

Myths, legends and beliefs on granite caves

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Abstract

In the North of Portugal and Galiza (Spain) there exists a very varied and lively immaterial culture formed by social and cultural manifestations and beliefs. Recently, the same UNESCO renounced to include it in the List of Goods of the Humanity Culture for its volume, variety and not being in risk.

The Galician caves have this cultural inheritance as proved by a old and numerous bibliography that collected the names, rites and/or stories associated to the caves. Today, it is even possible to check that this inheritance memory is still alive. This culture places mythological animals, goods which passed from Pre-Christianity to Christianity in different forms, supernatural races, magic beings, unreal passages, extraordinary treasures, etc., in the natural caves. This paper presents different legends related to caves located in the Galician mountains of O Pindo, O Pico Sacro, O Maúxo, O Galiñeiro and the Portuguese mountain of Castelo da Furna. They are a reduced selection of a more complex and wide cultural reality of the mythological complex of the Galician and Portuguese culture. Also, there are many other caves that are not included because though we have folklore references, they need to be investigated more deep.

Key words: immaterial culture, folklore, mythology, legends

INTRODUCTION

In this communication we are going to centre on the cultural references, written and oral, of the different granite caves that we visited during The First International Conference on Granite Caves.

The anthropospeleology, or the knowledge of the immaterial culture preserved about them, is very important due to the scientific vision we may have about them nowadays. We can add the cultural vision of the society that used it related to cultural references as well as daily uses and functions and linked to shepherding, masonry, afforestation, etc. In fact, the richness of the immaterial culture of this region is so assorted that it was proposed to UNESCO to be included as Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2006.

The documentation of legends is based on the bibliography developed from the traditional Galician historiography, since the VI century (López Pereira, X. Eduardo, 1996) and in the oral tradition for the peasant society of Galicia and North of Portugal.

The discussion about concepts such as popular culture, mythology and imaginary is very extensive and complex, but we can approach it naming two lines of discussion, the most outstanding:

- One of them maintains that they are survivals from past times. This line is developed from the traditional Galician historiography, which identifies traces or signs of old beliefs and rites from Castro Culture in these stories. Nowadays, authors, such as González Reboredo, say there are parallelisms between these stories and the old beliefs, and some of them may even go back to Neolithic (Aparicio Casado, Buenaventura, 2004).
- The other one, a group of authors who define the cultural references to the caves, among other landmarks which stand out in the landscape, as popular imaginary (Llinares García, Mar, 1990)

and not as mythology, because they consider that Galician popular culture does not reach the formulation of a theogony or cosmogony as it happened in the Antique Greece.

For Clube de Espeleoloxía Maúxo, more than an exciting discussion and critical study of bibliography, contrasting opinions and realizing the evolution of the explanation about “the popular imaginary” throughout historiography, it is of vital importance to pick up micro-toponymy, sayings, customs, uses and functions that granite caves had and have for all the neighbours in the place, being conscious as we are and as Mar Llinares says that the concept of mythology itself cannot be applied in a strict sense to a culture, like the popular Galician culture, because it is breaking down.

With the aim of easily understanding the legends related to the caves visited during the Conference, we are going to explain some of the common characters and events that all of them share as the “enchantments”, “os mouros” and “a moura”.

The Enchantments:

An enchantment, in the Galician popular imaginary, is a mysterious being, material and active, despite his/her supernatural attributes (Rodríguez González, Eladio, 2001). There are a number of enchantments, such as “mouros” and “moura”, and all of them appear related to the custody of fantastic treasures that are supposed to be hidden in caves, demolished monasteries and other singular monuments.

“The legends about them are widespread all over Galicia. There are no remains of feudal castles, monasteries nor other buildings, grottos or caves, castros, burial mounds, dolmens and other prehistoric monuments, which have not got its own legend. The same happens with the pools of lakes and rivers, and the still waters of lakes and lagoons. Whether a very

beautiful lady who, combing her hair with a gold comb, appears where hidden treasures are kept safe –and beware those who dare to look at her or talk to her and cannot disenchant her– or a hen, partridge or other bird which with their breeding suddenly appear in a very dense forest or woodland, and to whom the inattentive person who meets them chases in vain, and the more it seems he can seize them, the more they run away or vanish to appear again, making the unwary person to chase them in vain for long hours and who moans too late about not remembering that he was before an enchantment which he would have been able to disenchant just throwing a cloth or his handkerchief, cap or hat, not having at hand some water, and saying: Give me your wealth: have my poverty” (Carre Aldao, Eugenio, ca. 1925).

We have the first bibliographic reference for buried treasures in Calixtus Codex: Galicia “is rich in gold and silver, and in fabrics and wild furs, and in other riches, and above all in Saracen treasures” (Llinares, Mar, 1990). Generally, treasures appear as assets left behind by “os mouros” when they went away. According to Mar Llinares, this means that there is a mixture between the mythical “mouros” and the stories of the historical Moslem invasion, usually influenced by Saint James the Apostle.

Os Mouros:

Mythical people with singular features and behaviour. They live in deserted places –old ruins that are said to be built by them– and in uninhabitable worlds –under the water, under the ground, inside the rocks–. This is “Mourindade”. They are also known as Enchantments, Gentlemen and Gentile, and even French, Vikings, Celts.

