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## MUSEO DEL GRANO

#### THE IMPORTANCE THAT CEREALS HAVE HAD IN THE LIFE OF FUERTEVENTURA IN THE PAST, HAS SPURRED THE ISLAND GOVERNMENT TO CREATE **THE GRAIN MUSEUM.**

Here the culture engendered around the obtaining of grains is recreated by means of the visualization of agricultural implements and the explication of agricultural work.

In the inside of this building a collection of objects, texts and photographs are shown.

Thus, the language of the objects, the visual language and the verbal language are joined together to transmit the traditional way of life of the inhabitants of Fuerteventura.

The situation of The Grain Museum in the cilla (see following sentence) is based on the historical function as

an agricultural storehouse played by this building. Cillas were built to deposit the harvests of the Church, both those obtained from the livestock and lands of its property, and those that corresponded to it in concept of tithes. On the island of Fuerteventura cillas existed in Betancuria, Tiscamanita, Tetir, Tindaya and La Oliva. The La Oliva Cilla was constructed at the beginning of the XIX century, following the style of the traditional Fuerteventura architecture, both in the typology and the materials used in the construction. This building has been restored with the purpose of

fitting it out as a GRAIN MUSEUM.



### THE TRADITIONAL AGRICULTURE OF FUERTEVENTURA

AGRICULTURE was the most important economic activity developed on the island from the European conquest until the middle of the past century.

The food of the population, the social organisation and the economic relations of the island with the outside world were based on it.

The cultivation of the land carried with it the distribution of the land and the settling of the population in the most fertile valleys and plains, and started off a process of development and of the adaptation of the natural environment, orientated towards the preparation of the land for cultivation, and the optimum use of the water resources.

The natural conditions of the island, marked by the lack of water, the bad quality of the existing water and the lack of productive land, determined the implantation of extensive dry farming.

The main products cultivated were wheat, barley, rye, pulses, com and some fruit trees.

In rainy years abundant harvests were obtained and permitted the export of a great quantity of grain, whilst in the dry years the countryside became a source of poverty.

The importance attained by cereal-based agriculture for

centuries, determined that the daily life of the majority of the population was linked to activities related to the obtaining of the grain.

The harnessing of rainwater, the preparation of the earth for the crops, the sowing, the harvest, the threshing, the storage and the marketing of the harvests were the daily tasks of men and women.

The need to predict rainfall introduced into traditional wisdom a collection of popular predictions called aberruntos (popular sayings that are short-term weather forecasts) and cabañuelas (weather forecasts):

«WHEN CHOCOLATES (A TYPE OF INSECT) COME OUT ON WET EARTH, THEY FORECAST RAIN» (POPULAR ABERRUNTO)

«HOT EARTH FORECASTS DROUGHT» (POPULAR ABEN-UNTO)

«IF IT RAINS ON ST. ANDREW'S DAY, IT'S A GOOD SIGN» (POPULAR ABERRUNTO)



#### THE PREPARATION OF THE LAND FOR **CULTIVATION AND «MAKING USE** OF THE WATER

The lack of water made man turn to systems of preparation of the land for cultivation that demanded great effort to get them ready.

THE GAVIAS are flat terraces, or with a slight slope, bordered by stone walls or earth ridges [teste or trastón], that have an entrance for the water [torna], and an outlet [tronera] reinforced by stones or rubblework. The function of the outlet is to stop the gavia from breaking and to permit the excess water-to pass on to the next one, or to the ravine.

Gavias permit the use of land apt for cultivation and, at the same time, allow one to take maximum advantage of the water resources. The water reaches them through natural or partly man-made alcogidas (runnels on the sides of ravines, etc., where the rainwater runs down), or by means of dikes and caños (a shallow man-made ditch or runnel to carry rainwater to the crops), that direct the flow of the water from the ravines. When the gavia has received sufficient water it is said that «it has drunk». The group of gavias is called a rosa or rosita (rose or small rose).

THE NATEROS are crop spaces made in ravines, by means of the construction of stone walls perpendicular to the flow, that intercept the water full of mud and organic material which comes from the ravine and from the walls of the same. The nateros acquire the aspect of a thick layer of earthcoloured cream, from whence its name derives (from nata, meaning cream). The natero has a stone wall or earth ridge, and an outlet.

THE CADENAS are crop areas situated on the sides of mountains, formed by small stone walls, in the form of terraces, and where the land is quite steep. The walls impede the erosion of the soil and help the infiltration of the rainwater.

