



THE AKELARRE OR SABBATH

This word comes from the adjoining meadow, which is called 'akelarrea', the 'meadow of the billy-goat' in Basque. Local legends locate here the celebration of the akelarres, the ritual festivities linked to the forces of nature that the Spanish Inquisition tried as devil worship. They believed that they were covens where the devil, appearing as a goat, was venerated.

A distorted view

Since that time, witches have been seen, on the one hand, as people with special powers and, on the other, as people who pact with the devil and, in addition to participating in akelarres, cast the evil eye and curses. This view tarnished the image and reputation of witches, and their widespread persecution in Europe had a particular impact on our village.

The Auto-da-fé at Logroño or the public trial of ‘the witches of Zugarramurdi’

Witchcraft in Zugarramurdi has gone down in history thanks to the Auto-da-fé of 1610. The inquisitor Alvarado, after discovering some 300 people associated with witchcraft in the village, sent the most suspicious of them, 31 in all, to Logroño. The accusations, which were invented, and the confessions, obtained through torture, were a blend of clichés about witchcraft, allegations proffered by

envious neighbours and the supposed provocation of natural phenomena such as storms and crop failures, not forgetting the possible existence of ancient rites which Christianity had failed to extirpate and were still performed.

On 7 November 1610, the accusations, confessions and sentences were read out in Logroño. The next day, the prisoners were handed over to justice and the sentences were carried out: eleven of the accused were burned at the stake, six alive and five in effigy.

Behind all this, we might suspect an attack against the village: Zugarramurdi was under the criminal jurisdiction of the Monastery of Urdax and remained so until 1667.

