

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

THE IBERIAN PIG IN SALAMANCA: ITS ROLE IN CULTURAL HERITAGE AND TOURISM¹

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1. THE AGRARIAN LANDSCAPE AS A MIRROR OF AN AGE-OLD WAY OF LIFE

During the last decades ‘territory’ has been reconceptualised in cultural terms. The resulting concept of ‘territorial heritage’ is a historical construct that integrates natural elements and artefacts as expressed in architecture (Ortega, 1998). Territorial heritage encompasses the legacy built up during centuries by various cultures. Over the years the anthropogenic scars have been transformed into a common heritage, a valuable testimony that strengthens collective memory and identity traits that should be preserved.

The thread of this article relates territory and heritage as guardians of a unique agrarian landscape (the *dehesa*) and of a traditional agro-alimentary product derived from the Iberian hog (the Iberian chorizo). We will subsequently analyse the exploitation model and the rational management of the pastureland (*monte abierto*) covered with oaks (holm,

¹ In this study the results are presented of the research project *Territory and Cultural Heritage: historical background and traditional roots of pig-meat processing. The example of ‘Iberian Chorizo of Salamanca’*. The project has been realised in the framework of the ‘second call for research projects exploring solutions to the primary sector’ organised by the University of Salamanca in collaboration with the Provincial Council and the Caja Rural de Salamanca in 2017.

gall, cork oaks) and its secular utilisation based on ‘popular know-how’. The objectives are to highlight the characteristics of territorial heritage, the need of its conservation and to indicate its potential for the development of tourism.

The construct of ‘territorial heritage’ includes both tangible cultural heritage and intangible assets in an area populated by a community. As such the construct is linked with the concept of ‘cultural landscape’, which should be managed and preserved (European Landscape Convention, Florence 2000)². The *dehesa* is one of the types of landscapes distinguished, conserved as a result of social, economic and administrative compromise which corresponds with a way of life and a process of continuous development.

Feeding the stock of Iberian pigs is one of the ways the *dehesa* is exploited. The continued existence of the age-old agrarian landscape and its particular culture are the combined result of traditional practice and economic profitability. The breeding of Iberian hogs by mast and pasture feeding contributes to the preservation of the *dehesa*. Moreover, it is an economic spur for the meat-processing industry and an incentive for social cohesion with contributions to popular material and immaterial culture. In several areas slaughter rituals are maintained up to today as *la ronda de los mozos*, a walk through the village streets ‘*cantando los chorizos*’ (singing the chorizos): ‘*No venimos por morcilla/ ni tampoco farinato/ que vengo por un chorizo/ tan largo como el mi brazo*’ (We haven’t come for black pudding/nor farinato/ I come for a chorizo/ as long as my arm). Farinato is a sausage made from bread crumbs, lard and spices.

2. THE DEHESA LANDSCAPES IN THE TERRITORY OF SALAMANCA

Most of the land in the Province of Salamanca has an altitude of between 700 and 900 meters. The only exceptions are the canyon-like depths of the *arribes* carved out by the Douro river and its tributaries in the western part and the mountains of the south, the *Sierras* de Béjar, de Francia and de Gata. The geology and geomorphology divide the area into plains with Tertiary sediments, the southern mountain ranges, the western deep-side valleys and the vast peneplain. In the latter three areas the Paleozoic base is covered with a thin topsoil.

The climate has Mediterranean traits with a continental touch, although in the western and southern fringes the Atlantic influence is noteworthy. Man has modified the natural vegetation. At present agrarian areas with fertile soils are situated in the plains, wooded zones, vegetable gardens and pasturelands. The peneplains covered by oak species are the *dehesas*.

Given the ecological and economic benefits, the *monte hueco* or *dehesa* is an outstanding model of agro-sylvo-pastoral management recognised at a global level (Gómez, 1991). The exploitation model consists in topping so that the branches of the tree grow horizontally in the form of a candelabra. In such a way firewood and fruits for feeding the pig stock (*la montanera*) are produced while the tree top offers shade and allows crop growing every four years. However, the *dehesa* is above all linked with a livestock culture and a production

² Instrumento de ratificación del Convenio Europeo del Paisaje (número 176 del Consejo de Europa), hecho en Florencia el 20 de octubre de 2000 (BOE nº 31, de 5 de febrero de 2008).

based on the rearing of native species or industrial crosses. Here the study object is the stock of Iberian pigs aimed at the production of quality meat in a competitive way.