THE ENARENADOS OR ARENADOS are obtained by means of covering the soil with a layer of picón (coarse grained volcanic ash), with the purpose of conserving the humidity of the earth and avoiding the loss of water by evaporation. All productive land on the island was cultivated, including any slope or ridge or small piece of tableland that only needed to be cleared of stones.

#### **REGULATION OF THE USE OFOVERLAND FLOW WATER**

«The immemorial custom in Fuerteventura is to make common and impossible of appropriation the overland flow water, that will be used through the natural sources and wherever they flow without impediment» (Right based on custom ratified in a Sentence in 1567 by Agustin de Herrera y Rojas)

Each agriculturist had the right to construct his caño, or to prepare it together with others, to get the rainwater to their respective lands, that were filled by strict turns in function of their proximity to the main ditch. They could have all the time necessary for the use of the water. To avoid appropriation on the part of privileged persons, the custom of buying land with its acogidas (the same as alcogidas - see above) was adopted.



### PLOUGHED SOWING

Traditionally, sowing has been done on gavias, nateros, cadenas, tableros (small pieces of table-land) and lomos (slopes or ridges).

Sowing can be done as part of dry farming (before the rains start) and in season (after the rains).

DRY SOWING starts in the month of September, and can continue until November, if it has not rained.

#### «IN SEPTEMBER, WHOEVER HAS GOT BREAD, LET HIM SOW»

(POPULAR SAYING)

The land to be sowed is divided into furrows so that the seed is distributed evenly.

The countryman places the seeds in the seed box or sack and scatters them by hand at random, broadcast, on the dry earth.

The sowed "earth is turned over with the plough so that the seeds are covered up, waiting for the water that will make them sprout.

SOWINGIN SEASON is done between the months of October and January, when the rain water has already watered the fields, and the soil is in season (neither very soft nor very dry).

**«IF IT RAINS WITH THE OCTOBER** MOON, THEN IT WILL RAIN DURING THE FOLLOWING MOONS» (OCTOBER CABAÑUELA) **«THE OCTOBER MOON COVERS** 

SEVEN MOONS»

(POPULAR SAYING)

#### IN THE PLOUGHINGOF THE LAND ARE INVOLVED:

- -The countryman: he guides the plough and equips and guides the animals.
- -The draught animals: donkeys, cows, oxen and camels, either individually or yoked together.
- -The implements: the plough, which is joined to the cango, canga, yoke or cangoyugo; the zálamo; the vara with reja and aguijón; and the sorinque.

THE CANGO is used to plough with only one donkey or Camel.

THE CANGA, to plough with two donkeys or two camels or a donkey and a camel yoked together.

THE YOKE, to plough with teams of cows or oxen. An individual yoke is also used when ploughing is done with only one cow or ox.

THE CANGOYUGO is used to plough with teams formed by donkey and ox or cow, or camel with ox or cow, yoked together.

THE ZÁLÁMO is placed on the month of the animals so that they do not eat while they plough.

THE VARA (pole) has a reja (arrow shaped piece of iron) at one end to clean the plough and an aguijón (spike) at the other end to spur on the animals.

THE SORINQUE is the whip that the ploughman uses to hit the animals with so that they move faster.



## THE HARVEST

THE HARVEST USUALLY TOOK PLACE BETWEEN THE MONTHS OF MARCH AND JUNE, DEPENDING ON WHEN THE RAINS CAME AND WHEN PLANTING TOOK PLACE.

The saying «In March the old lady grinds with the pestle» referred to the month from when the first harvest was available.

The barley and the lentils were the first to be collected, followed by the rest of the pulses and the wheat. The barley needed to be collected serosa (not very dry); and the wheat, very dry so that, on threshing it, the grain came away from the casulla or chaff that enfolded it. In Fuerteventura the cereals and pulses were picked and occasionally were cut, if frequent rainfall compacted the earth.

The picking was done with the blandura, that is to say, when there was atmospheric humidity or low mist, preferably at dawn or dusk; if not, the pods and ears lost their grains, and both grain and chaff were lost. As they were picked, they were formed into sheaves that were grouped together in gavillas (bundles or large sheaves): altogether this made up the montón (heap or pile).

### THE HARVESTING WAS USUALLY DONE BY:

—The family.

—The pionada: a team of people, made up of relatives and neighbours of the smallholder, that picked, without charge, the harvest of the smallholder who organised the pionada: or pickers, who came from different parts of the island or from outside, contracted only for that harvest, to do the work in exchange for payment in money or grain.

