fieldwork I undertook for this research took place in Ireland, by means of two tours that I organised for a group from Iruñea who expressed great eagerness and readiness to come. I realised during fieldwork, to my surprise, that some of the Irish bodhrán players I spoke to in Ireland knew about Txalaparta, and a few even played it. Some of the contacts I counted on to organise concerts in Belfast came in fact from Josu Goiri. During one of our performances at a pub in Ardoyne, arranged by bodhrán maker Eamonn Maguire, one of Josu’s friends showed up with a big group of Basques who were circumnavigating Ireland with a mixed crew of Catholics and Protestants as part of ‘Navigating Peace 2003,’” the Basques on a *trainera* and the Irish on a *curragh* (their traditional rowboats). These asked the *txalapartariak* to meet them at the end of their voyage in Portnoo, and off we went a few days later: Two members of the Basque crew improvised a Txalaparta in the boat to play at their entrance into the port, while Txalaparta players welcomed both crews, their rhythms intertwined with the music of
an Ulster Scot drummer (musician Willie Drennan) and a piper (John Hamilton). “If it is possible in Ireland, in Euskal Herria, why not?” one of the Basque participants told me.

In February 2004 a seminar was held at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, entitled in English (as well as in Irish and Basque) “Music Politics and Identity. Exploring Paths to Peace.” This seminar included the participation of singer/song writer and peace activist Tommy Sands, from Co. Down, Northern Ireland, born to a Catholic family, and Rev. Canon Gary Hastings, musician and minister of the Church of Ireland, from Belfast, based in Co. Mayo, who presented a Protestant Unionist perspective. I was myself a speaker as well at the seminar on the subject of my research. The seminar also included a lively performance by Kaiet Ezkerro and Mikel H. Urrutia, two Basque Txalaparta players from the group Jo Tta Kun. The txalapartariak, who always performed in public in Ireland with a Basque flag fixed to the front of the instrument, decided not to display it: “No flags, since no one is putting flags,” Kaiet stated, resonating with the spirit of the seminar, a space of coming together, of belonging, where flags were not needed because no one was being denied.

In my explanations of Txalaparta Zaharra to Irish audiences I used to explain the interplay between order (embodied by the ttakun role) and disorder (the herren), as a kind of conflict leading to the attainment of a resolution (tturrukutun) between both parties (where both finish the performance merging into a succession of fast ttakun beats). This immediately resonated with Tommy Sands, deeply committed to the peace process in Northern Ireland, who invited the musicians to come a few days later to Armagh to be recorded for the remake of Tubular Bells by Tom Newman and him as part of the project Pirates for Peace. The Txalaparta group was also invited to perform.

Figure 5.21: Txalapartariak Kaiet Ezkerro and Mikel H. Urrutia, from the group Jo Tta Kun, recorded in Armagh by the BBC2 NI for the TV programme First Stop, in relation to their participation in the remake of Tubular Bells by Tom Newman and Tommy Sands, as part of the project “Pirates for Peace.”
at the Fiddlers Green Festival in Co. Down that summer, among others, at the event entitled “The Music of Healing” with speakers from both sides of the divide (the late David Irvine, former loyalist UVF member heavily involved in the peace process, was one of them). Txalaparta workshops were also delivered to mixed audiences of Catholics and Protestants enchanted with the dialogue that Txalaparta is. In some way, the Irish peace process absorbed us.

To listen is much more interesting than chewing the cud, than speaking and than anything. And… buf!, and there, there is the Txalaparta! That space! There is no one, no one who can play it, that doesn’t listen to his partner and that doesn’t respect his partner’s space! It is amazing, eh?! The law of respect, isn’t it? (Eleder, interview, June 2006).

“Forrakutun. Look, ah?, four ‘as’ and four ‘us’,” stated JosAnton Artze. “From ‘a’ to ‘u’,” I thought aloud. He added:

Yes. There’s something there…: Forrakutun. It’s four. It’s four sticks. It’s four legs. It is horizontality beaten vertically … Two creating four … There is a kind of dialogue between two, … but between the two, the two make one, one that is precisely Txalaparta, right?… That is, from the four, create the oneness.
Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored ritualising in relation to Txalaparta and the struggle, with a focus on its incorporation in a kind of ritualising openly connected to the political and armed struggle, and to its understanding and use in relation to “healing.” This is a differentiation established on my part for an increased understanding of the dynamics of ritualising in relation to Txalaparta, while acknowledging that boundaries between both kinds of ritualising blur.

In relation to Txalaparta and ritualising within events of a more political nature or closely linked to the armed struggle, I have begun with the “call to join in the struggle,” represented in this dissertation by the argument of the former ETA activist who claimed the experience of Ataun led him to the decision of joining the armed struggle (a ritualising in respect to Txalaparta and the armed struggle already present in the late 1970s as per documentary films made at the time), then followed by the belief among many participating txalapartariak, and other musicians, that Txalaparta and the struggle, in terms of politics and the armed means, are intimately related (“the act, yes, was very political, and Txalaparta fitted perfectly there” (Urzelai) in relation to the “magical” or “mystic” (Urzelai, Zabala) experience at the festival of Ataun). This I witnessed at the poetry reading I attended in March 2003, where Txalaparta was especially prominent at Aresti’s poem “I will defend my father’s house” (a poem that had great impact in the mid 1960s when Aresti wrote it, together with the rest of poems of his collection Harri eta Herri, “Stone and People”). Txalaparta opens (at least until 2006) the political rallies of the Independentist Left political formations, and may be performed at “climax” occasions during the rally, especially in those rallies which are organised in celebration of a specific political juncture (such as the political process that was opened in 1998 and which ended in December 1999). There seems to be a sort of continuity between the ritualising by means of Txalaparta by the Artze brothers and their peers during the difficult times of Franco’s regime and the so called transition to democracy, and the ritualising that has developed within the Basque Movement for National Liberation in the political rallies and events directly connected to the armed struggle. The Artze brothers and their circle of fellow artists in Ez Dok Amairu, for whom art is inevitably political and embedded in a doing of resistance and a search for a
lost identity, opened and closed their concerts with Txalaparta (Ez Dok Amairu and the documentary film *Euskal Herri Musika*, for example), which also featured at other stages of the performance, although generally on its own, occupying a central position, and revered. Txalaparta was conceived and shaped, within experimental and avant-garde understandings of “music,” as a “break through” in the conservative approach to Basque culture exemplified by the PNV (Basque Nationalist Party) and mainstream social values that the youth, in contact with Marxist ideologies and anarchist understandings, desired to subvert: For them Txalaparta was primitive yet new, and always “free” (which in musical terms meant not entering into the beat or melody lines—challenging a conventional sense of tuning—when combined with other sound elements in a piece). In the ritualising developed in connection with the rallies of the Independentist Left coalition (initially HB) and the armed struggle, Txalaparta also opens the event, sometimes closes it, remains present on the stage for the duration of the event and is played at moments of special relevance. When combined with other instruments, largely for its iconicity in relation to the struggle (up to the mid 1990s approximately), it was generally done “badly,” as performers with more mainstream “musical” aspirations stated, something however that, as Josu Zabala or Eleider (a former political prisoner and *txalapartari*) explained, was not the result of a lack of skill but rather actively sought. In both cases, as participants expressed, participants were and are driven, among other things, by a sense of urgency in relation to a sense of belonging under threat: “a fear of disappearing” and “a sensation of not having a trace of where we live, as a culture that is very much a minority one [“*muy minoritaria*”] and has been very much made into a minority one [“*muy minorizada*”]” (Joseba, b. 1952, *txalapartari* and *euskaltzale*, interview, July 2006).

Txalaparta is here embedded in what is sometimes a rich display of Basque traditional performing arts as well as more mainstream fashionable music expressions (a rock concert, for instance). The aesthetic of the rallies seems to be intimately linked to the nature of the struggle in relation to the following elements:

1. Struggling for a Basque “way of being” rooted in the past, for the present where the much sought independence is legitimised by a disappeared Navarrese Kingdom whose borders and sovereignty are reclaimed for the present. **Txalaparta evokes this ancient past**, yet reaches beyond the concept of a datable history and thus links with a whole line of undefined
ancestry and a sense of both vertical and horizontal community and communion.

2. Reflections upon Basque traditional popular expressive culture as part of traditional forms of political organization and active engagement in community affairs (pointing at a concept of political life and the law that seems to fit into what Bernard Hibbits terms “performance cultures” (Hibbits 1992)): **Txalaparta as a call for auzolan** (to get together for a necessary communal task, assuming communal responsibility); carnival as a form of exercising popular criticism of social/political structures; summer solstice rituals as a political means of ridding of the unwanted and construction of the desired in the public (that is, socio-political) realm.

3. Sacrifice in the defence of the community, one of the most elemental forms of engaging with, and giving to, a community perceived to be under siege, something which confronts and engages individuals and the larger community with the depth of what is given (life) and the price paid by s/he who offers it (separation, torture, imprisonment, death). **Txalaparta seems to be intimately linked to the gravity of sacrifice in the armed struggle in the ritualising that emerges in relation to it.**

The last point, sacrifice, is particularly significant in the ritualising that relates to political prisoners, such as protests in their support, ongietorriak, or welcome events, in which homage is paid to the political prisoner in her/his release, or funerals/farewell homage events for those who have given their lives in the struggle. There is something very organic in the way different participants reflected upon Txalaparta: “Txalaparta is the heart” (Josu Zabala, fieldnotes, June 2006). An ancient mythical past, brought together with something essential for life (the heart): “Txalaparta connects with the heart, there is something millenary in it, a memory of millions of years” (Josu Zabala). A heart that beats from the remote distance of an ancient past, made instantly present, and that is perceived as a call, not for celebration, but for a different kind of auzolan: sacrifice, death, so it may continue beating; death and suffering for life, as the idea behind this sacrificial discourse could be put.

