



THE BASQUE PEOPLE

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The Basque nation is a relatively small island in the surrounding sea of Indo-European peoples. Their language, *Euskara*, is an inflected language which linguists and historians attempted to bring into relationship with the Georgian and other Caucasian languages, or with the non-Arabic African languages. Finally, they had to come to the conclusion that the *Euskara* language and culture developed „in situ” in their present homeland at the dawn of history. Their ancient presence is supported by newer excavations which show the presence of humans with the same characteristics as the Basques in the early Neolithic. The antiquity of their language is supported by the archaic word structures, which take us back into the Stone Age. For example their word for axe is based on their word for stone (aizkora or haizkora = axe, aitz, or haitz = stone).

Before Roman times, the Basques occupied a larger territory than today. Their northern border was Aquitaine; the southern border was at the River Ebro. They have seven historic Basque provinces: Lapurdi, Zuberoa and Behenafarroa (in France), and Gipuzkoa, Bizcaia, Araba and Navarre (in Spain). There are 520,000 Basque-speaking people in the Basque provinces in Spain, that is 25% of their total population.

They were not allowed to write or speak in their own language up to the 16th century. During the years of their oppression, it was the peasant population – just as in Hungary – who preserved their language in its purity and, although they could not teach it in schools and develop a written literature until after Franco’s death, the language was not only preserved through oral traditions, but it was cultivated to a high degree. The preservers of the language were the „bertsolarismo” and the pastoral poems. Some of their words were preserved in the *Glosas Emilianenses* of the 10th century which also preserved the first Castilian ballad. The *Calistino Codex* of the 12th century preserved a few Basque expressions to benefit the pilgrims around Santiago de Compostela. The first Basque book, by Bernard Dechepare, was not printed until 1545, and it bore the title of *Linguae Vasconum Primitiae*. The earlier mentioned „bertsolaris” were short poems of eight-to ten lines composed to a given metric style, varying in content from light hearted to satirical, to exquisite lyric content.

Prince Louis Luciano Bonaparte's studies and efforts helped to establish the Linguistic Charter for the Basques in 1883. According to the Charter, they have seven main linguistic provinces (the eighth – Roncale -- is now thought to be extinct). In 1968 the Euskaltzaindia Basque Language Academy was established. The language of the Basque people is in revival, appearing as the first subject in schools. Adults, who had no chance to learn their native language, are now given an opportunity to learn the language of their ancestors.

The Internet refers people interested in the Basque language and literature to two interesting pocket books: "*Mitología e Ideología sobre la Lengua Vasca*", by A. Tovar, Alianza Editorial, n.= 771; and "*Historia Social de la Literatura Vasca*" by Ibon Sarasola, Akal 74, n.= 59. For a more detailed study on literature: "*Historia de la Literatura Vasca*", by Fr. L. Villasante, Ed. Aranzazu, 1979.

The history and the oppression of their culture and language are parallel to that of Hungary. The Magyar language was not allowed to be taught in schools until after the Hapsburg oppression. It was taught only outdoors in woods and other lonely places. Count István Széchenyi founded the Hungarian Academy of Sciences to cultivate the language but this Academy was used by the Hapsburg regime as a tool for oppression, the destruction of our culture; a technique which seems to be effective even today. Count Széchenyi lost his life in this struggle as did all the cultivators of the Magyar language.

The preservers of the *Euskara* language were the Basque peasants. The same situation took place in Hungary too. The literature of both countries bloomed with the help of poetry.

Both the Basque and the Magyar people preserve the memory of an ancient, peaceful, agricultural indigenous population; both have a non Indo-European tongue, a love of God and country and a zest for life and liberty.

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Basque Country Anthem - Eusko Abendaren Ereserkia

Gora ta Gora Euskadi
aintza ta aintza
bere goiko Jaun Onari.

Areitz bat Bizkaian da
Zar, sendo, zindo
bera ta bere lagia lakua

Areitz gainean dogu
gurutza deuna
beti geure goi buru

Abestu gora Euskadi
aintza ta aintza
bere goiko Jaun Onari

English

Taken from <http://lyricstranslate.com/en/basque-country-anthem-eusko-abendaren-ereserkia-anthem-basque-ethnicity.html#ixzz33cpOIGCM>

Anthem of the Basque Ethnicity

**Up and up Basque Country
glory and glory
to its Good Lord from above.**

**There is an oak tree in Biscay
old, strong, healthy
it as its law**

**On the tree we find
the holy cross
always on our top**

**Sing "Up Basque Country"
glory and glory
to its Good Lord from above**