The hard, long picking was made pleasant with songs, preferably ballads, and with lullabies, that were sung to stimulate the harvest, raising the morale and the output in general.

The owner of the harvested land took charge of the food and drink; and mojo (a spicy sauce, typical in The Canaries), gofio (toasted, coarsely ground maize or wheat, usually mixed either with milk and sugar, or fish stock), figs, salted fish and wine were in abundance.



### THE HARVEST

#### Juan Periñal

My Juan Periñal has got a sandy piece of land and grains of Wheat he showed me how to sow and this is how he sowed my Juan Periñal and this is how he ploughed my Juan Periñal and he picked my Juan Periñal and this is how he threshed my Juan Periñal and this is how he sieved my Juan Periñal and this is how he ground it my Juan Periñal and this is how he kneaded it my Juan Periñal and this is how he ate it my Juan Periñal and this is how he shitted it my Juan Periñal

\* Traduzione libera della poesia



## THE «SACA»

THE SACA CONSISTED IN MOVING THE RIPE CEREALS AND PULSES FROM THE FIELD TO THE THRESHING FLOOR.

The pulses had to be moved early in the morning, as they could not be broncas (parched by the sun), because they lost their grains and the chaff or straw disintegrated.

#### THE WHEAT AND THE BARLEY COULD BE MOVED AT ANY TIME OF THE DAY. IN THE SACA PARTICIPATED:

The countrymen and women: they loaded and guided the animal and made sure that the cereals and pulses did not fall off.

- —The transporting animals: the camel as the main animal because of its resistance, and the donkey, less strong and with less load capacity.
- -The implements: the silla de saca, angarilla and barcina, for the camel; the saddle, serón and the baskets for the donkey.

The camel was loaded kneeling down; it was then taken to the threshing floor where the contents of the angarilla and the barcina were unloaded. Undoing the alcordonaderas emptied the latter.

**THE SILLA DE SACA:** was placed on the back of the camel and its function consisted in supporting the angarilla.

**THE ANGARILLA:** a rectangular frame formed by four poles from which hung the barcinas.

**THE BARCINA:** a net of wide mesh that was used to transport the Cereals, the pulses, the chaff, the straw etc. **THE SADDLE:** was placed on the back of the donkey, the harvest being tied to it.

**THE SERÓN:** a useful implement of palm leaves in the form of a saddlebag that was used to transport loads on the donkey.

**THE BASKETS:** recipients of vegetable fibre used for loads.

**ALCORDONADERAS:** rope that closed the barcinas underneath.

**VASO:** the basket that was placed on the camel to carry the load.

**COLMO DEL VASO:** the part of the vaso that was placed on the angarilla.

VASO DE PALOS ABAJO: the load in the barcinas.



## THE THRESHING FLOOR

#### THE THRESHING FLOOR IS A PIECE OF LAND, CLEAN AND FIRM, SOMETIMES COBBLED, WHERE THE **CEREALS AND PULSES ARE** THRASHED.

It can take different shapes, although it is predominantly circular. It is situated in a flat place, and without obstacles that impede the passing wind, that is necessary to winnow the grain.

On the threshing floor the following tasks are carried out: the threshing, winnowing, derrabar (see below), the separating of the straw and chaff from the grain, the sieving and ajechar (see below).

THE THRESHING is carried out between the months of March and August, depending on when it rains and when sowing and planting are done.

When the rains and the sowing are early, threshing starts from the end of March.

When they are late, it starts in May or June. Before starting the threshing, the cereals or pulses are placed on the threshing floor, forming a circle. The threshing is carried out with two animals yoked

together, that are muzzled with zálamos, and that revolve around'the circle guided by a person.

For wheat, the thresher is also used.

Usually, first the barley and the lentils are threshed; and

then the chickpeas, beans and two different varieties of peas (chícharos and arvejas) and lastly the wheat. Barley and lentils are threshed with blandura, due to the fragility of their ears and pods.

Wheat and the rest of the pulses are threshed broncos and when it is very hot, due to the greater hardness of their pods and ears.

After the threshing, the cereals and pulses are placed in the form of a saw and are WINNOWED with the pitchfork, winnowing fork and the wooden spade, separating the chaff and straw from the grain. The barley, after it is winnowed, se derraba, i.e. it is threshed once again to eliminate the chaff, husks and the straw. The wheat grain is separated from the chaff and straw and then winnowed a second time to further separate the chaff and the small pieces of straw from the grain.