Ritualising in relation to political events of the Independentist Left or for activists is nonetheless problematic for some participants (generally for those who are
distanced in a way or another from such political coalition), in particular those with a marked anarchist orientation, who see routine in it and fear gregarious tendencies and institutionalisation, perhaps also seeking recognition for musicians, which is also a criticism presented by left abertzale txalapartariak participating in this research, among others who sought a different kind of ritualising for it, more attuned with a reverence for the sacred they perceive in Txalaparta (sometimes not expressed like that, but in terms that resonate with the ceremony of a classical music concert, for instance.)

A fourth point, stemming from the theme of “sacrifice” could be added here, that which led us to the ritualising of Txalaparta in relation to “healing.” The kind of sacrifice that is involved in an armed struggle implies not only the offering of one’s life on the part of the activist, but also taking someone else’s life, a point at which the differentiation established between victim (us) and perpetrator (them), blurs (a difference the ritual is perhaps meant to present as a natural “given”). It is this point that concerned some participants as it emerged in some of the interviews and informal conversations. I approached these concerns on the ethical question of violence as a means to achieve goals with certain reluctance, as they initially reminded me of the much trite performative concept and argument of “terrorism” invoked by mainstream media and political agents to avoid dealing with the Basque political question as political rather than criminal, and to avoid engaging in the negotiation of a resolution while covering up state violence, justifying anti-democratic policies, the disenfranchisement of thousands of citizens, and furthering the conflict. Nonetheless, ethical anxieties in relation to violence emerged as relevant in the practice and understanding of Txalaparta for a number of participants.

The attitudes of these txalapartariak in relation to the armed struggle take us to a ritualising that consciously seeks to make Txalaparta performances efficacious in bringing audiences to a new state of “spiritual health” (as well as physical, in understandings that see the spiritual and the physical intertwined), aiming at facilitating an end to violence by means of focusing such performances on individuals and groups. The values ritualised in relation to the events of the political and armed struggle that I interpret to be the most salient are those of sacrifice. For performers that are critical of the Independentist Left and/or the armed struggle, values ritualised by means of Txalaparta converge in compassion. Reflections upon Txalaparta seem to often coincide nonetheless in both cases (linking it to an ancient ancestry beyond time, to Basque
cultural manifestations, Euskara, the heartbeat, Ama-Lur -Mother Earth). It may not be farfetched to state that the figure of the *txalapartari* (or dialogic couple of *txalapartariak*) has been crucial in supporting the Independentist Left community at critical times in the life of an activist within the grave juncture of the political and armed struggle (embedded in a ritualising where it has been considered necessary, and in certain events, crucial). By means of this support, at least, Txalaparta players emerge as healers in a way, in efficacious ways for *txalapartari* Josu Goiri, for instance, who does incorporate Txalaparta within a mystic and spiritual healing approach to which I felt participating *txalapartariak* seemed to be converging in different degrees and at different paces across time (though perhaps not consciously or intently oriented toward healing by means of Txalaparta).

At this point I discussed the personal juncture in fieldwork, being based in Ireland, where a peace process had been opened, and doing research on the Basque Country, where this was not the case despite the attempts made by Basque nationalist forces (and in particular the Independentist Left) to mirror it and make it happen. I reflected upon events that unfolded in relation to performances I organised for Basque *txalapartariak* in Ireland (north and south), and the potential Irish singer and song writer Tommy Sands (actively engaged with the Irish peace process) saw in Txalaparta: I tended to focus on Txalaparta as a traditional rhythm of resolution, the interplay between order and disorder culminating in a synthesis, a new order in my presentation of it to Irish audiences. This aspect together with the eagerness and impassionate performing style of *txalapartariak*, immediately resonated with singer and song writer Tommy Sands and music producer Tom Newman, who sought to embed it in their own ongoing work toward the facilitation of conflict resolution among the contested communities in Northern Ireland.

There are other forms of ritualising where Txalaparta is present that are not so openly or obviously related to the Independentist Left. These are forms in relation to which a wider array of personal and political approaches may be found that I have chosen not to discuss in order to maintain a focus on the use of Txalaparta within the Basque struggle for self-determination and more specifically in relation to its armed stage. An armed stage that is now close to its end at the time of writing, since the Basque Independentist Left has publicly expressed its renunciation to violence and a commitment to exclusively peaceful means to pursue its goals.
The ritualising by means of Txalaparta in relation to the armed struggle and performances discussed so far in previous chapters are woven together into a final interpretation next, in the conclusion to this dissertation.
Conclusion

Several themes have been presented in this dissertation, some more explicitly than others. A final interpretation that weaves them together is offered here, concluding the exploration of the “popular world of Txalaparta” that I have sought to offer through my own experience and understandings.

Ethnographic research from 1998 to 2006 in Madrid, Euskal Herria (mainly Iruñea) and Ireland, with intermittent periods of fieldwork and e-mail contact with participants up to the time of writing, inform my interpretation. Issues openly raised or hinted by participants brought into my awareness a series of ethical concerns that finally led me to avoid disclosure of my fieldwork experience to an extent, and to rely instead on interview content. Interviews were always intelligible frames of research for participants, which allowed them an extent of control over their representation which I believe they have a right to have. An ethnography based more in an account of my observant participatory experience need not be ruled out for future work, which might include it through collaborative means in a different political juncture not dominated by siege, or perceptions of siege.

The painful circumstances of the armed conflict are the backdrop against which the dynamics discussed in this dissertation take place. In his influential book *Quosque Tandem...!* Oteiza described art as a means “with which the artist engages in an existential urgency, to elaborate a spiritual sensibility for the perception and the dominion of reality and life” (1994 [1963], 98). Performances displayed by participants, both of discourses and behaviour, seek to make sense of life amid the struggle, and are part of larger attempts to seek a new social and political framework, and we may add a new “spiritual” one also, regarding some txalapartariak’s views and forms of doing presented in this dissertation. Something on the verge of life and death, accessed through sentiment, is encountered and shaped, “in the creative sensibility of art,” as Oteiza stated in the film *Ama Lur* (1968) (“Mother Earth,” that is, Euskal Herria), 29 years after the Spanish Civil War, eleven years after the creation of the armed organisation ETA, months before the first fallen in action from ETA, and the posterior killing of police commander Melitón Manzanas two months later (known for his torture
of Basque detainees: “try to explain issues of “sensibility” to those…!” stated a participant, referring to Spanish Civil Guards and police (March 2003)). From then on the conflict spiralled into more deaths, injured, kidnappings, reports and evidence of police torture of detainees (such as the case of Lasa and Zabala, kidnapped and tortured to death by the state sponsored GAL), siege, espionage, threats, internment without trial of young Basques, extortions, bomb attacks by ETA and by Spanish paramilitaries, closure of Basque newspapers (with charges lifted decades later in the last few years), closure of radios, banning of democratically elected parties disenfranchising hundreds of thousands of Basque citizens, exorbitant fines for protesting or for releases on bail, revenge policies toward Basque political prisoners and their relatives, fear, pain, anger… and past failed attempts of negotiation for peaceful solutions. At the same time, Basque youths of different generations from the 1960s to the present moment, commit to the salvation of Basque cultural traits, and among them, Txalaparta.

The interpretation task involved in this research has been mindful of concerns of representation expressed by participants, especially at the beginning of this dissertation. Participants in this research are highly aware of dynamics of power and constructions of authority, which they seek to subvert in their tireless work for an independent Euskal Herria and in their active efforts to construct a social Utopia in the now. Some of them critiqued research endeavours and in particular my own. One of my hosts in Iruñea, a txalapartari who identified himself as a radical anarchist, challenged my attempts “to define him,” to “classify him” and “label him” into some neat authoritative intellectual and inherently reductionist construction of who he is. He defended his right to self-define himself and to change as he wished, as circumstances, which are dynamic, change too. He defended his right to be “incoherent,” as he put it. Also, at the end of our interview, JosAnton Artze questioned a misrepresentation of peoples by anthropologists, bringing my attention to that which is lost “in translation” so to speak: sentiment, I understood he meant; a kind of sensibility, peoples’ longings, their feelings, their existential quest, which gets lost, as my first host somehow argued, in cumbersome scholarly explications of others’ meanings and doings. I saw myself watching and questioning, from the sidelines, people immersed in the action of living in the troubled wild waters of a struggle: I saw myself taking something away from what it means to be in the middle of it, and what it means to fight for the survival and continuation of Txalapartia in the storm. JosAnton Artze handed me Suzuki and Eric Fromm’s book Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis, introducing me to a Zen approach to knowing that I was
oriented towards but did not know. Suzuki compares two poems, one by Tennyson and one by Baso, both about their encounter with a little flower. Tennyson pulls the flower from the crannies, kills it because he wants it; in dissecting it, as Suzuki explains, he believes he will know God and man. Baso too admires a little flower, but does not interfere with it, Suzuki explains. All that needs to be known is apprehended in the feeling of the encounter between the poet and the poem the flower is. He is no less, and no more, than the *nazuna*, the flower he writes about. He kisses her with his sentiment, and perhaps departs. In this spirit, I have tried to be careful in my “dissections” and conscientious in my effort to convey the “sentiment” of my encounter, a sentiment that may well have been primary in the necessarily embodied process of knowing involved in the research of the social phenomenon of Txalaparta.

Expressive culture may not simply involve mediums of expression, but unique forms of agency, or else the logic and words of the ideologue or the “intellectual,” or the behaviours of politicians, militants, scientists, engineers, traders…, would suffice for the making and shaping of social realities and the survival of groups in struggle. The subject of this thesis is the making of social reality by means of expressive culture, and indeed I often encountered in the field discourses about self, being and doing, that were put in terms of sensibility. I have tried to construct my interpretation mindful of an embodied methodological and epistemological orientation (Csordas, Rice) on my part and the part of participants, in their attempts to make sense of their world and shape it. Thus, I have followed, when it seemed feasible, a kind of poetic logic, in an attempt to capture in the text something of the sensibilities I have encountered, and also to convey the intersubjective experience from which interpretation has emerged (Denzin). This and other writing strategies have been deployed as well with a view to consciously engaging the reader in a greater aesthetic stance of transaction (Rosenblatt), and thus into an embodied methodological field of knowing.

