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TRADITIONS AND CEREMONIES

FOLKLORICA PROJECT
IES PÉREZ GALDÓS

FIESTA DEL CHARCO



INTRODUCTION

La Fiesta del Charco or *la Embarbascá* is a century-long traditional festivity that takes place in Gran Canaria island on September, 11 to commemorate Saint Nicholas de Tolentino celebrations in La Aldea de San Nicolás municipality. It is one of the most important, popular and crowded festivities in Canary Islands.

HISTORY

This festivity represents and honours the way of life of aboriginal Canary islanders. It revives an old aboriginal fishing technique (embarbascadas), which consisted on spilling plants' sap into the water to cause a sedative effect in the fish located in the coastal ponds, and thus, make it easier to catch them with the hands.

This practice was still alive in the island until the 20th century, when it became a tradition celebrated for the patron saint festivities on the northern part of the island.



RULES AND PROCEEDINGS

As tradition suggests, participants shall stand around the pond without touching the water. In order to do so, the exterior perimeter of the pond is marked first with a line of lime. People shall not overtake this line until it is allowed.

On September, 11, at 5 o'clock in the evening, a rocket launched by the mayor of the town, is the sign for the fishing to begin. From this moment, the race of the participants starts. They must dive immediately into the water altogether to catch the fish with their hands, it is also allowed to use baskets (guelderas) and thus remembering the origin of the festivity.

Usually, since this performance is funny and festive, those that dive into the water try to take into the water those that stay in the shore.



THE POND

The pond, located in La Aldea de San Nicolás, is the natural setting where the festivity takes place. It is located between the mountains and the Atlantic Ocean, right in the center of the mouth of La Aldea's gully, just a few meters from the seashore.

It is a small coastal pond, which is known in the Canaries as *marciegas*. It originates from the drought and blockage of sea water, due to the high tides in September (known as *mareas del Pino* in Gran Canaria), together with the water that flows through La Aldea's gully when it rains.

The depth of the lagoon is just 1.59 meters and the bottom is formed by the sediment dragged by the gully.

This small lagoon has been declared and recognized as a Cultural Interest Good by the Canary Islands Government, within the category of Ethnological Place, due to its influence as a symbol and landscape and its strength as a representation of the culture and history of Canary Islands.

THE POND





FIESTA DE LA RAMA

One of the main symbols of identity on the island of Gran Canaria is *la Fiesta de La Rama*, in Agaete. It is the main festival of the town in honor of Our Lady of the Snows, and declared since 1972 a Festival of National Tourist Interest.

HISTORY

On August 5 the main festival is celebrated in honor of the Virgin, but it is the day before, on August 4, when the Fiesta de La Rama takes place, where thousands of dancers, to the rhythm of the two music bands of the municipality, go through the town waving branches in the air, until they reach the sanctuary of the Virgen de Las Nieves.

La Rama festivity, according to some scholars in the matter, could have connotations similar to the aboriginal rite for the request for rain that the Canarian aborigines made, bringing branches from the Tirma mountain to hit the sea with them while they uttered songs as a prayer.

Nowadays, people still hit the water with the branches and also delivered them to the Virgin as a sign of offering.

Undoubtedly, La Fiesta de La Rama represents numerous values, emotions and feelings of identity associated with Canarian people. Over time, various rhythmic, musical or physical elements have been introduced, such as the papagüevos, which represent various popular characters from the town of Agaete.



DÍA DE LOS FINAOS



FINAOS NOWADAYS

People gather on the streets to eat chestnuts and to sing traditional songs.

It is celebrated in many places of the Canary Islands from October 31 to November 2. The word "finaos", which means "deceased", refers to a popular Canarian festival that was celebrated on the night before All Saints' Day (from November 1 to 2), although today it is the eve of "All Saints" (from October 31 to November 1).



HOW THE TRADITION WAS

People knocked on the door of neighbours and asked, are there saints? The owner said yes, putting almonds, walnuts, dried figs or chestnuts in the bag. When the children had their bags filled, they returned home very happy.

In the afternoon families gathered to remember their deceased. The oldest woman in each family remembered the dead, telling anecdotes and while sharing a meal with seasonal fruits.

For that day, people roasted chestnuts or almonds. Figs and prickly pears were also passed around, and an almond was added to the "raised figs". These could be elements of the family celebration, or what was going to be found and/or brought to the deceased. For the family celebration, more elaborate dishes were made, such as almond and fig cheese, frangollo and "pine nuts".