They are said to have supernatural powers. They are not visible unless they want to. They control magic, are pagans, sleep during the day and can even eat people. They are skilled in building tunnels and underground palaces. They have a lot of gold; even their oxen and

carts are golden. They themselves are enchanted treasures. On the contrary, their daily domestic activities such as cattle, farming and games, music and dancing are the same as those in Galician peasant society. Nevertheless, from the cultural anthropology viewpoint, “os Mouros” have been considered as the inverse image of peasants; as the paradigm of The Other (the non-humane) or just as the reminiscence of old Galician settlers or those gods and beliefs previous to the arrival of Christianity. They have parallelism in traditions such as those of Breton Korrigans, the Scotch Pictos, the Follets of the Catalan caves, etc..

Galician Mouros are recognized to have, from in and out of Galicia, a well-rooted personality and cultural importance. As a Spanish ethnographer from the first half of the twentieth century says:

“Everybody thinks Galicia is inhabited by Galician people. And up to a point they are right if they do not mean that only Galician people live there. Galician people know very well that besides them the Mouros also inhabit their land. In fact, in Galicia there are two overlapped people: a part lives on the surface of land; they are the Galician people, and the other in the subsoil, the Mouros. The former ones do not really live like us, but they are enchanted; that is, in a special state which modern men have lost, but that exists” (García de Diego, Vicente, [(1953) 1999]).

The first written reference about the Mouros in Galicia, not named like that in that moment, is in the Inventory of the Old Houses of the Kingdom of Galicia. This was written by Vasco de Aponte between 1530 and 1535. He places them in Cova da Coruja. The chronicler tells it as a historical fact whose main part was played by the nobleman Álvaro Pérez de Moscoso seventy years ago:

“This man, Álvaro Pérez, did not live much and, according to what people say, advised by a friar he went into Coruja cave to look for a big treasure. He took with him thirty squires and labourers who were very strong, and before them many burning torch-

es and very big oak trunks. And in the entrance of the cave they fastened long ropes with sticks. People were well armed. When they were going into the cave they discovered very big birds that blow them strongly on their faces. They walked until they arrived at a large river, and on the other side of the river they saw strange beautiful and very well dressed people who were playing instruments and looking at big treasures. But they were so afraid of the river that they did not dare to go across it. So, they were all in agreement to return, but the friar said: "Go on, go on, there is no trouble". And they did not want to believe it. Then, the wind blew so hard that the torches were put out. And when they managed to go out, they breathed poisoned air so they did not live more than one year, and afterwards the friar lost his sight" (Aponte, Vasco de [ca. 1530-1535] 1986).

Historically, the main character existed (García Oro, José, 1982) and died in 1468. He was the IV gentleman of the noble house of Moscoso de Altamira in Santiago de Compostela. He was a lay nobleman with an outstanding position in the 14th and 15th centuries when he clashed with the power of the archbishop of Santiago de Compostela. There are two different hypotheses about where Coruja Cave is. Some people say it is in O Pico Sacro, others in Coruxo (O Folón).

A Moura

They are enchantments described as beautiful shining women, with a vast fortune in gold. They live inside the rocks in old places who nobody remembers building or, preferably, in caves, rivers and fountains/springs. When they appear washing and singing by the river they are known as Lavandeiras. The Galician Mouras are wizards. They are almost always shown as attractive and tempting hardworking magicians who comb their long red hair. They must not be confused with the male genre, the Mouros, with whom they share characteristics.

Mar Llinares quotes as the first bibliographical reference of a moura who keeps an enchanted treasure that appears in the papers of the beginning of the 17th century. There it can be read a lawsuit of the priest Vázquez de Orxas against the peasants, because of the propriety of some burial mounds where gold was buried:

"... As one of his servants called Hilario Alonso had found there a dishevelled woman dressed in brown clothes and with her hair down when it was already getting dark. He was going to the mill with a "fuelle" (it is a measure of capacity for solids) of grain. He had in his hand some hairs and she asked him what he thought it was better: she herself or what he had in his hand. He answered that she was better so she ordered him to go and dig the hillock of the megalithic chamber tomb in Segade and there he would find a treasure for him and all his generation" (Llinares, Mar, 1990).

In these documents it can be also read the apparition of a hen and chicks.

"They are named in different ways such as "donas", girls, women, young ladies, ladies, madams, enchantments, princesses and queens. They are equal to fairies, "xanas", "anjanas", "fées", "korrigans", "faïres", "fainen", fate, moirai, etc." (Cuba, X. R. & Reigosa, A. & Miranda, X. 1999).

As we shall see [Legends of Folón] it is not strange that the Moura be described as a siren (a fish-woman) or half woman, half snake into which she transforms. In fact, the ophidian worship –the worship to snakes, dragons-, the "litolatría"-the cult to crags, rocks, stones- and the "hidrolatría"- the cult to water- all these are only three sides of the old pre-Christian animation latent in a country where the caves, as well as the trees, the fountains-springs and the stones, speak.