I have explored the ongoing revival and construction of Txalaparta and its dynamics, or some of them, through interview analysis mainly, guided by my fieldwork experiences, as stated earlier, through an interpretative framework that relies on performance and praxis approaches. Thus, I reflect upon verbal and non-verbal behaviour “as” performance in the sense advocated by the broad spectrum approach, exemplified by Richard Schechner among other Performance Studies scholars. I have also approached the type of behaviour that more explicitly relates Txalaparta to the
Basque struggle through Catherine Bell’s proposed focus on practice within Ritual Studies, that is, a focus on “ritualising,” or the ways and processes through which the (intentional or not) construction of realities is effected, within “out of the ordinary” frames created by means of an “out of the ordinary” doing. I have followed, for the sake of my argument’s clarity, Schechner’s performance scheme, where he locates on one end performance for the purpose of “entertaining” (akin to Juan Mari Beltran’s understandings), dealt with in chapters 3 and 4, and efficacious performance (“ritual”) on the other end (chapter five of this dissertation). However, despite such useful organisation of performance for the sake of its study, it has limits some of which need to be acknowledged for they affect interpretations offered here. Though I discuss ritualising in relation to the incorporation of Txalaparta to overtly political events, I am aware that, as Christopher Small points out, all music making activity (“musicking”) such as that involved in a music concert, or a music festival, involves discourses and behaviours that may pertain to the frame of “ritual” (that is, such practices may also be considered “ritualising”). “Entertainment” does not preclude other social dynamics, though perhaps appealing to such function to the exclusion of any other may disclose a discourse of disguise or concealment (intentionally or not) of the fact, for instance, that values enacted within a given practice and the community built on them, are not part of a natural order of things, but rather constructed by means of performance, a characteristic that Barbara Myerhoff attributes to “ritual” (Bell 1997)). I reflect upon this discourse of the “‘ought to be’ as ‘is’” later in the conclusion. I have also applied the broad spectrum approach to the study of performance, and Bell’s proposed study of “ritualising,” in such a way as to avoid overloading interpretation with an elaborate framework of intellectual ideas and theoretical tools which could have the effect of precluding forms of engagement akin to those involved in art (disconnecting us from that which we seek to understand), or which might provide an appearance of excessive coherence and linear logic to an experience that may not necessarily display such traits.

Txalapartariak and others reflected upon the foundations of their cherished nation in terms of the “cultural infrastructure,” as Oteiza called it, that they had inherited, or actively recovered from oblivion or “subtraction” (Urbeltz), and near extinction. Thus we encounter narratives that explain Txalaparta as the evocation of the horse, totem of the Basques, perhaps played already in Prehistory in conjunction with cave paintings of horses (facilitated by Eliade’s Shamanism). We also encounter narratives that explain Txalaparta as a calling device or calling rhythms, those that have
seemingly prevailed in relation to the political rallies and ritualising in relation to the armed struggle. Finally, one other main narrative, put forth by the old txalapartariak, and stemming from their practice, relates Txalaparta to the communal cider-making celebration. This last narrative is further elaborated by Juan Mari Beltran within understandings of music as entertainment and merry-making, with socialist undertones, and within a more pragmatic performance of music construction as per established notions and frameworks. On a par with these narratives, we encounter practices that shape Txalaparta within avant-garde understandings, that commit to the old style, or that adapt it to mainstream western music canons and the requirements of the music industry, deconstructing and reconstructing it (or “restoring behaviours” related to it (Schechner)) in different ways in non verbal practices and also in associated discourses that seek the legitimation of the past.

Along with the above performances, we also encounter practices that relate Txalaparta more directly to the struggle. If the logic of the dissertation so far seemed to ask for a thematic structure where narratives and discourses about performatic practices are presented before txalapartariak’s “ritualising” in relation to the political and armed struggle, now a reversed reflection is necessary, for the sake of a more integrated interpretation.

A return to the early decades of the revival may be necessary in order to understand Txalaparta’s iconicity and txalapartariak’s doing within the struggle for a socialist Euskal Herria, and an independent one. Oteiza, Basque sculptor, poet and philosopher, with the imagination and creativity a fearless artist can afford, sought to bring the “cultural infrastructure” of the Basques to the attention of a youth eager to recover what had been lost, eager to restore it and launch it into the future. Subjected to dynamics that left it exposed to dismissal and extinction, such “paraculture,” as the artist referred to it, contained an “essential” Basque philosophy about life that he sought to bring back, from as far back as an avant-garde stone age. “The first prehistoric artist is the one that hits the wall with his weak hand, his wounded hand, and receives like the awareness of an answer … He asks and answers, he receives and replies; the artist plays in his walls like in a pelota court; the difficult, slow, commitment of his paint to life, in order to dominate it” he stated in Quosque Tandem…! (1994 [1963] Mo) and similarly in the film Ama Lur to a scene of cave paintings of hands. Oteiza seems to carry on his shoulders and sentiment, the weight of a humiliation of generations. That is perhaps the
artist that rests his wounded hand on the cave walls, Oteiza himself returning to his most primeval sense, supporting himself on the most ancestral, human, Mother Earth, he could feel in his interior, the walls of ancestors’ caves. From that, his imagined Prehistory, raises Oteiza, with all that weight, like a harrijasotzaile, a stone lifter, with a cry of rebellion, in Latin: *Quosque Tandem…!*, his *Chalk Laboratory*, his *Spiritual Exercises in a Tunnel*, his work. With the energy of his rebellion he shakes that weight of generations. Or he tries: it is a long process, that will also take some generations; a process that will transcend beyond his life, and his death. An effort that will lead generations to pick up a gun, but also to drop it (as is the case at the time of writing).

A youth with questions, receptive to the international climate of decolonisation and revolutionary Marxist ideologies that were coming from outside despite the censorship apparatus of Franco’s Regime, answered Oteiza’s impassionate call to awaken. The rebellion against the dictatorship and capitalism happened on a par with the recovery of Euskara and Basque traditions on the brink of extinction, in order to create anew. One such tradition was Txalaparta, which the Artze brothers soon incorporated in the group Ez Dok Amairu within the so called Basque School of Contemporary Art, and which not much later the Beltran brothers would incorporate into the dance group Argia, also part of the same cultural movement. In those first years of the revival, the 1960s and 70s, during the tough times of the dictatorship, it was the Artze brothers’ style that seemed to have had its greatest influence, through Ez Dok Amairu (1965-1972), as part of an emerging ritualising characterised by an acute awareness of the political struggle, within a politically engaged art. In Ez Dok Amairu Txalaparta was played often on its own (or not accommodated to the beat of other musics), opening and closing the concerts, or somewhere in between other performances of the group. The instrument was placed in a strategic place on the stage, framed by a flood light, “like a totem,” “an altar,” or “a centre” as Benito Lertxundi, former member of the group, stated; it was also present throughout the whole concert even when it was not being played. Lertxundi further evoked, in relation to the overall stage performance in which Txalaparta was incorporated in such way, “a certain religiosity” and depth, seemingly in tune with Oteiza’s advocated sensibility where “artistic sentiment” and “religious sentiment” merge. This sensibility, or kind of sentiment, could be perhaps described as the artist’s “somatic mode of attention” (Csordas 1993) to the painful circumstances of the conflict, in the struggle to recover the once lost freedom. Perhaps the source of the seemingly spontaneous
artistic/efficacious behaviour (ritualising) that emerged at the time in relation to Txalaparta, may be found in the process of such culturally informed body attending, with a heightened sensorial awareness of itself, to a social environment of “emergency” and to the encounter with a deeply felt and endangered cultural heritage.

Ritualising specifically related to the armed struggle, exemplified for instance by the song 564 of the rock group Hertzainak, may also emerge, as stated, from a “somatic mode of attention”: Josu Zabala, composer of the music and lyrics (1989), insisted on a certain “altered state of consciousness,” in his case facilitated by alcohol or other substances, in the creation of this song. I am basically questioning the element of intentionality that is commonly attributed to ritual makers (or to certain kinds of performances) in anthropology and ritual studies, whereby agency in the creation of culture is exclusively attributed to the human subjects involved, contrary to the intimate embodied experience of individuals who perceive themselves as a medium rather than source.

An emerging ritualising in relation to Txalaparta in connection with the conflict may also be identified in influential documentary films of the late 1960s and 70s related to the struggle, within a sequence of images and sounds that evoke sensorial experience and seek to mobilise the audience’s potential for action (especially in the case of the film Ama Lur (1968) and Euskal Herri Musika (1978)). In the film Ama Lur Txalaparta soundtracks are played in conjunction with images of Basque nature and Basque people, underlying key words that bring the elements and “man” together; or taking us at speed, over the drone of an ox horn, on galloping horses perhaps, to the Orreaga valley, where a historical victory, significant for Basque independentists, took place in 778 against the Francs. Txalaparta also features visually, performed by the Artze brothers, Jexux as ttakuna (performing the continuous beat ttakun) and JosAnton as herrena. Txalaparta is part of a story line that tells the history of a people from Prehistory to the present, a people that were sovereign (under the Kingdom of Navarre, on whose borders, I was told, is based the reclaimed Euskal Herria) and that are now unfree (during Franco’s dictatorship). In Euskal Herri Musika, released in 1978, the same year in which the Basque Independentist Left coalition is formed, and in El Proceso de Burgos (The Burgos Trials), released a year later, Txalaparta seems more overtly incorporated to a ritualising related to the armed struggle. In The Burgos Trials (which document a critical moment in the history of ETA and the struggle, where the former defied
Franco’s dictatorship, with major international support) Txalaparta seems to convey or support a sense of action as soundtracks for the live footage and still images shown relating to the events of the trials, and the theme of sacrifice in the struggle (death for the continuity of the community) in relation to the shooting of a protester by police. The sound of Txalaparta, also played by the Artze brothers, supports action, evoking a sense of atavism and emerging as a sonic symbol of the struggle. In Euskal Herri Musika (Basque Popular Music), Txalaparta is incorporated within a sensory discourse whose central theme seems to be that of sacrifice to recover the lost freedom, death (foundational sacrifice) for the sake of life, and the mother: the Earth from which Txalaparta emerges from prehistory giving life to cave paintings of horses, from inside the motherland that shall be liberated. It is one of the old txalapartariak who play at the start with one other, it is the Artze brothers who play, again, at the end of the film, Txalaparta berria, the new Txalaparta that shall continue into the future, against a bonfire, before the second strophe of the song that opened the movie, crying for the lost freedom over a dark screen.