3. THE PIG STOCK IN SALAMANCA

In the Province of Salamanca cattle rearing has been present during centuries. Within the family herd, the hog was fundamental as it provided food security through the conservation of meat during the entire year. The pig stock has expanded due to changes in the traditional economy, the growth of the demand for meat products in the cities and the introduction of upgraded races during the 1960s (Tolosa, 1998: 31 y 32).

With the coming of non-native light-coloured species hog breeding has become bipolar with the traditional system of extensive rearing of black Iberian pig herds on the one hand and intensive industrial breeding in stables. However, the Iberian hog bred in freedom, has always maintained its dominant position in the province. Although the meat production based on the exploitation of holm oaks is comparatively small, the rural environment needs the Iberian hog for its conservation.

The Iberian hog helps to preserve the ecosystem of the dehesa to which it is well-adapted as it feeds itself with acorns. The hog walks through the dehesa or, more precisely, it trots arching the loin without following a straight line but instead continuously moving in a zigzag way. Because of this strange habit, the race is also known under the names of *camperos* and *malandares*. Food consists of pasture, stubble and acorn. The fruits of the different oak species are ripe from the end of September to February and they are indispensable in the diet of the Iberian pig. Apart from providing necessary nutrients, the acorns add a special taste to the dried meat and sausages, which are the key products of the Iberian pig stock.

4. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TRADITION IN THE PRODUCTION OF DRIED MEAT AND SAUSAGES FROM IBERIAN HOGS

The origin of the processing of meat from Iberian hogs goes back in time. However, nowadays traditional skills are still being used in the industry. Quality products with a traditional flavour are being elaborated and wait for the officially recognised brand of the *Indicación Geográfica Protegida*³. According to the writer José Mas (1922) in the town of Guijuelo the pigs were slaughtered in the streets during the Winter months up to February. The domestic slaughtering helped to feed the family during the entire year and was a gathering point for relatives and neighbours. The village of Candelario provides another example of traditional pig-meat processing. Half a century ago Salvador Llopis (1965: 144) wrote: *'the other industrial aspect of Candelario is the well-known dry-meat industry that gave it a special fame and whose history goes back to before the eighteenth century'*.

³ Since 2006 the Iberian chorizo is an officially recognised brand *Marca de Garantía 'Ibéricos de Salamanca'*.

Today the flourishing industry is based on a mix of artisanal techniques transmitted from generation to generation on the one hand and innovative technology on the other. Quality is maintained. For instance, when the Iberian chorizo it is cut its appearance is like ever, namely marble in bright-red.

Artisanal slaughtering and processing skills were not the only reasons why the industry expanded. Muleteers, merchants and chorizo peddlers played a crucial role in the origin and consolidation of the industry in the Province of Salamanca. They carried the different meat products all over Spain establishing the reputation of Salamanca-made high-quality dried meat and hams.

5. THE EXPRESSION OF POPULAR CULTURE IN ART

Various works of art witness the cultural heritage. In a tale (Sepúlveda, 1887) King Charles IV was hunting in the mountains. He felt hungry. By coincidence a peddler came across with his mules carrying bags full of odorous chorizos. *Tío Rico* (Rich Uncle) which was the peddler's nickname in Candelario offered his nicely smelling dried meat to the monarch. The King rewarded him by appointing the peddler as the purveyor of the Royal Household. In such a way *tío Rico* and the chorizo of Candelario became so famous at the Royal House that it became a source of inspiration for artists.

In 1786 Ramón Bayeu painted the cardboard *El choricero*⁴ (the chorizo peddler) based on a small sketch that his brother Francisco included in *Trece bocetos para cartones de tapices* (Thirteen sketches for tapestry cardboards), which today are in the Prado Museum. *El choricero*, perhaps modelled on *Tío Rico* of Candelario, carries half-full bags on his left shoulder. In his right hand he holds several strings of Iberian chorizo, the commodity that made him famous. By 1860 in Paris Clement Frères edited the series *Collection de Costumes des diverses provinces d'Espagne*. Among the coloured high-quality illustrations, issue 46 is devoted to the *Charcutier des montagues de Gata / Choricero de la Sierra de Gata*⁵.