THE **SIEVING** is the last task carried out on the threshing floor. Wheat and barley are sieved with the zaranda (sieve), whose bottom with small holes lets the grain through but not the chaff and straw. Chickpeas, beans, and two different varieties of peas (chicharros and arvejas) are sieved with cylinders with large holes that let through the waste and conserve the grain. For lentils, a cylinder with smaller holes is used.

After the sieving, the grain is then AJECHAR i.e. sieved in cylinders with very fine holes, carrying out precise movements that separate the grain from the waste. The clean grain is deposited on matting or sacks, previously placed on the threshing floor, and then later it is stored.



### THE STORAGE **OF THE HARVEST**

#### THE GRAIN AND THE STRAW HARVESTED WERE STORED IN DIFFERENT PLACES FOR THEIR CONSERVATION.

TARO: a construction preferably circular or quadrangular in form, made of stone, mud and lime, used for different purposes: to cure cheese, to store agricultural implements and to store the grain.

They can have one or two floors. The upper floor was used to store the grain and the lower as a storehouse for the agricultural implements. The taros can be joined onto or near the countryman's house.

The agriculturists that did not have a taro or pajeros used a room in the house for the storage of the grain, which was placed in large baskets, barrels or sacks.

PAJERO: a conical construction made of straw, to store grain, straw and cheese and other agricultural products. Its dimensions depended on the quantity of the product

to be stored and the straw available for its construction. For its construction a stone base was made, that functioned as an insulator between the straw and the rainwater that ran along the floor. On this support were raised ruedos (rows of well pressed straw bundles) in circular form that were filled with straw to secure the pajero.

Once it was finished, if one wished to store something else, the straw was taken out and it was closed with torta (see panel 8).

The straw used in its construction had to be soft, so that it did not break; usually it was from barley.

CILLA: a building used to store agricultural products that the Church obtained from its land and those received in concept of tithes.

**PÓSITO:** a grain and money fund, created by means of popular donations to confront the years of scarcity, which played an important part in the economy of Fuerteventura.

Pósitos existed in Betancuria, Tetir, Pájara and La Oliva. The oldest one was in Betancuria, created at the end of the XVI century.



### THE DISTRIBUTION **OF THE HARVEST**

The distribution of the harvest was effected in terms of the volume of the same.

When it was scarce, it was used wholly for consumption by the family; if it was abundant, the excess was sold, on the island and to the outside world.

The commercial transactions entailed the fitting out of various ports and anchorages in the coves of the island. The marketing of the harvest implied the existence of a system of weights and measures.

The instruments used in Fuerteventura to measure dry commodities were wooden boxes of different shapes and sizes.

Those most used were the, media fanega, the cuartilla, the medio almud and the cuartillo.

These instruments were used as measures of capacity and of weight that varied according to the grain that was being measured.

#### THE APPROXIMATE EQUIVALENTS WERE:

- 1 fanega of wheat ......50 kg.
- I fanega of barley .....varies between 36 and 42 kg.
- 1 fanega of lentils ..... varies between 65 and 72 kg.
- 1 fanega of chickpeas, peas, beans and maize .. varies between 63 and 65 kg.

The way they were measured depended on the grain: wheat, barley and rye were measured raidos.

For this, the measure was filled and then levelled off, so that the contents were level with the top edge. Lentils, chickpeas, peas, beans and maize were measured heaped up, forming a pile that jutted out above the level of the top edge.

#### THE TRADITIONAL ACCOUNTING SYSTEM WAS:

<ul> <li>Media fanega</li> </ul>	I/2 of a fanega
• Cuartilla	I/4 of a fanega
• Almud	1/12 of a fanega
Medio almud	1/24 of a fanega
• Cuartillo	1/48 of a fanega
• Cuartica	1/96 of a fanega

The part of the harvest destined for consumption by the family remained in the storehouses of the countryman's house.

The products that were made use of from the harvest were the straw in pieces or whole, the chaff and the grain.

THE **STRAW** had multiple uses:

- -That from wheat and barley was used as animal food, for the construction of pajeros and for filling mattresses and pillows.
- -That from wheat was also used for the making of baskets and hats.
- -That from pulses was used as animal food.

THE GRANZÓN (small, broken pieces of straw) was mixed with mud and used in the making of the torta, with which walls were plastered and roofs covered. THE GRAIN constituted the basis of the diet of the population.