There seems to be a connection among the kind of ritualising in relation to Txalaparta that emerged within Ez Dok Amairu and later experimental compositions in relation to the Artze brothers (where Txalaparta was not expected to accommodate to other instruments or the composition), the general style of the numerous Txalaparta groups that emerged all over the Basque geography, and events more closely related to the political and armed struggle (at least until 2006), where Txalaparta is also given a prominent role (as a sound device fulfilling a function within the overall event). Also, Ama Lur and Euskal Herri Musika emerge like a form of ritualising by means of art, sounds and images conveying that which could not be put in words, resembling the political rallies of Herri Batasuna, and subsequent ezker abertzale formations, or the events in relation to the sacrificed in the armed struggle, which will also incorporate txalaparta within a sequence of metaphoric actions and images that embody primal ideas (strength, endurance, life) or address the independence sought as the continuity of the lost Kingdom of Navarre, for instance.

One element related to ritualising in relation to Txalaparta is its power, often claimed by txalapartariak and non performer participants, of evoking a primitive past, and of connecting them to an ancestry –in a context of recovery of a lost, or denied, identity, also marked by the significant loss of life, often unaccounted for, during the
recent wars. To this is added reflections upon Txalaparta as simple, austere, natural (in relation to the wood), or “gut” in the sense of instinctual; and more specifically reflections upon the *ttakun* beat (two immediate consecutive strokes by the same performer with the accent on the second: *ttakun*, like a pulse) as an organic kind of rhythm, evocative of the heart (“the *ttakun* is the heart of Txalaparta”), or the Earth (“the beat of the Earth”). The figure of the mother, seemingly prominent in the funerals of deceased activists, also emerged, as a primordial figure, in the ritualising of *txalapartariak* and their discourses, as Mother Earth, or as the return to the mother through the language and then the nation (JosAnton Artze). A connection with the mother was also stressed to me as crucial by *txalapartari* Josu Goiri: “she is your matrix.”

Ritualising in relation to the struggle by means of Txalaparta also seems to reclaim Basque forms of popular empowerment contained in Basque expressive culture, as *abertzale* left participants stressed to me often times, in a way that seemed to fully resonate with Bernard Hibbits’ reflections on the enactment of the law in what he terms “performance cultures.” Hibbits (1992) states that in preliterate and semiliterate societies (the Basque Country’s literature has been predominantly oral until relatively recently in history) the Law relies on the experiential qualities afforded by multisensory (ephemeral) performance, rather than on fixed written inscription. Reclaiming traditional forms of expressive culture, characteristic of the behaviour and imagery displayed in the political events of the Independentist Left and events related to the armed struggle or the activist, and also characteristic of the revivalist efforts of so many *txalapartariak*, may be thus understood (at least partly) as a way of reclaiming its associated forms of popular government, appealing not only to the intellect, but to the sentient body that is and may be the source of action. Txalaparta as a call for *auzolan* (volunteer communal work for a common cause), the *bertsolari* that provides social commentary, the *joaldunak* that symbolically awaken the Earth from its winter sleep, and other carnival masks that bring into existence a universe of wild beings that subvert the established order (the establishment), are some examples. Councils with an Herri Batasuna majority, concerned with Basque popular culture and its survival, and with forms of popular empowerment, resonated with Juan Mari Beltran’s music projects for Txalaparta (as well as other traditional instruments), namely the Txalaparta Festa, the festival organised annually by the School of Txalaparta of the Public Music School of Hernani (Gipuzkoa) since 1987 to promote this interlocking tradition and instrument/s,
and the *Herri Musikaren Txoko*, the Popular Documentation Centre, as it is referred to, in Oiartzun (Gipuzkoa).

Within the larger context in which Txalaparta is incorporated in the events previously discussed, especially those that mark key moments of transition in the life of an activist, the individual who sacrifices for the community (the nation, Euskal Herria), *txalapartariak* seem to fulfil a central role: that of underscoring the value of living and dying for the Basque Country and the primitive yet timeless origins of the community it represents. Another possible role may be that of helping attendants deal with the pain in a more physical, efficacious manner, as per one of the *txalapartariak* who discussed his participation at funerals of activists openly with me. Acts of such weight as the activist’s mother lifting her son’s ashes, the source of life lifting sacrificial death (the mother that once held a live son and now holds his ashes, for the sake of a kind of continuity) create a critical moment that is primal, at which the community is confronted with a reality that is utterly serious, grave. At this moment Txalaparta is played with particular intensity, resonating and vibrating in the chemistry of those present. The kind of Txalaparta performed at such events seems to be, with little modification, Txalaparta Zaharra, the old style, which seems to reveal in its performatic qualities and general configuration of the piece, the structure identified by Gennep in what he termed “rites of passage.”

The physical experience of the vibrations produced by the txalaparta was often brought up by participants, such as Josu Goiri, who approaches Txalaparta from a therapeutic stance within a larger spiritual healing perspective. Among other participants, Goiri, as well as Erlantz Auzmendi and students of the latter I met in Iruña with an anarchist orientation (like Auzmendi), expressed concerns in relation to the use of violence as a means to attain goals, and in relation to its condoning among ETA’s support base at the time (2003-2006) in a discourse where violence seemed to stand also for anger. They stated that until very recently a great majority of *txalapartariak* had approached Txalaparta through a “patriotic” sentiment, in connection with support for the armed struggle and/or the Independentist Left coalition and related ceremonies. In tune with mystical reflections upon Txalaparta as a transformative rhythm of healing, Erlantz advocated its use for the peaceful pursuit of Euskal Herria’s historical claims, while Goiri intentionally incorporated Txalaparta in his public
performances so as to affect an increased spiritual state in his audiences by means of sound vibrations.

Within an eclectic mystic discourse of Zen and Eastern resonances, references to Native American beliefs and a general Christian philosophy, Erlantz Auzmendi, similarly to JosAnton Artze, presented Txalaparta as a transcendental spiritual tradition, and the *ttakun* beat as resonating with an ineffable unfathomable reality the knowing of which could be embodied but not apprehended by means of intellect. It was within such discourse that Auzmendi revealed the moment at which one other emerging understanding of Txalaparta became overtly manifest for those who, like him, upheld such mystic outlook: the habilitation course that took place in Eibar during the academic year of 1993/94 to enable music teachers and *txalapartariak* to teach Txalaparta in the context of official music schools. At this course, delivered by Juan Mari Beltran, a new version of the *ttakun* became evident, and with it, the emerging influence of Beltran’s understandings and practice, developed within the environment of the School of Txalaparta of Hernani, and actively “exported” by Beltran, seemingly since the late 1980s or early 1990s, to areas of Euskal Herria where there was a demand for Txalaparta and no implantation of it (seemingly most places).

Beltran, and his students, advocated a *ttakun*, that they argued should not be differentiated with adjectives (“new” versus “old,” “open” versus “closed”), for it was a natural evolution of the *ttakun* beat played by the old *txalapartariak*, which was in itself part of an ongoing process of change. This version of *ttakun*, often referred to by participants as “open” or “new” *ttakun*, and also as “lauko” (meaning “of four”) or “takataka” (chapter 4), was performed by means of equidistant strokes, in a metronomic manner, or fitting into a 4/4 time signature, for instance, with a stress on the first stroke, thus putting the accent in the downbeat of the measure (*tta kun tta kun tta kun tta kun*, as opposed to: *ttakun ttakun ttakun ttakun*). The rationale for this modification was/is to facilitate the inclusion of Txalaparta in music groups, accommodating it to the regular rhythms of mainstream musics as a percussive base, for instance.

Juan Mari Beltran states in all his publications related to Txalaparta (understood as living tradition) that “Txalaparta is music,” as did many participants emphatically in their verbal discourse, possibly after him. The aforementioned developments in relation to the *ttakun* and other discourses and practices, which incorporate innovations by other
txalapartariak (for it shall be a collective project), are part of a performance that seeks to make “music” out of Txalaparta as per established western canons, challenging understandings emanating from the music establishment that despise Txalaparta as less worthy than other forms of sound making and sound instruments, and challenging perceptions of Txalaparta as efficacious (calling rhythms, healing) rather than music, or as an oral tradition that should not be notated nor composed (where music literacy is also identified with so called “high art” music and the asymmetrical power structures within society the latter emerges from). Within this project that seeks to construct “music” by means of performance, by force of doing, and thus bring what “ought to be” into being, “music” emerges as a performative, that is, a concept that, like Austin’s utterances, has the power of transforming that to which it is applied. “Txalaparta is music” seems to mean “Txalaparta is worthy,” as per the standards of an establishment that denies it belonging: “Txalaparta belongs.”

