



The O Cebreiro Ethnographical complex

The *O Cebreiro Ethnographical Complex* is situated in the village of O Cebreiro, and is the entry to Galicia of the French Way to Santiago de Compostela. It was declared a historical and artistic complex in 1962 because of its heritage value, an integral part of the pilgrimage route.

The four *pallozas* which make up the Ethnographical Complex were acquired by the National Office of Art and Culture in the 1960s, thanks to the efforts of Manuel Chamoso Lamas who was also the person who brought about the creation of the Ethnological Museum of the Mountain, opened in 1971. Various administrative problems meant that the running of the Museum fell into the good hands of the parish priest Elías Valiña, a key figure in the revitalization of the Camino de Santiago, who managed to keep the *palloza* “of Xan López” open as a “museum” as well as the other three which were used for activities related to pilgrimage.

In 2004 the Department of Culture and Sport of the Government of Galicia, now in charge of running the site, began the restoration of the four *pallozas* which are in public hands and which today make up the Ethnographical Complex: they are the pallozas of “Xan López,” “Quico” and “Galán” which have been converted into museums and “Campelo” which is used for other purposes of the museum complexes.

Conxunto Etnográfico do Cebreiro.

C.P. 27671, O Cebreiro.

Pedrafita do Cebreiro, Lugo.

(+34) 982 82 87 30

museo.viladonga@xunta.gal

Opening times: Tuesday to Saturday

Summer (June 15 - September 15)

From 8:30am to 14:30pm

Winter (September 16 - June 14)

From 11:00am to 18:00pm

Sundays, Mondays and holidays closed.



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The palloza: a dwelling adapted to the environment

The *pallozas*, characteristic dwellings of the Ancares are also to be found in other mountainous areas of the north-west peninsula of Spain. Their unique configuration is related to their ideal adaptation to the habitat and to the economic model proper to the mountain.

The correct organization of their elements of construction guarantees good insulation from the exterior by using a corner-less ground plan, thick walls with hardly any openings and a roof covering made of *colmo* thatch of rye straw. The building set on a wooden framework cured by smoke is able to stand the weight of snowfalls. The way it faces, the position of the *lareira* or hearth and the stabling of the animals inside allow the maintaining of a stable temperature within the building. All of these factors come together to make an architectural effectiveness which explains the survival of the *palloza* in spite of the presence of other types of building.

Inside we can distinguish two main parts: the *ástrago*, a space where the people live, and the *estravariza* or animal stable. In the *ástrago* is to be found the *lareira* where they lit the fire. The *lareira* was the place where the family got together, ate, and carried out various tasks: preparing food, weaving linen and wool, repairing clogs and tools... Above it were placed the *canizo* and the *sarillos* in which they kept foodstuffs such as chestnuts, cheeses or meat from the animals they had killed, so that they would be smoked and also protected from rodents. Near the *lareira* are to be found the storage furniture and vessels: cupboards, boxes and chests. There may also be an oven and small pens for young or small animals, which needed more warmth. In the *ástrago* there was also the bedroom, a room built from wooden planks and which formed a private area for the oldest married couple living in the house.

In the *estravariza*, as well as the stables for the animals they kept the cart and various farming tools. Sometimes there was an intermediate wooden floor called *la barra* where they kept hay and the harvest. It was also used for sleeping as it benefited from the heat generated by the animals in the stable below.



The productive model found in the mountains

The *palloza* was also the centre point from which the various productive activities were organized, using a traditional model of extensive animal farming, agriculture and exploitation of the surrounding countryside. The latter gradually became transformed through the work of peasants into pasture for cattle and fields for growing crops. This crop production, heavily conditioned by the poorness of the soil and the harshness of the climate was based on cereal production along with other crops such as potatoes and beans. Rye or “bread” was the cereal of the mountains par excellence as it was the best adapted for the terrain and climate. The grain produced made up an important part of the staple diet, while the straw was used in the stables and as a raw material for the *teitos* or roofs of the *pallozas*.

On land situated near the valleys they sowed linen which allowed them to make cloth. Near the house itself they had a vegetable garden. They harvested fruit from the trees such as apples and specially chestnuts. Chestnuts explain the importance of the *soutos* or chestnut forests to be found in the countryside in the mountains.

We are dealing here with a subsistence economy in which the family produced what it needed with as little dependence as possible on the outside.



R.A.G. Belas Artes, Arq. "Manuel Chamoso Lamas", sg. F1180008

The Ancares family

The nucleus of Ancares society was the extended family, made up of several generations and headed by the oldest married couple, owners of the property. In this family organization the usual thing was for the first-born male to inherit the house and the estate to thus avoid, with this *mellora* or improvement, the division or breaking up of the property and goods and thus ensuring its continuity, although this made the situation of the rest of the brothers and sisters more difficult; they remained the responsibility of the first-born son and were able to obtain some form of income working as agricultural labourers, learning a trade or even emigrating to other parts.

In the Ancares mountain region the harsh living conditions were a determining factor in the character of the peasants. Visitors who came to Galicia crossing this mountain pass received an image of austerity and harshness.