1.- LEGENDS OF O PINDO MOUNTAIN AND CAVES

The most well-known and meaningful belief about O Pindo Mount is that couples

with fertility problems that came to the stone bed usually visited it. Places where people were trying to facilitate gestation and also to make sure you will find a partner, to have a safe delivery, to manage to make mothers nurse, etc. Among the stone beds in Galicia there is the famous one in San Guillerme, in Fisterre cape. Some kilometres to the southern part of the country, in Tui, it is the bed of San Xián, in Aloia Mount.

“A thousand of things are said about what there is in here: that the grass grows a lot overnight; that there are innumerable medicinal plants and many of them unknown and that some doctors go there to search them; that inside there are extremely fertile animals”(Sarmiento, Fr. M. 1745).

In spite of having visited this place for just a few months, there is evidence of the vast richness and intangible culture in caves that have to be picked up and studied in O Pindo. In this way, in O Cebro Cave, according to José Cernadas Sande, the neighbours from this place used it to keep sheep. Its name is due to the number of holly trees which sprout near it.

O Forno dos Mouros Cave, according to Alonso Romero and Barreiro Barral, was a Christian hermit place in the 8th century because it had a cross engraved on the left side of the entrance. They also tell us its location and why it is named like that.

“(…) in the eastern hillside of A Moa, a small cave, called Forno dos Mouros where it was said the Mouros made bread. People say that inside there were pots with coins” (Alonso Romero, F. 2001).

“In the field, the only flat stretch of land that it is there, in A Moa, converged all the walled ravines. There you can find the ruins of a building with a square plan having its walls completely demolished. In the northern part of these ruins the lining up of big stones show the existence of another wall or small rampart (…), the small cave opened in the top side of A Moa as well as the overcrowding of material which belonged to a chapel from which we do not have any written evidence, nor it was

known which kind of building it was, until we discovered they belonged to a small sanctuary” (Barreiro Barral, J. 1970).

The Cocho Cave is located near A Moa,

“A Moa crest is made up of a huge mass of solid and compact stone, without cracks or joints. It is a huge protuberant crag of archaic surface, with a rounded shape. By the western side the mountain slopes down towards Pindo beach, having a wide side without high points where one can see a broad depression named “Cocho Cave” in cartography. On the right and left high hills converge leaving between them deep and narrow defiles, everything resulting in a scenery of amazing coldness. By the eastern side, there is a barrier of high and sharp crests, some of them almost with the altitude of A Moa” (Barreiro Barral, J. 1970).

We have underlined the previous and the following words. We still have to confirm the quoted cartography. If it were not the same cave, we would have another one to locate.

Xoana Cave, also known as Casaxoana or Casa da Xoana (Xoana’s house), is not on our way, because the access is by another way of greater difficulty.

“The top of Casaxoana is formed by a rectangular crag where eagles nested only a few years ago. About ten metres down it is the entrance of a cave with 29 metres long and five wide, which crosses the mountain from west to east. There are several opinions about its origin; some say it is natural, and others that it was made by the mouros” (Alonso Romero, F. 2001).

Xoana Cave is also known as Revertedemos (Barreiro Barral, J. 1987) because people said that here the devil appeared and that on San Xoan’s night –June 23rd - he met up with the witches of all the region to plan the evil deeds in the course of the year.

The same outrage happens with the cave which is down Penafiel, in the northern part of Pindo, in As Chouzas Fountain. “There people say there is a small cave where an enchanted snake is hidden. It only comes out every thousand years. It is of great size and very fierce.

Three kisses must be given to it to disenchant it: one on its head, another on the middle of its body and the third one on the tip of its tail. The person who dares do it will turn it into a golden cobra” (Alonso Romero, F. 2001).

O Cadoiro or A Cortada Well. Estuary in Xallas River. Carnota.

“It was said that Queen Lupa was buried in that well and that she had many jewels in her tomb and a pot full of gold. Another legend and related to O Cadoiro Well talks about Ventana das Bruxas (Witches’ Window), actually it is a simple natural shallow cavity which is on a rock opposite the missing waterfall and that, according to the legend, it is the access to a cellar under it. Three barrels are kept in it: one of them contains poison; another boiling tar and the third is full of gold (...). From the cellar you can go to a large luxurious room where an enchanted princess live (...). The old people in Reboredo said that the daring youth did not even have the chance to enter by that mysterious window, because when they tried to do it a terrible storm of lightning and thunderclaps broke and this made the boldest go away from there” (Alonso Romero, F. 2001).

“Ézaro River [Xallas River] or Lézaro, flows quickly among boulders not far from the sea between the beginning of O Pindo Mount and Santa Uxía do Ézaro (...); the place where it falls is called Cadoiro.” (Sarmiento, Fr. M. 1745) (Photo 1).



Photo 1.- ca. 1928 in Cadoiro do Ézaro, Geografía General del Reino de Galicia, Coruña Volume 1: 215.

2.- BELIEFS AND LEGENDS OF O FOLÓN CAVE AND ITS VICINITY.