Like the incorporation of the Basque nation to an established framework of nation-states in equality of terms will safeguard and ensure its survival, so the incorporation of Txalaparta to western music canons and a mainstream music scene will ensure its continuity (as well as the possibilities of txalapartariak to make a living off it). Justified by means of a recourse to the authority of tradition, in a discursive performance that deconstructs such tradition and reassembles the dissection remains that suit the “restoration of behaviour” pursued (the process inherent to performance as per Schechner), different innovations are introduced to ensure that Txalaparta remains useful, that is, alive: Tempering of the boards; development of a tablature notation system, which facilitates transmission and also composition; programming of the piece; development of a repertoire; a systematic teaching method and a teaching curriculum for Txalaparta; the annual festival Txalaparta Festa; or the elevated stage afforded by the latest publication of Beltran’s book *Txalaparta* (2009), these are all part of a project that seeks to construct music out of Txalaparta, within a process that also obeys music and spectacle industry dynamics.

It may be useful for the sake of interpretation, as outlined in chapter four, to consider a spectrum of sound practice that seems implicit in participants’ understandings of Txalaparta and that organises performances, associated performatic practices, and music related values, from the least humanly elaborated or controlled sound making to the most elaborated/controlled one. Adopting the term “sound making”
as I have done so far, rather than “music making” or “musicking,” places us in a better position, I feel, to consider the full range of this spectrum, and the performativity of the concept of “music” in relation to Txalaparta. Such a spectrum seems parallel to the imagined continuum, as explained in chapter four, between nature (the least elaborated sound making) and culture (the most elaborated). Ideas that relate to power, presented in relation to Txalaparta, seemed to fit into such a range of behaviours. An unpitched txalaparta (the instrument), not subjected to fixed rhythms or other musics/instruments, was conceptualised as anarchistic, free, and primeval, evoking, for some participants, romantic images of universal or forgotten shamanistic practices and reflections upon nature (the evocation of the transition from the horse trot to the gallop within efficacious performances of healing and transformation). A Txalaparta subjected to regular rhythms, or a metronome, was presented as subjected to authoritarianism, as limited and subdued, even by a participant from the School of Hernani who defended Beltran’s points of view, for instance. Beltran and those akin to his perspective, on the other hand, presented the kind of Txalaparta he advocates as richer, and txalapartariak that adopted and mastered his developments of technique and rhythm, such as different rhythmic beats and forms, as resourceful.

Though certain understandings were often expressed as a matter of preference by participants who nonetheless engaged, or increasingly engage, with a wide range of practices for pragmatic reasons, a point was revealed along the sound making spectrum at which one end met the other, so to speak, resulting in a criticism that many participants regarded as healthy and expressed within a frame of appreciation for each other’s contributions and the acknowledgment of their shared commitment to a bigger cause, that of the survival of Txalaparta. One criticism regarded the style born in the midst of Hernani as overly relying on technique at the expense of the transmission of sentiment. A transmission, or kind of communication, that in some cases replicated models pertaining to bertxolaritza, the Basque improvised sung verse tradition, in relation to performatic strategies employed by Jexux Artze or the Sorzabalbere txalapartariak, for instance, revealing a connection with culture in Euskara, a dedication to which was presented by most participants as preceding their commitment with Txalaparta.

The performance that shapes Txalaparta as per music canons seems to address the prominent orientation of young txalapartariak, until perhaps the mid or late 1990s,
to what Erlantz called a “patriotic Txalaparta,” that which incorporates it within the ritualising related to the overtly political and armed struggle. In the interview that Beltran kindly offered me in May 2006, he stated that he felt the need to launch the Txalaparta Festa in relation to a feeling that the spirit and function of celebration (which he understands as music) was disappearing in relation to Txalaparta. Indeed when explaining Hertzainak’s song “564” (alluding to the 564 Basque political prisoners at the time in 1989), Josu Zabala stated that the incorporation of Txalaparta, unlike its original use of celebration, served the opposite purpose: to acknowledge the painful situation suffered by many Basque families who have lost or are missing a loved one to the struggle. Beltran also indicates in his 2009 publication that many of those who joined his Txalaparta classes regarded Txalaparta as a calling device (an understanding upheld by organisers of Independentist Left political rallies also). His approach to Txalaparta thus not only seems to “recover” Txalaparta for music, perhaps seeking to save it from the painful political juncture of siege to Basque cultural, social and political democratic expressions, but it may have “recovered” too, perhaps, txalapartariak themselves into “more constructive” pursuits with Txalaparta.

Ultimately, the ongoing grassroots construction of Txalaparta as music seems to be embedded in the so called ongoing process of “national construction,” from a general ideological stance that seems also manifest in the general prevailing aesthetic, and forms of socialisation, of the community of practice that articulates around Txalaparta, seemingly driven by a socialist or progressive left humanist ethos. The struggle for music and the struggle for sovereignty seem to converge, bringing txalapartariak somewhat together in ultimately the same quest for the survival of specifically Basque ways of being, and belonging.

The more typical Basque realities and strategies seem to be paramilitary, para-political, paramilitary, para-cultural … Be it euskera, the public school, university, art, museums, the political process, a key slogan has always consisted in requesting its “normalisation,” as if the most characteristic of the country was to be a non-normal or paranormal reality (Zulaika 1996, 227) [bold fonts in the original, italics added].

In the academic year 1985-1986, the Public Music School of Hernani started offering courses for the learning of non regulated popular instruments, among
them txalaparta, thus becoming the first Basque music centre to make its learning possible … [it] meant, to an extent, an important step in the normalisation of the instrument (Beltran 2009, 106) [emphasis added].

The late Christopher Small argued that musicking, that is, any kind of behaviour related to the larger “ritual” like construction that music performance ultimately is, involves much more than entertainment. As Martin Stokes asserts:

…musical performance, as well as the acts of listening, dancing, arguing, discussing, thinking and writing about music, provide the means by which ethnicities and identities are constructed and mobilised (1994, 5).

The construction of Txalaparta as music within established canons seeks to transform paraTxalaparta into a formalised, and perhaps also standardised and unified, musical form -where paraTxalaparta would be that which is perceived as associated with efficacious ritualising; the kind of Txalaparta that does not conform to other musics when it is combined with them, and seems random; one that is embedded in a discourse that appeals to archetypes and calling rhythms; one that public music schools are reticent to incorporate. The construction of music from Txalaparta seems to have another consequence, whether intentionally sought or not: A unification of styles, as some participants observed. The latter seems to replicate other processes of unification and standardisation in the creation of nations as feasible political entities, and ultimately nation-states (an example is the unification of Euskara, initiated in the late 1960s). Txalaparta might now be moving in that direction. Harkaitz Martinez’s proposal in 2004 of an association of txalapartariak and an agreement on contents for a generalised Txalaparta teaching curriculum, could be regarded as part of such project, not yet welcome by the larger community of txalapartariak (fieldwork 2004, 2006), without whose opinion, in an assembly manner, it would not go ahead.

Part of a project of construction of music from Txalaparta is also the transformation of the “para-musician,” as we could perhaps call the txalapartari that struggles to make a living off it, into a professional musician, the dream of many participants in this research, and also ultimate step, perhaps, in the “normalisation” of Txalaparta. The para-musician might be also understood as the txalapartari that plays for free, in service to the community, as part of a commitment with its survival in the
painful juncture of the conflict. The “normalised” musician might be as well, consequently, one that is free of such commitments, one that can busk in the streets if s/he so wishes, and request without remorse the right fees for “his sweat,” “the decent work” he has put in, as a txalapartari from Iruñea expressed to me. The paramusician plays for three minutes at the rally, welcome or funeral event where s/he is been needed at the recent and perhaps current political juncture, and the “musician,” in emerging understandings within the left that claim recognition for txalapartariak and that suspect overtly ritualising behaviours, questions it.

The Txalaparta Festa is also part of a performance that seeks to contribute, or so it seems as well, to the construction of nation. While “entertainment” is called upon as the function of music, and thus of the festival (together with the promotion of the music Txalaparta “is”), another performance or ritualising may be identified, one which resonates, as it seems, with most participants in this research. It seeks to construct the Basque nation, within the general effort that manifests through many other Basque collective practices (i.e. the rally race Korrika for the promotion of Euskara), by means of a concert programme where an all Euskal Herria is represented, and a socialist one, through the promotion of values of equality, sharing and relatedness that match those that predominate among most txalapartariak, as it seems from views expressed by participants and my own experience living with them.

Those practices in the least elaborated or humanly organised end of the sound making spectrum (which sought to engage with the primeval materials of culture, in disillusionment with an establishment experienced as numb and disempowering) seemed to disclose more clearly anarchist approaches to life, and in some cases, to the political question (rejection or disbelief in nation-state frameworks and ethnic based national claims). The music making project in the other end, however, seemed to disclose a more pragmatic approach (perhaps in tune with Marxist-Leninist or Maoist outlooks), one that seeks to make Txalaparta understandable, to make community, and to avoid the demise of Txalaparta in a rebellion against the system (a rebellion that might be exemplified by the refusal to fit into western canons and a resistance to dynamics that seem to converge toward a unification of styles).

Though in the focal point of my fieldwork research, Iruñea, participants did see Txalaparta linked with the struggle and the abertzale left, regardless of the reasons, some non txalapartariak participants I met from Bilbo, not familiar with a left wing and
independentist social political environment they regarded with suspicion, claimed that Txalaparta could not be readily identified with the political scenario nor the abertzale left. Indeed, many participants stressed that since the mid 1990s a new expansion of Txalaparta had taken place (possibly linked to the world music industry and spectacle market dynamics and demands), opening it up to a more varied range of peoples that approach it for its musical qualities and potential. I was told this was not yet the case, however, in Iparralde (fieldwork 2006) where it was still a strong symbol of the struggle for the few who approach it to learn play it.

