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There are civilizations which are so famous for their history, culture, traditions that they are the field of many research studies. At the same time, other civilizations are ignored by the whole world and their history, culture and traditions are not investigated. Media are partly responsible for that: they broadcast what they want, what they think can be easily sold, the rest does not count. This is the case of the Basque Country, which is unfortunately apparently quite unknown by most of people. Those who know something about it generally know something about ETA, the terrorist organization created during Francisco Franco’s dictatorship and well known all over the world for its terrorist attacks and violence. As it is clear from nowadays media coverage of Islamic issues, media voluntarily focus on only one issue, the easiest to diffuse, ignoring all the rest. In theory, this is a logical process: media transmit what people want to know. However, this provokes a mechanism whereby individuals believe this issue is the only element that can be referred to this or that country.

For several centuries, Basque people have fought for their independence, always denied by the Spanish and the French governments and it is for this reason that the ETA started their fight by showing their will through manifestations and terrorist attacks. Even though violence is the cruelest form to spread one’s ideas, it was the most effective one. According to the armed organization, *Euskal Herria* (“the Basque country”) had to be independent and the ETA would have done everything to meet this goal.

In addition to the problem of the independence and the armed fight of ETA, the Basque country has a long history, a wide culture, and so many traditions that make them so different from Spain and France. The history of the Basque population is very ancient. According to some studies, the Basque ancestors go back to the Palaeolithic period. Since then, Basque inhabitants did not move to other places. The *euskaldunak*, meaning “those who speak Basque”, have been faithful to their land, strategically situated at the crossroads between France and Spain, on the Pyrenees. Mountains can be seen as a form of division, but for the Basque it symbolises union: the union of two territories – the French Basque country

and the Spanish Basque country – populated by the same people, Basques. Because of this, they have different legal rights: administratively the first are French and the second are Spanish; they do not enjoy the same political and civil rights; and they are exposed to different stream cultures.

As the expression *Euskaldunak* makes it clear, Basques have their own language, *euskara*, which is spoken in the three provinces of the Spanish territory (Guipúzcoa, Alava and Vizcaya, and Navarre) and in the three provinces of the French territory (Soule, Labourd and Lower Navarre). Most of the Basque identity is based on Euskara. That is why the noun of the inhabitants makes reference to the language and not to the land. These people venerate their language for its antiquity (it is the oldest language of Western Europe) and its uniqueness (it is considered as a language which does not have any “genetic” links with other European languages. Moreover, Euskara is covered by mystery. Nobody knows the origin of such a language which has been spoken for centuries in a small area of the Pyrenees, and even though it is considered as an isolated language, linguists do not give up and try to uncover the origins or, at least, possible relationships with other languages.

All these elements contributing to the creation of the Basque identity are analyzed in detail in this thesis. After a general introduction, the work is divided into three chapters: the first one focuses on geographical, historical and political aspects of the Basque country, thus giving an idea of what Euskal Herria was and how it has changed so far; the second one is focused on linguistic aspects: a detailed analysis of *Euskara*. Some analogies with other languages have been analyzed thus showing the commitment of linguists in trying and uncovering such a mystery; the last one focuses on Basque nationalism, its origins with *Sabino Arana y Goiri* and the creation of the ETA in the mid-1950s until the 2011 ceasefire, leaving the country in a precarious balance between the armed organization and the Spanish government.

It has been possible to rebuild the history of the Basque country and its people through specifically Basque websites, written and directed by *euskaldunak* (with French and Spanish translations), interviews on Youtube to Spanish, French and Basque speaking people during the most crucial moments of ETA’s fight, and some valuable books and articles on Basque studies.

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