“There is a moura in O Folón”. A woman of about 70 warned us about this when we started to go to O Folón cave in 1992. Later on and thanks to the ethnographic investigation of Afonso Rodríguez, we did a lot of research about the moura in O Folón. At the end of the twentieth century, some people left a hen at the entrance of the place where the enchantment appeared as an offering to ask several favours to the moura: abundant harvest, to avoid the evil eye...” (Rodríguez, A., 2004). A round granite stone, which rises on the “chaos” of O Folón, is known as A Pedra da Moura. The references gathered from interviews, reading and the contributions from members of C.E. Maúxo, let us know places near O Folón where the mythical beings from the popular culture had its own story too. The group offers a magical geography that we are going to delimit in the nearest countryside to O Folón cave (Rodríguez, A., 2004).

Os Penedos da Moura. A place in the vicinity of Pedralonga where two big round granite stones outstand.

This moura is described as a mixture of a very beautiful woman with white skin and long blonde hair and her lower half body as a sea mermaid or snake. Her face can be seen in the sea from here. It is reflected in the waters of Porta Grande (Rodríguez, A., 2004) northern entrance of Vigo Ria between Cíes northern island and Home cape.

On Sunday, January 21st, 1996, being near Os Penedos da Moura, we could listen the following story from a woman of about 60, who was from the nearby Os Eidos, Fragoselo, Coruxo:

“This was told by daddy. A man went to Os Penedos da Moura and there he saw a very beautiful woman, really pretty, who told him she was enchanted. The woman told him that if he helped her to go away from there, they both would leave carrying with them a golden cart and its golden oxen. Good heavens! The

ox was also golden. The man fell in love with the girl and said yes. So, she said she was going to go down the stone and from there a snake would go out, but he could not mention the word God. Then, a snake went out and started to go up the man's legs. The man had such long-suffering... but when the snake reached his neck he said: Ow [with a deep moan and frightened throwing his hands to his chest]- My god! The snake went away. -Broum! An enormous noise was heard and the hillock collapsed. The man went around there, but the woman was never seen again."

Xerardo Dasairas tells that in Os Penedos da Moura it was said to be a treasure. Many people went there to cast spells to disenchant it, but when they did this a moura came out and started to dance on the stone. When they saw this, they escaped frightened and left the treasure" (Dasairas, X., 1987). Afonso Rodríguez, on his part, in his study, specifies that this treasure was in one of the crags, but nobody knew in which one. Moreover, the other one was said to have so much poison to kill all the people in Coruxo.

Several witnesses pointed out that around the middle of the twentieth century a man who intended to get the supposed gold from the inside -"wealth largely talked about"- made part of the crag to explode with dynamite leaving it lowered, the way you can still see today. Others say the reason was less fantastic and that that man only wanted to blast it because of his trade as a stonemason. As Afonso Rodríguez (Rodríguez, A., 2004) explains "the intention of the stonemason was to blast it completely, but for some reason unknown to us he was frightened, leaving the crag like that".

A Pedra Moura

Without any doubt it is Maúxo's most famous carving rock. It is near the centre of population in Fragoselo, in a strategic point from where you can control the valley of Rega

River between Chandebrito fort, which dominates from the top, and Coruxo.

In 1943, Luís Monteagudo picked up the following contributions:

"I could pick up three stories, told by two old men from that place. One of them -who, as a modern druid, and with the Saint Ciprián on his hand [Saint Ciprián or Ciprianillo: famous magic book, essential to disenchant treasures] tried to look for "the treasure in the moura crag"- he told me that lying on the soft grass, he had witnessed from a certain distance and for some nights how a green light went past. Sometimes it lit up the underwear of those who wear them. When going out of the crags in "A Dobesa do Rey" - that is the previous name of "A Dobesa de Fregoselo"- it went around the "carballeira" (oak wood), which today does not exist, and taking the way towards the mountain it went down the opposite slope; this mountain called "Mouro Grande" [Maúxo G.] according to him, it has a deep lake on its top which never dries [Oídos de Mar]; someone also told me that a Roman channel to carry water comes from it down to some Roman ruins in Canido" [Fonte do Sapo-Pedra da Garza] (Monteagudo, L., 1943).

"The same old man told me that those drawings were the plan which "os mouros" had left so people could find the treasures they had hidden when they ran away. Another peasant said that one of his ancestors, when she was young, had seen a young lady, glowing with beauty, who was laying wheat in the sun on the crag. Holding out her hand she offered it to the girl; the girl was afraid and run away; the following day the young lady had disappeared" (Monteagudo, Luís, 1943)..

Xerardo Dasairas, who names the place as A Pedra dos Mouros, picks up the previous legends and adds that "people also talks about a siren who, from time to time, rose to comb her hair in the sun, disappearing at once. Another variant of this story talks about a virgin instead of the siren" (Dasairas, X. 1987)

The study carried out by Afonso Rodríguez confirms and emphasizes the diversity of the intangible heritage associated with this place. In fact, according to many inhabitants interviewed by him, the real Pedra Moura was different from the one with the carvings. It was nearby, upper than the hillside, in Alto do Cataboi, and it was destroyed by masonry in the first decades of the twentieth century. It is remembered as a round granite stone with basins that kept water and a hole in its interior, called “cacheira”. “This crag flew open in certain moments during the day, specially at day-break. Then, an extremely beautiful woman went out” (Rodríguez, A., 2004). The rock where the carvings are is called Laxe das Patas do Burro. It is called like that because of the hoofmarks printed there by a donkey –others say it was a horse- and also the footsteps of a parishioner boy, both killed by a big snake which also left its trace printed on the rock.