In casual conversation, participants often spoke to me of Txalaparta as if it had an agency of its own, a capacity to change those who approach it toward a humanist outlook, a potential contained in the interlocking technique, and perhaps, as I understood, in the kind of community of practice that so far it seems to mostly articulate. Some of these participants stressed the effect Txalaparta vibrations had in them and in those present when it is performed. They spoke of “magic,” “connection with ancestors,” “connection with Mother Earth.” This sort of “magic” and “life enhancing experience” (as a member of the audience expressed to me), was also felt by Irish audiences who would come enthused to the txalapartariak after their performances, wanting to buy CDs, shaking hands and wanting to know more about the Basque Country and its plight. In some cases this included people who, closer to the border with the North, had initially looked at us with great suspicion. Opportunity seemed to open for us in Ireland, and the peace process soon absorbed us into its dynamics through singer and song writer Tommy Sands and music producer Tom Newman, contacts facilitated for me by Josu Goiri, and both Protestant and Catholic audiences that welcomed us, in a context where Txalaparta facilitated dialogue. Indeed, an element that participants in this research always pointed out to me, framing it as relevant, was the dialogic nature of this tradition. Josu Goiri, focused on spiritual healing as already stated, claims that Txalaparta in his opinion has helped the energy flow (in the terms he uses) toward the current scenario, in which the abertzale left has publicly renounced violence, and ETA has answered the call of the latter, its support base, with a cease of its activities oriented toward a final decommissioning, with the continuous heavy price involved for them in the unilaterality of this decision.
Though recommendations for further research are usually stated at the end of the work, I shall include them here. The density of themes that have emerged from the subject of this dissertation and my fieldwork research has been overwhelming, and it is likely that many more themes than those presented in this conclusion have been exposed, perhaps beyond my current awareness. Themes that nonetheless can be expanded and would deserve further research, the participating community willing, would be a more in-depth exploration of the events of the Independentist Left and current ritualising now that the Basque struggle enters into a new juncture in the current peace process. *Txalapartariak* practices in relation to the World Music Industry, and developments in relation to the “normalisation” of Txalaparta would demand also further research. An exploration of what I referred to as a “grounding in the world as Basque” among some participants (JosAnton Artze, Josu Goiri or Juan Mari Beltran, for instance) and issues of interculturalism in performance, open up a rich and interesting path of research in relation to the world of Txalaparta. Equally, participants willing, a deeper exploration of social and political approaches to the Basque question in relation to sound making practices would be a fascinating theme for further research, which requires a longer exposure to a non-violent scenario, for the sake of the trust required. The revival and construction of Txalaparta is ongoing and in a rapid process of change, a further exploration of its direction (or directions) would require of further study. A research exploration that has been outside the scope of this dissertation, and that would offer interesting avenues for a collaborative ethnography, would be the social history of Txalaparta along the decades through in-depth study of the different Txalaparta groups to date, also incorporating musical analysis. A collaborative ethnography of the ongoing work of revival and revitalising of local traditions by the cultural group Jo ala Jo from Baztan, and/or other groups, including autoethnographies by performers, would be an invaluable avenue for a more in-depth research into the nuances and complexities of the social phenomenon explored in this dissertation. Finally, one other theme that discloses great potential for exploration would be the study of spiritual healing approaches to Txalaparta.

“Struggle,” “search” and “healing” are all terms that may be interchangeable in the interpretations provided in this study. The division provided in chapter five between “rhythms of struggle” and “rhythms of healing” is an artificial but useful construction.
for the sake of aiding interpretation and understanding of issues at stake. The theme of “search” has also emerged very often in my fieldwork experience, a kind of indefinite search that I felt participants, and me, were immersed in. Struggle involves search, and search involves struggle. When we start finding our way or our goal, or we realise that we are perhaps in the right path to it, we speak of healing.

I now allow myself some last personal reflections. The personal and the work the person undertakes cannot be separated from the intersubjectivity from which ethnography emerges. Imagination comes, and I frame it as such:

**Struggle.** When I initiated research specifically aimed for this doctoral dissertation, I intended to study “the world of txalapartariak” which unfolded within the painful juncture of an armed conflict. Presented to me as “young and revolutionary” by a Basque student of Euskara living in Madrid, the capital of a state he found increasingly hostile, Txalaparta emerged in his discourse as a symbol of the Basque struggle for self-determination (as the recovery of a once enjoyed independence and the restoring, perhaps, of a belonging), for the sake of protecting (or recovering) –and in the process, constructing- a sort of both individual and collective self (Euskara, ancient laws and institutions of popular self-government, a traditional popular expressive culture perhaps containing them, and that which is built anew yet rooted in it, with a similar spirit of self-empowerment). I encountered a socialist struggle that seeks to reclaim the centre for the people, and that finds socialism in the nature of that traditional popular strata it seeks to protect and reconnect with. On further research, Txalaparta did appear to be related, perhaps central, to a kind of ritualising openly and closely linked to such struggle, to the gravity of life and death, to the existential question of sacrificing/taking life for the sake of life (or to the continuity of a community and its eventual liberation), to hearts torn between honour and love, and the pain involved.

**Search.** Some kind of undetermined longing led me to this subject and through it; some kind of a question, existential too. Groping in a kind of mist, for something unknown perhaps, yet sensed, I often felt during fieldwork that we were all immersed in a common, collective search:

An embodied search emerging from the innermost (more intentional in some cases, more intuitive in others; more regulated and consciously controlled in some instances, more spontaneous in others);
A ritualising that arises from somatically attentive individuals, within a kind of phenomenology of art (that improvised “elastic” Txalaparta that some participants perceived as anarchistic and free).

The kind of search I was engaged in seemed to resonate with that of other participants in this study: txalapartariak haunted by the beauty of an ancient language in which words taste when pronounced, Euskara; haunted by the deep warm resonance of the wood, Txalaparta, that seems to hold one, from the interior of the Earth, remote, like the origin of existence which, who knows, perhaps emerges from it, far back in time and outside of it. Txalapartariak, haunted by the beauty of the natural places that surround them, the music and dances that told them, in the doing, who they were. Haunted by the basa ahideak of Iparralde, songs without words. Sometimes she who searches needs to rid herself of words before she can find what is sought.

I was often queried by the txalapartariak I worked with in Iruñea (Nafarroa), about my findings so far. I recall Jokin, one of my hosts, throwing himself backward in the sofa he was sitting on, deeply moved when I told him about my conversation with JosAnton Artze: “Buah! An instrument with no name! How beautiful that is!” “You, who are young,” stated an interviewee as he thought out loud, after a long conversation about Txalaparta, nature, the horse, the heart beat of mother and child interlocking in the womb, “I don’t know why are you doing this search…, but it is a beautiful search. It is a journey that can take you… it can take you very far from the Basque Country and from Txalaparta, because you can touch the universal; it is possible, with this theme of the Txalaparta” (interview, June 2006).

Be patient with that which has not been resolved in your heart
and try to love the questions in themselves,
as if they were locked rooms,
or books written in a foreign language (Rainer Maria Rilke).

Ritualisation may have emerged, not so much in a desire to self-consciously create practice for the sake of what it might do to us (experience seeking), but rather more spontaneously, where a certain “content” (and/or a longing) is what leads practice: an embodied search, in this case, for something as deep, and deeply needed, as a lost connection, the lost identity, something that has been denied, or subtracted, as Urbeltz
put it. Perhaps ritualising practices, like answers sought for existential questions, are not only “made-up,” but they are also found.

Healing. Whatever moved me and moved them in the haze of such a search, knows where it is going. Images and sounds: a pulse, rhythmic fractals of sounds and movement, hutsunes: “The energy that moves is always positive” I hear Josu Goiri say to me from the corners of my memory. Energy: like running water. I then recall Simon Goikoetxea, who honoured me with one of his father’s old makilak (here beside me as I write, like pointing to some enigma I shall solve): he says “urguna,” the Goikoetxea’s herren player, the lame that can strike with a single stick, the “water course” that leads the continuous flowing tukutun, the Goikoetxea’s ttakun, through capricious meanders and stretches:

All rivers flow into the sea,
because the sea is at a lower level;
humility grants it its power.

Lao Tzu
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Appendix A

Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

18/98 Macro-summary. Legal proceedings launched by the Spanish judicial system in 1998, against several Basque grassroots cultural, social and political organisations, businesses, radios, newspapers (Egin, pronounced clear of charges in July 2001 for lack of evidence linking it with ETA, or Egunon Egunkaria, also pronounced clear of charges in April 2010), and so on. The proceedings, which have meant the banning and closure of several entities and media outlets, and the imprisonment of many of its members, have been reported by Basque and international legal associations (such as the US National Lawyers Guild) as violations of freedom of expression and right of association, and contrary to human rights. These proceedings have also been reported by different Basque lawyers and media for their lack of coherence and criminalisation of Basque society. According to these proceedings, which are based on police reinterpretations of several, often public, documents (Eskubideak and Behatokia 2008), organisations targeted belong to ETA. Large numbers of Basques from different walks of life, from politicians to artists to cooks, have been detained and/or called to pay statement to the National Spanish Court in Madrid during the last decade (see ehwatch.org), and large sums of money have had to be paid by those detained as “a prevention measure” to be freed on bail, heavily taxing them and the grassroots organisations set to support them.

Adar. Ox horn (“adarra,” the ox horn).

Abertzale. Lit. “Patriot,” may be translated as “nationalist.” It is often used to refer to the ezker abertzale (by elision of the first word, which literally means “left”).

AEK. Alfabetatze Euskalduntze Koordinakundea (Coordinating organisation for adult literacy in Euskara). Grassroots literacy organisation born out of popular engagement with the promotion and transmission of Basque language since the 1960s. For further

**Aita.** Father.

**Akelarre.** Seemingly pagan practices later associated to witches’ Sabbaths. A narrative that a few participants mentioned to me in relation to Txalaparta, relates this tradition with the akelarre celebrations that allegedly took place in the past in the Caves of Zugarramurdi (Nafarroa).

**Alboka.** Basque double-reed hornpipe.

**Ama.** Mother.

**“Arrano beltza.”** Literally “black eagle,” it is used to refer to the oldest of the flags of the Kingdom of Navarre (a black eagle on yellow background), on whose borders are based the reclaimed borders of Euskal Herria (The Basque Country). Euskal Herria is understood by Basque independentists as the continuation of the ancient Kingdom of Navarre.

