

**COMPARATIVE AND CONTRASTIVE  
ETHNIC-LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF GEORGIAN  
BERIKAOBA-KEENOBA AND BASQUE SPRING HOLIDAY –  
FIESTA AGAINST THE BACKGROUND  
OF THE RELEVANT LAZ (KARTVELIAN) MATERIALS**

**ABSTRACT**

In general, the same traditional ritual may be established on its own in different nations. The Pyrenean (Iberian) peninsula is located in Western Europe, while Georgia is at the crossroad of Europe and Asia.

The article examines and analyzes one of the long-standing spring celebrations, Berikaoba-Keenoba, embraced in Georgia from ancient times. It is compared to Fiesta, which is one of the celebrations of the Basques living on the Pyrenean peninsula.

The study is based on the fieldwork materials recorded and obtained by us in Gipuzkoa, one of the provinces of Spain and the territory of the Basque Country, and in the village Ude, in Samtskhe-Javakheti, one of the regions of Georgia.

In terms of its form and content, the Berikaoba-Keenoba of Samtskhe-Javakheti partly resembles the Fiesta which is widespread in Spain. Berikaoba-Keenoba is related to fertility and the awakening of nature. In the course of one week, the Berikas and the Khans impersonate historical figures in a grotesque manner, wearing masques made of sheep skin or goat skin. The folklore materials obtained from the Turkish respondent of Georgian origin verifies the availability of a ritual resembling Berikaoba-Keenoba.

Similar celebration is embraced in the Basque Country. A couple of days before the festival, shepherds leave their places, slaughter goats and sheep, rarely wolves, and skin them making sheepskin garments and masks, play drums and wind musical instruments, and sing. The bertsolaris, troubadours play a similar role in the Basque Country.

It is interesting that the archaeologist Marcelino de Sautuola discovered a cave in the territory of the Basque Country, Spain in 1879. The cave was dated back to the pre-historic period. Wolf and sheep masks are featured on the ceiling of the cave.

It can be assumed that Proto-Basque people and Proto-Georgians had the Berikaoba-Keenoba festival in the pre-migration period. It is possible that following the expansion from the Pyrenees to the Caucasus, the very festival has developed independently in the Northern Spain (Basque Country) and the Caucasus (Georgia) which was further facilitated by Christianity.

Certain elements of festive rituals identified in Georgian and Pyrenean (Basque) celebrations require in-depth ethnolinguistic study.

**Keywords:** Ethnolinguistics, rituals, Basque holidays, Georgian holidays.