From all the motifs shown in this carving rock, it stands out the biggest combination of concentric circles, the one that has superimposed a letter Phi in its centre. It has a name: O Postigo do Zapón. Through this little door the beautiful enchantment disappeared when, far from her cave, the moura felt observed by the neighbours; then she would raise the trap door as a woman and she would go in as a snake, always walking backwards into the rock.

The story of the man and the moura in Os Penedos da Moura, listened by us, has also been documented in Pedra da Moura-Laxe das Patas do Burro.

A Casa de Dios. A place in the neighbourhood of Santo Cristo, Fragoselo. A small granite dome with holes as “cacheiras” and basins which despite being among the houses, it is respected. In the oral local tradition it is called A Casa de Dios because God himself, or Jesus Christ, has its own home here.

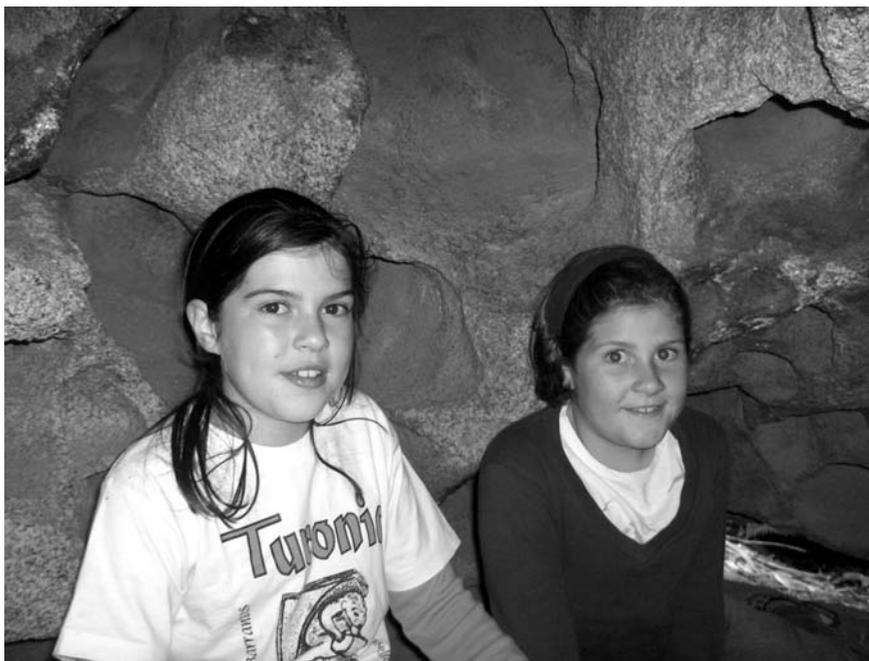


Photo 2.- At dawn, he liked to look out and observe from here the mouras or sirens in Os Penedos da Moura and in A Pedra da Moura, who just at that moment went out of the rocks where they were enchanted” (Rodríguez, A., 2004).

San Lourenzo de Coruxo. Os Penedos de San Lourenzo are on the top sides of San Lourenzo de Coruxo, inside the archaeological protected area of the vast Iron Age settlement.

“The festivals of San Lourenzo have deep roots in our parish. Long ago, before the annual celebrations took place, the neighbours from that place brushed and washed rocks and crags till they were sparkling. The priest himself went up to the place and there he blessed the well, which people told it did not dry in any time of the year. Then, the devotees went up –many of them were not inhabitants of Coruxo- and there they washed their eyes with the water of the so-called Pozo de San Lourenzo, which people assured it had curative properties.” (Rodríguez, A., 2004).

The case, already studied by José María Álvarez Blázquez, can be summed up as follows: in these rocks there is a rock group made up of the integration of natural shapes –the blocks themselves, joints, basins, the probable cave “cacheiras”, tafoni, -with human carvings, lines, steps and rock carvings-which form an archaeological and ethnographical area with an exceptional value. Among the numerous and supposed prehistoric “Altars for sacrifice” in our country, this seems to be the less prone to fantasizing, since it was worshipped for the last time a few years ago.

From the seventies of the past twentieth century, you cannot reach Os Penedos de San Lourenzo due to some troubles with the surrounding owners who do not let anyone through towards the rocky hill. In fact we could never visit the place.

According to the local oral tradition, the body of the saint martyr was washed in O Pozo de San Lourenzo. In Galician oral tradition, Lourenzo is the name of the Sun.

3.- BELIEFS AND STORIES OF PICO SACRO MOUNTAIN AND CAVE

Twice a year, on the 20th of January and the last Sunday of May, there is a procession

in honour of St. Sebastian in Pico Sacro. This religious expression is only one of the sacred characteristics of the mountain. Many people attribute curative power to Pico Sacro.