**Askapena.** Internationalist solidarity organisation created in 1987 that operates within the so called Basque Movement for National Liberation. It fully endorses the goals of Basque independentism and socialism as upheld by the Independentist Left political formations, all banned to date at the time of writing. For further information see www.askapena.org.

**AuB.** Autodeterminaziorako Bilgunea (platform for self-determination). Independentist Left political formation created soon after Batasuna was banned in March 2003 for the coming municipal elections of May 2003. Most of the formation would be banned in May 2003.

**Auzolan.** Basque traditional institution by which neighbours would work together for the communal good. Today this term is used to refer to volunteer communal work for the community.

**Baserri.** Basque farmhouse (or the etxe, the Basque house). The term was used to refer not only to the living household, but also the dead, and included the house itself as much as cattle, orchards, and other associated property. For information on the imagery

**Berri.** New ("berria," the new…)

**Bertsolari.** Basque sung verse improviser.

**Bertsolaritza.** Also spelled "beretsularitza," it refers to Basque sung verse improvisation (traditionally in the medium of Basque language, *Euskara*). This tradition, linked to the popular work for the salvation and promotion of *Euskara*, is celebrated in crowded and televised tournaments and nowadays also transmitted in schools. For information on this tradition from an ethnomusicological perspective, see Laborde, D. (2005) *La Mémoire et l’instant. Les improvisations chantées du bertsulari basque*, Donostia: Elkar. For works in English see for instance: Armistead, S. G. and Zulaika, J., eds. (2005) *Voicing the Moment. Improvised Oral Poetry and Basque Tradition*, Reno: Center for Basque Studies, University of Nevada.

**Bikote.** Couple or duo. Used to refer to the pair of Txalaparta players who perform together.

**Castilian.** Refers to what is commonly known as “Spanish” language. The use of the term “Castilian” acknowledges the origins of the language in the political entity of the old Castilian Empire and is also used, instead of the term “Spanish,” within a consciousness that acknowledges the multilingual, multicultural (as well as multinational) nature of the Spanish State.

**Danburia.** See “*ttunttun*."

**Dultzaina.** Double reed wind instrument.

**EA.** Eusko Alkartasuna ("Basque solidarity"). Split of the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) with independentist aspirations. Of a social-democratic character, it has recently entered into coalition with other left wing independentist formations, including the Independentist Left.

**Ekitaldi.** Political rally (among other meanings), event implying action.

**Españolista.** Spanish nationalist.

**ETA.** *Euskadi ta Askatasuna* (Basque Country and Freedom), defines itself as a Basque revolutionary socialist organisation for national liberation. It was created in 1959 (some
accounts situate its birth in December 1958 (Egaña 1996)) as an armed organisation, though its activities were mainly cultural and educational, and symbolic until 1968 (date of the first deaths within ETA and also within the Spanish police, since its creation). It underwent a number of excisions during the 1960s and 1970s as the organisation refined its ideological orientation and strategy. The organisation recently declared a total cease of its armed activities in October 2011.

**Euskaldun.** Basque speaker. Term also used to refer to a Basque (implying that s/he who speaks Basque, is Basque).

**Euskal Herria.** The Basque Country in the acceptation that includes the northern provinces of Lapurdi, Nafarroa Behera and Zuberoa (currently part of the French State), and the southern provinces of Nafarroa, Gipuzkoa, Araba and Bizkaia (part of the Spanish State at the time of writing).

**Euskaltzale.** Literally “Basque language lover.” Term used to refer to people committed to the use and promotion of **Euskara**.

**Euskara.** Basque language, Pre-Indo-European and non-related to any other. The standardised unified form of **Euskara**, outcome of a process initiated in 1960, is known as “**Euskara Batua.**”

**Ezker abertzale.** See “Independentist Left.”

**Foruak.** Basque ancient laws which granted independence to the Basques, part of the legal and institutional apparatus of the ancient Kingdom of Navarre (Urzainqui 2002, 2003). These laws were abolished after the Carlist Wars, in 1841 partially, when the Spanish customs border was moved from the Ebro River, below Euskal Herria, to the Pyrenees, and fully in 1876. Iparralde lost the institutions and laws of the ancient kingdom in 1789 with the French Revolution.

**GAL.** Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación (Liberation Anti-terrorist Groups), were a Government sponsored illegal paramilitary force, deployed to attack and kill Basque citizens in both the Spanish and French States, thus establishing a continuation of the extreme right groups that had claimed different attacks against Basque targets during the so called “transition to democracy” period after Franco’s death. GAL’s activities took place mostly in the North of Euskal Herria (French State), where ETA activists used to take refuge, and were directed toward suspected members of ETA and political figures of Herri Batasuna among other. In total, GAL became responsible for 27 killings.
(Núñez 1997) and more than 20 assassination attempts, beatings and mutilations (Ó Broin 2003). GAL’s activities ended in March 1986 when the French Police started delivering Basque refugees to the latter with the newly elected French Right in power, at a time when the French media brought the links between GAL and the French and Spanish States into the public light. In 1995 the remains of two Basque refugees who had being kidnapped by GAL in 1983, Joxi Zabala and Joxean Lasa, where found with evident signs of torture, which brought state collusion into the public light and led to people in top government positions facing charges.

**Gaztetxe.** Lit. “youth house,” these are self-managed centres, established in derelict abandoned buildings which are refurbished by the youth. Different socio-cultural activities are undertaken by the participating youths with the involvement of the local community within a spirit of volunteering and reciprocity.

**Gora!** “Long live!” (“gora” as an adverb means “upward, above, up, upstairs” and also “loudly, strongly” or “high” (Aulestia 1992)).

**HB.** Herri Batasuna (union of the people). Basque political formation created in April 1978 as a coalition of Basque independentist and left wing political groups. Its first campaign would become a request for the “no” vote to the newly drafted Spanish Constitution, which was presented to referendum in December of that year without democratic debate or discussion of its contents (the constitution did not consider Basque historical claims nor recognise the Basque nation, and was rejected by 65% of the electorate in Hegoalde, continuing the lack of legitimation of the Spanish state in the Basque Country (De La Cueva 1988)). In the first elections at which Herri Batasuna participated, in March 1979, it became the third leading force in southern Basque politics, and a month later it became the second force after PNV at the municipal elections. A Spanish paramilitary campaign of attacks against its political representatives was immediately initiated and claimed under different names (Núñez 1997).

**Hegoalde.** Lit. “southern region.” Term used to refer to the South of Euskal Herria, comprising of Nafarroa, Gipuzkoa, Bizkaia and Araba.

**Herren/a.** Sonic/performatic role of one of the Txalaparta players in the old style of Txalaparta. The term is also used to refer to the beat characteristic of such player, consisting of a single stroke in a txalapartari’s turn.
**Herri.** People, country, nation, village or inhabited area in general.

**Herriko Taberna.** Literally “people’s tavern,” these are private pubs that organise different cultural and social activities, and are generally identified with the Basque Independentist Left in terms of ideological orientation. The Spanish police have been closing them down since 2006, under the premise that support for goals shared by ETA (independence and socialism) means membership in the armed organisation (see 18/98 macro-summary).

**Hutsune.** Literally “void” or “empty space.” In relation to Txalaparta, this term is used to refer to a beat consisting of the absence of a stroke.

**Independentist Left (Basque).** When this term appears in capitals, it refers to a certain political organisation (a coalition of political forces) and its social support base. It is also commonly referred as “ezker abertzale,” or by either of the names the different political forms have had (the composition of the coalition has varied across time): HB, which stands for Herri Batasuna (1978-1998); EH which stands for Euskal Herritarrok (September 1998 - banned in March 2003); Batasuna (June 2001 - banned in March 2003) and so on. In this dissertation I refer to the political formation with either of the names outlined above for simplification purposes, as participants did (the names that stuck with participants were “HB” and “Batasuna”). The boundary between the political coalition referred to as Independentist Left and its social base is often blurry given the popular and grassroots nature of the movement. Thus, its base provides a constant supply of candidates for renewed political lists after every banning of the coalition by the Spanish Government.

**Iparralde.** Lit. “northern region.” Term used to refer to the north of Euskal Herria, in the French State, comprising of Lapurdi, Nafarroa Beherea and Zuberoa.

**Irrintzi.** Basque yodelling yell uttered as an expression of happiness or defiance which imitates a horse neigh.

**Joaldunak.** Carnival masks from the Navarrese villages of Ituren and Zubieta which march from one to the other village, across the countryside, clanging big cowbells attached to their back, carrying a stick with a horsetail attached, in conjunction with long conic hats and other attire.

**Kirikoketa.** Sound making interlocking tradition found in the testimony of inhabitants from the Baztan valley in the 1970s when it was extinct, and also documented by Father
Donostia (Beltran 2004, 2009). Kirikoketa (also registered with other names) was performed by three people in an interlocking fashion, beating a plank positioned low over the ground in a perpendicular motion to the ground (chapter 2, fig. 2.3). It was accompanied by a chant stating that the apple had been pressed. A reconstruction of the traditional technique, rhythmic patterns and the instrument, accompanied with experimentation with these elements, has been included prominently in the repertoire of the young group Jo ala Jo, from Arizkun (Baztan, Nafarroa), who have been instrumental in the recovery and refurbishment of an old dolare (as the cider press and building are known in Nafarroa), which they have made fully operational. This group celebrates the pressing of the apple annually as part of a kirikoketa festival, in which the youth celebrates and summons the multigenerational community to which they are actively committed. The cider-making process is also pursued to its completion, in auzolan.

KKII. See Komite Internazionalistak.