Among other possible testimonies:

Our villagers think that O Pico Sagro has certain power and extraordinary effectiveness; so, in some places when they are upset by any ailment, they go up a place from where they can see the prodigious mountain and they talk to it like this: “Picosagro, Picosagro cure this ailment I have”. The ceremonial also requires to carry a crust of bread and leave it on the place from where you are talking to Picosagro” (Fernández Sánchez, J. & Freire Barreiro, F., 1885).

The power of the mountain can be sensed in a vast and well spread series of popular proverbs related to meteorology that Picosagro has as its protagonist. For example, it warns us: “When O Pico Sacro puts on its headdress / water we have, little or much”. Some people also believe in a powerful and magic wind that carries all kinds of possessions into O Pico (Luces Miranda, J., 1888) and even kidnap girls:

“It is said that all the fruits which had to be picked up by the peasants went to the big bread bins and silos in the ancestral home of Pico Sagro, but nobody knows where it is because the rocks are covering it from long time ago; it is so many years that no old man can remember it. But, despite this, there is no single woman who dares go past the oak in As Cambas at night fall, because although they commend themselves to Saint Lourenzo, patron of the parish, they run the risk of being taken by the whirl of wind to the upper floor of Pico Sagro ancestral home, in the same way that the bread of the fields go there the day before the cutting” (Carre Alvarellos, L., 1969).

O Pico Sacro stories are also varied and well known, even among villages out of the way of the mountain. We are before an ethnographic combination at first hand, by the

validity of traditions and by the multiple references compiled during centuries.

The dragon topic has already been documented in medieval writings that maintained the myth of the translation of St. James' body. The story tells that, after being executed by the Romans in Palestine, he is transported in a stone boat to Galicia where the sepulchre is looked for. In the twelfth century, the Codex Calixtinus tells that in this adventure the enormous dragon, which lived in this mountain, was defeated by the carriers of St. James' body, "because it could not stand the sign of God's cross". The story goes on telling that they also defeated dozens of devils who were in the mountain and, without any problem, they got the oxen they needed to translate the apostle's body to the place that would be the one selected for his grave: Compostela. From that day on:

This mountain, earlier called Ilicino, the one which captivates, because previously to that time many men ill-fatedly seduced worshipped the devil there, was called by them Mount Sacro, that is, sacred mountain" (Moralejo, A. & Torres, C. & Feo, J., 1951).

Also related to this medieval story, at least part of it, it is A Raíña Lupa (Queen Lupa), the lady of the country when the carriers of St. James' body arrived. In popular literature the mythical queen appears almost always with the same attributes as Galician enchanted women, the mouras. She was told to have big treasures, her ancestral home in the cave, an alley and a vegetable garden in the next top. Among the stories about Lupa in O Pico Sacro we think it is exemplary the one picked up in 1963 by the archeologist Vázquez Varela from an elderly peasant:

"Queen Lupa lived in O Pico Sacro. There was a servant of a house who took the pigs to graze to the mountain. This servant realized that some of the pigs were fattening a lot so he decided to follow them. He went to a cave. There he met Queen Lupa. She told him she would feed the pigs and in return when the animals were slaughtered he should give her

the best pork sausages of the best pork. He accepted. When the owner of the pigs, an old woman, heard of it, instead of taking her the best pork sausages, she took her the worst. Queen Lupa throw the deception back in the old woman's face and told her she was going to punish her. The pork sausages turn into snakes, which eat her. Her skeleton can still be seen at the bottom of the well" (Moralejo, A. & Torres, C. & Feo, J., 1951).

About O Pico Sacro there abound another kind of stories too, such as the ones about treasures in the inside of the mountain, with marvellous rooms with graves, dishes with mercury and thousands of riches looked after by pitiless creatures and/or giants. Supposed treasures that made more than one person lose his/her patrimony:

"(...) and it happened that a man called Juan Antón, inhabitant of Coruña, some years ago said that in this peak towards the eastern part there were some assets, and some men motivated by this made a descent like a tunnel and through this one they went down to the mine which leads to the mentioned place (...) and they stupidly wasted their possessions in this" (Hoyo, J., 1607).

There are many references to the mouras, mythical population who lives in Galicia. Here the building of the cave is ascribed to them.

"The mouras made the holes in O Pico. Firstly, they made small holes in the rock; then, they put dry wood wedges. Then, they put water on the wedges, which swelled and the rock broke" (Neira Pereira, E., 1992).

Even so, the imaginari about O Pico Sacro cave stands out because it is supposed to have extraordinary dimensions. It is stated that through O Burato dos Mouras, there is a path that leads to the place where the Ulla River spectacularly narrows; it is called O Paso de San Xoan da Cova, five straight kilometres from O Pico, the border between A Estrada council and the province of Pontevedra. There are a lot of references to

this long and imaginary path. Here, there are some examples:

“It is said that below that mountain range there is a mine which goes as far as the Ulla River, next to the monastery [San Xoan da Cova], and long ago people used to throw some ducks and birds there to the entrance of this mine and they came out by the river, near the monastery” (Hoyo, J., 1607).

This cavern is open and so deep that nobody has ever seen its bottom, although some people has tried to, and it is so long that others think it goes as far as the Ulla River, which flows a long league distant from the peak (Álvarez Sotelo, 1689).

“The most common opinion and also the less right supports that Ilicino underground flows for over a league and a half into San Juan da Cova” (Vicenti, B., 1875).

“According to the inhabitants of the country, Queen Lupa palace is in the bowels of the mountain. Inside the cave there is a vault, where water is dripping from its walls. At the bottom, there is an opening quite symmetrical and next to it the excavations where the stones are thrown. Their beating against the walls is heard, but not when they reach the bottom: Ordinary people think it is an underground path which goes as far as O Paso [de San Xoán da Cova]” (Carré, E., 1936).

“The Queen’s soldiers took their horses along this path to drink. This well outstands: it has an «enchantment» [enchanted guardian who may be the “moura” or the treasure itself but transformed] which is a golden beam, and something similar to a bottomless pit” (Llinares García, M., 1990).

4. BELIEFS AND STORIES OF THE CAVES IN MOUNT GALIÑEIRO

The stories related to the caves in Mount Galiñeiro still exist thanks to the contribution of the oral tradition of Vincios parishioners. These stories were picked up by C.E. Maúxo

and Afonso Rodríguez González (Rodríguez González, A., 2005) during the last five years.

The legends related to the mountain refer to water:

Flooded Sea: People places it near As Ghallas on the top west side of O Galiñeiro, in a rock known as O Ollo do Mar, because if you go past there, you hear the water flowing. In the popular culture if this rock were broken, the whole parish would be flooded because all the water that is inside the mountain would be spilt.

Meteorological phenomena: Related to the old woman, A Vella. In this place called Onde Fumegha A Vella one could know if it was going to be a hard winter when from this rock there seemed to come out smoke because it was said an old woman was boiling or grilling chestnuts. The effect was due to the rain raised by the wind. It is a feminine deification of winter.

In hidden places, the CAVES, the references are related to:

1.- Fantastic and nowadays extinct animals as we pick up in:

Cova da Becha: a huge snake lived in it; it had to be fed with milk by the neighbours who did this so the snake would not come down to suckle the goats who had recently given birth. The snake is the first state of the development of “a becha”, coca, which is how it is named the dragon in Galician culture.

Ghrencha do Brión: O Brión is described as if it were an eagle owl. Its peculiar existence was that it lived with a heron. The eagle owl brought food from the sea to feed the chicks of both of them.

2.- Beings of another world, as the Devil and the Mouros:

Casa do Demo (house of the devil): there are many places in A Serra do Galiñeiro which refer to the Devil, Forno do Demo, Cornos do Demo, due to the demoniac nature that not easily accessible and steep places had for the rural culture. In this way, A Casa do Demo is well-known in the parish of Vincios because it was a shelter for the stonemasons in winter

days and also because it had been fitted out as a repair shop for masonry tools. It was also to be sheltered in winter when shepherding.

A Lapa da Moura and O Coto da Moura: A Moura, as a mythical character, is described as a woman with golden hair who combed her hair with a golden comb. She was extremely beautiful; she captivated the one who looked at her and promised big riches to those who carried out one of her orders without telling anybody. In the following story the mouro's way of acting is better shown:

“In Moutas Mount (Prado) there are some burial mounds. Beneath them the mouro's were said to live. Once, some men went there

to dig, to unearth the gentiles' buried treasure. But what they found in the inside were horns, a lot of horns. They filled up an oxen cart with them, as a yoke. When the cart driver who drove the yoke was opposite to a friend's house, this one invited him to go in and have something. When the cart driver was going in, he left some of the horns he was carrying in his cart at the entrance of the house. When his friend came out and found the horns, he flew into a temper: he had invited him and his friend paid him with horns! He was carrying a scythe in his hand and with the rage he hit one of the horns with the blade, the horn was cut and from its interior gold came out.”

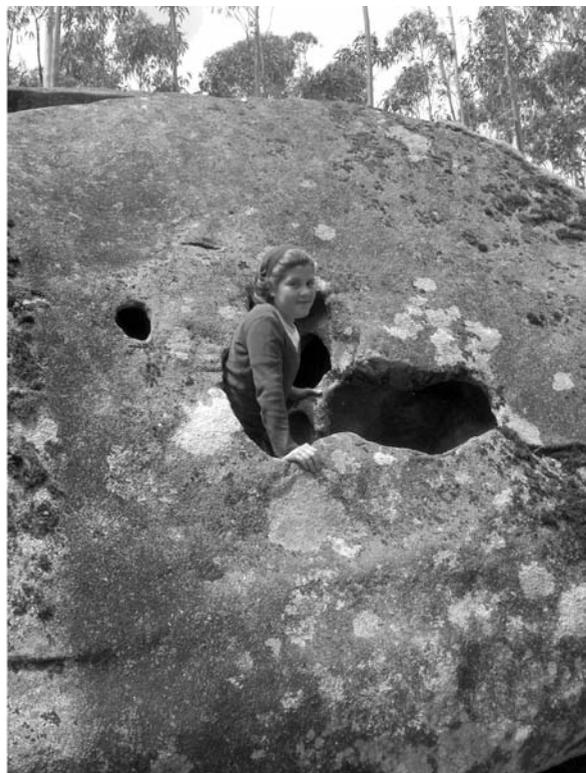


Photo 3.- “Coto da Moura” in Chain, Gondomar.