Komite Internazionalistak (K.K.I.I.) Basque International solidarity non governmental organisation. The Komite Internazionalistak are somehow opposite (though boundaries are blurred) to the Independentist Left equivalent of Askapena (see Askapena). “KKII,” derived from former splits of ETA, which went on to create the political party “Zutik” in 1991, now dissolved (Zutik was initially conformed by EMK, a Maoist party, and LKI, a Trotskyist one, though the Trotskyists eventually left, as I was told by some participants). Zutik became opposed, as I understand, to the armed organisation and the political wing of the Independentist Left. I was informed by some participants that for the K.K.I.I., international solidarity comes before the national question, though it may not be so for all its members. K.K.I.I. members uphold different ideological positions within the left and different party alliances (including support of Spanish socialist parties by some of its members). The ideological linings of different social organizations are not always clear-cut.

Korrika. Lit. “run,” or “race.” All Basque Country rally race on support of Euskara which was celebrated for the first time in 1980. The rally is organised by AEK (see AEK) to raise funds for the promotion of Euskara (largely by means of popular sponsorship) and to raise consciousness on support of the language. For further information see www.korrika.org. For an anthropological study see Del Valle, T. (1994) Korrika: Basque Ritual for Ethnic Identity, Reno: University of Nevada Press.
**Lauko.** Beat similar to “takataka” as taught in the Txalaparta Eskola, in the Public School of Hernani (explained in chapter 4).

**Lur.** Earth. “Lurra,” The Earth.

**Makila.** Lit. “stick,” plural: “makilak.”

**MLNV.** Basque National Liberation Movement (Movimiento Vasco de Liberación Nacional, in Castilian). This label refers to several social, cultural and explicitly overtly political organisations and unions that share in the primary goals of Socialism and Independence. ETA is one of the organisations that are classified under this label, which has been used as an argument by the Spanish Judicial apparatus to inculpate all other organisations belonging to this loosely defined movement as part of ETA, and thus individuals who identify with the movement as ETA activists, regardless of whether they are or not. I learned during fieldwork that the boundaries between organisations seemingly part of it and who seemingly are not, are blurry, as was explained to me by participants, and ascription to the movement by individuals, in terms of the scope of personal activism, may be equally blurry and fluid.

**Mutil Dantza.** Lit. “boy’s dance.” Ancient circular dance from the Baztan valley, traditionally performed in the village square by men. Local txistulari Patxi Larralde has collected approximately 92 steps for this dance for which he has developed his own notation system. “It is a bore to watch, it is to be performed” he explained in relation to this dance which he also related with the performance of authority. It is also referred as “mutil dantzak,” in plural, for it encompasses several dances, or sections. The cultural group Jo ala Jo is actively engaged in the ongoing revival of this dance also incorporating women (the latter not without resistance by older generations –of women mostly, as I was told (fieldwork, summer 2006)).

**Pastoral.** Basque traditional form of popular theatre performed in Easter, outdoors, mostly sung, with dance as a central element, and performed with the participation of everyone belonging to the village that puts it together. The plays, stories told in versified dialogue, used to be about the life of figures such as saints and kings until 1953, when the poet Pierre Bordaçarre introduced themes relating to the Basque Country.
**PNV.** Partido Nacionalista Vasco, Basque Nationalist Party, founded in 1895 by Sabino Arana Goiri. This party belongs to the Christian Democratic International and the conservative block of the European Parliament.


**PSOE.** Partido Socialista Obrero Español (Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party). Spanish party, of a nationalist and social-democratic character.

**Saio.** Performance. Basque term traditionally used in relation to Bertsolaritza and also used by *txalapartariak* (i.e. the Sestao Tx group) to refer to a Txalaparta performance/piece.

**Takataka.** Sequence of equidistant strokes performed by two Txalaparta players (two consecutive strokes each). The group SestaoTx, however, explained to me that they use this term to refer to four consecutive strikes performed by a single player (group interview, June 2006).

**Tobera/Toberak.** Sound device, and tradition, consisting of at least one suspended iron bar percussed by two people in an interlocking fashion and accompanied of improvised verses (some verses have now been fixed). Also referred as “Txalaparta” by early collectors and considered a variant of Txalaparta by Juan Mari Beltran, this tradition is related to the work in the forges (among other work tasks). The *tobera*, or *toberak* (in plural), were used as mocking replacement of church bells to serenade couples the night before or after marriage (especially in those cases of socially questioned marriages). Barandiaran has recorded mentions to “lime weddings,” a kind of celebration related to lime making at the kilns, at which this tradition may have been performed. For further information on this tradition, see Beltran in bibliography.

**Tokata.** Txalaparta piece/performance in the colloquial language of *txalapartariak* of Iruña I have worked with.

**Trikitilar.** Trikitixa player.

**Trikitixa.** Small diatonic accordion.

**Txakun.** Spelled as “*txakun*” until recent decades. Sonic/performatic role of one of the Txalaparta players in the old style of Txalaparta and also the beat performed by such
player, consisting of two consecutive strokes (chapters 2 and 4). “Tiakuna” means “the itakun.”

**Ttuntun.** Type of struck zither found in Iparralde and commonly used (as a kind of pipe and tabour ensemble) in conjunction with the “xirula,” a small three holed flute.

**Ttuntturroak.** Ttuntturros if declined in Castilian. See “joaldunak.”

**Txalapartari.** Txalaparta player. “txalapartaria” means “the Txalaparta player” and “txalapartariak” is the plural form. The plural form appears as “txalapartaris” when mentioned in everyday speech in Castilian language.

**Txapela.** Name the black beret takes in Euskera, traditionally worn by males in the Basque Country.

**Txistu.** Basque traditional three holed flute that is played with the left hand while a snare drum is beaten with the left (“pipe and tabour”).

**Txistulari.** Txistu player.

**Txoznas.** Plural in Castilian of the Basque term “txozna.” These are stalls put up during the celebrations of the festival season (commercial kiosks, mobile drink bars, and so on). Some are private and others are put up by popular cultural, social and political non governmental organisations as a means to raise funds to finance their activities for the year.

**UPN.** Unión del Pueblo Navarro (Navarrese People’s Unity). Right wing Spanish nationalist party, close to the Spanish PP, which has acted as a branch of it for a number of years.

**Zahar.** Old (“zaharra,” the old...)

**Zanpantzar.** See “joaldunak.”

**Zortziko.** The zortziko, regarded for a long time as typically Basque, is a dance rhythm in a double compound metre which, Laborde explains, is the result of the combination of a duple metre \((2 + 3)/8\) and a triple one \((2 + 3 + 3)/8\), creating a complex asymmetric pattern (2000). Colin Quigley however does not support the use of “double” and “triple” in the technical description provided since, he argues, both are examples of an additive rhythm (personal communication, 2011). There has been much speculation as to the origin of the term: the most extended explanation is that provided by Iztueta, where it
gets the name (meaning “of eights”) from the eight steps of the dance of the same name, however Juan Antonio Urbeltz argues that there are many more dances consisting of eight steps which do not receive that name. Arantzadi, as Urbeltz explains, considers that it is the number of dancers involved what explains the term *zortziko*, yet the *zortziko* is also danced by twelve dancers. Urbeltz points out that “zortzi,” as found in the Azkue dictionary and from his personal experience, was used for soldier in *Euskara* (resembling the custom of referring to Spanish recruits as “quintos” in Castilian, meaning “fifths”), and that the *zortziko* is military music (personal communication, June 2006). I cannot help but wonder if these dances were developed within or in connection with the institutional framework and military culture of the former Kingdom of Navarre.
Appendix B

Manual Transcription of Txalaparta Zaharra

This transcription, presented in the next page, intends to show the structure revealed by the motives created through the interaction between the *ttakun* player (whose strokes are indicated with vertical lines in black) and *herren* player (vertical lines in red), in a piece of Txalaparta Zaharra (old style Txalaparta). Motives containing an odd number of strokes (*ttakun* and *herren* beats) are coloured in yellow and motives containing an even number (*ttakun* beats) are coloured in blue (the intersection between both appears in green). Absence of strokes in the *herren* player’s turn is not coloured, and seems to highlight/construct, through “what is not” (*hutsune*), “what is.”

The transcription is based on the model used by Juan Mari Beltran, though it shows all the strokes above the horizontal line (which here becomes a time line), to allow for the appreciation of the players’ interlocked interaction into a single line of sound. The piece progress is shown from left to right and top to bottom.

In order to do this transcription, I had a time counter inserted into the video excerpt of a performance by the old *txalapartariak* Ramon Goikoetxea (as *ttakun*) and Pello Zuaznabar (as *herren*) (fig. 2.25, chapter 2), which I then watched controlling the motion, frame by frame, in order to be able to grasp and to convey with as much accuracy as possible the moment of each stroke (the accuracy decreases as the tempo of the performance increases nonetheless). The time line in the transcription obeys to the make up of a video sequence: thus every second is divided in 25 units, since there were 25 frames (still pictures) per second.

TXAKUN = R = RIGHT HAND
HERREN = L = LEFT HAND

TXALAPARTA ZAHARRA, BY PELLO BUZNABAR AND RAMON GOIKOTEA, MAY 1989, TXALAPARTA FESTA), IN HERNANI, BASQUE COUNTRY (SPANISH STATE)

TRANSCRIPTION BY MARÍA ESCRIBANO 1999
Appendix C

Page 1 of the score of “Odolaren Boza” (“voice of blood”) for Txalaparta, composed by Kepa Junkera

Copy kindly facilitated by Kepa Junkera (chapter 4), May 2006
Appendix D

Notated copy used by the txalapartariak as a guide for their performance at the poetry reading of “Nire aitaren etxea” by Gabriel Aresti, 3 April 2003.

The copy has been notated in pencil by the txalapartariak in order to structure their improvised performance to suit the poetry reading. The notation used is explained in chapter 5.

Copy kindly facilitated by the txalapartariak.
besorik gabe,
sorbaldei gabe,
bularrik gabe
utziko naute,
etar arimarekin defendituko dut
nire aitaren etxea.
Ni hilien naiz,
nire arima galduko da,
nire aukia galduko da,
baina nire aitaren etxeak
iraunen du
zutik.

Fernando Uria (1976)
Angel Illarramendi (1978)
Bizar Aiapo (1994)