A Capela dos Mouros: Mythical beings who lived underground or in structures for which the Galician peasants had no logical

explanation about its building. On the flat surface of the hole there are rock carved rectangular basins, which the peasants interpret as

“lavadouriños” where the mouros came and washed their gold. When cups appeared they say they used them to put candles in them.

5. BELIEFS AND STORIES ABOUT O CASTELO DA FURNA

As it could not be in another way, O Castelo da Furna has also a rich intangible patrimony associated to it. One of the old customs related to this castle, and also one of the most popular is the joke that single men and women play to know who is going to get married. The first person to leave a stone on the rock will be the first to get married. If all the stones fall, he or she will remain single.

Among the different legendary stories, which have the scene in O Castelo da Furna, it stands out The Legend of the Enchanted Shop. We have shortened it here, according to the investigator Álvaro Campelo’s work. We are told that one moonlit night at the beginning of a summer, at the time of S. João festival, a man who was going with his cattle to the mountain as everyday, got up earlier without realizing. When he was going past a big crag “viu uma tenda em ouro!” (he saw a golden shop!). Next to the gold there was a long hair woman who after a while asked the impressed peasant what he preferred: What do you prefer this golden shop or me? The man chose the shop and, of course, “all he had seen disappeared. If he had chosen the woman, who was an enchanted moura, he would have also had all the gold” (Campelo, Á., 2003).

Another one, the story of Queen Aragunta tells as the mentioned queen goes to the castle fleeing from her husband who had her disowned and sentenced to death, because of the servants’ gossip. Aragunta, pretending to be fed with trouts by an eagle which drop them, managed to get the king, also impressed by the source of water there, raise the siege and forgive her because he thought Aragunta enjoyed a supernatural protection. As you can see in Valença town council website:

There seems to be an element of truth in this story. Queen Aragunta [Aragonta], the wife of Ordonho II, of Leão [and of Galiza between the years 914-924] whom he disowned. She came to Salzeda monastery [Salceda de Caselas, near Tui] to be taken in there; she is said to have died blessed; this provoked remorse to the king. This queen was the daughter of the earl D. Gonçalo and the countess Dna Teresa, and she was the sister of the earl Emmenegildo Gonçalves, from Portugal and Tui.

The micro-place named A Horta da Raiña, a terrace placed in the interior of O Castelo da Furna, can have the previous story as a point of reference, but there are people who state that its name is due to Virgin Mary. In fact, another place from this granite castle, which has a special meaning, is A Pía da Nossa Senhora.

Inside the top in O Castelo da Furna, there is a group of basins. Among these basins there is one that is sacred. It is commonly thought that this basin is always with water “because the stone sweats” and in St. John’s night, many people fill “demijohns” with water before sunrise.

We were lucky to document (Ref. X&L, CEM, August 2006) some detailed versions of this old story, and living witnesses who guarantee the benefits of the water in this basin. The story, which has as reference the flight to Egypt that the New Testament states, is summarized as follows, according to what Uncle Anibal da Pita, born in Taião in 1931 told us:

“A Nosa Señora” ran away from her pursuers. The enemy was following her because she was carrying Jesus in her arms. The Virgin “forrou a mula ás avesas”, nailed the mule’s foot from back to front, so the devil could not find them. In this way, the enemy would think they came from O Castelo da Furna, where they were actually going. On her way, she was helped by some brambles, which caught the enemy, and that is why the Virgin blessed them. On the contrary, she excommunicated the “antremoços” who indicated the flight

direction making such a noise. Once in O Castelo da Furna, the Virgin carefully used the basin, which is today called “da Nossa Senhora”, as a cot for the baby Jesus.

Directly related to this story, there are “As Pegadas da Nossa Senhora” (the footsteps), probably the lowering of rock carved as steps to easily go past the castle. “The story says that in the castle rocks there are some footsteps ascribed to A Nossa Senhora. The popular tradition says that whoever wants to go up the rock, they will have no option but to follow her steps, one foot before the other” (Salvador, V., 2006).

CONCLUSIONS

The utilities of Anthropospeleology are very important for:

- Human Sciences, because they rename the concepts and history periods and use the oral history for societies without writing.
- Particular Galicia History, because it picks up customs, uses and functions that the granite caves had for the neighbours of the place and picks up micro-toponymy.

There are many systems of classification and explanations about Galician mythology till now. We systematize here its subject matter with the aim of offering the fullest possible outlook of a complex world according to the area our piece of work covers, the granite caves.

The mythical places with granite caves are in high mountains, singular stones, water places: Fountains-springs and pot water, and Prehistoric Monuments.

The mythical beings are in O Galiñeiro Mountain, as in other Galician places, areas considered as magical because they are of difficult access, have a strange petrological or geological shape, represent territorial marks or outstand in the landscape as landmarks of meteorological observation, springs of water, etc..

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