Other pictures such as etchings, paintings and photographs witness cultural values of livestock fairs and weekly markets. Perhaps the *Feria de ganado en Salamanca*⁶ (the Salamanca livestock fair) painted by Francisco Iturrino in 1898 was the first painting of the livestock fairs and markets in Salamanca. Pictures taken by the Salamanca photographer Cándido Ansede in the 1920s which reflect the traditional habits, are displayed in this section. On the other hand, the printed drawings made by the Scottish watercolourist and etcher Muirhead Bone stand out (Kent, 2008a: 41). They reflect the splendour of the market, the fair and the actors. She drew the left bank of the river Tormes crowded with people and animals, indeed among these Iberian pigs. Her drawings breath a rural atmosphere.

4 Oil on canvas, 222x106 cm. Source: <https://www.museodelprado.es/coleccion/obra-de-arte/el-choricero/47a56742-b51d-43c0-bf7d-7c3064affb1d>

5 https://www.todocoleccion.net/arte-litografias/pigal-charcutier-des-montagnes-gata-choricero-sierra-gata-caceres-lit-langlume~x38371402#sobre_el_lote. The Sierra de Gata is situated along the administrative border between the Provinces of Cáceres and Salamanca.

6 Collection/Museo Carmen Thyssen-Bornemisza. <https://www.carmenthyssemalaga.org/obra/feria-de-ganado-en-salamanca>

6. NEW ACTIVITIES: TURISM, GASTRONOMY, FAIRS AND INTERPRETATION CENTRES

The livestock fairs are still celebrated as there is a weekly one on Mondays and a yearly fair in September. Obviously, the site has changed, as well as the way the animals are presented and exchanges take place. However, today the annual fair *Salamaq* with its native livestock is one of the important livestock fairs of Spain. Alternative activities for rural professionals have been added to the traditional ones. Leisure publicity related to cropping and livestock and tasting gastronomic specialities have transformed the September fair into a touristic attraction with more than 100,000 visitors.

Similarly, the extensive breeding and the agro-alimentary industry based on the Iberian hog have become a new touristic resource within the field of gastronomic tourism. The Province of Salamanca has always received visitors who came in search for quality products made from Iberian pig meat, enjoying the taste of chorizo, other Iberian pork sausages and ham. Apart from gastronomy there is a growing interest in other details of the life of the Iberian hog. The latter is reflected in interpretation centres, which are like small museums and through the participation in some activities of meat-processing. The Province has several ethnographical museums and interpretation centres with some exhibition rooms devoted to the slaughtering or the *dehesa*. Museums exclusively specialised in the sector are the *Museo Casa Chacinera* in Candelario and the *Museo de la Industria Chacinera* in Guijuelo, places with a great tradition of processing the Iberian pig meat.

In addition to the interpretation centres extramural activities are offered to the visitors. Walks through the *dehesas* are organised during the *montanera* campaign when the pigs are fattened with acorns. Many villages organise slaughters for visitors during the Winter which attract many visitors from elsewhere. In 2017 the Provincial Council organised the *Día de la Montanera* (the Day of the *Montanera*) and nominated the *Montanero Mayor* (Great Pig Herder) in order to make visible the culture related to the Iberian hog.

The latter examples demonstrate that territorial heritage has become an asset for the development of tourism. In this way tourism contributes to economic and social cohesion and fosters local collective memory about traditional skills.

7. CLOSING REMARKS

In the course of centuries, the collective identity of Salamanca has been evolved out of the legacy of several cultures that have occupied the provincial area. The material and immaterial heritage reinforces rootedness and territorial belonging of the area's inhabitants. The *dehesa* connected with the breeding of Iberian hogs stands out among the landscapes inherited from the past. Identity also relates to the products made from the hogs, such as Iberian chorizo, its traditional know-how and the management of the *monte hueco* with its oak trees. The culture tangible in art and folklore is now utilised as a touristic resource. We will subsequently highlight the main conclusions.

A relationship has grown between territory and cultural heritage based on the breeding of the Iberian pig. Breeding takes place in an agro-ecological system that respects the natural environment and enables the production of dried meat.

The herds of Iberian pigs are perfect allies to the model of agro-sylvo-pastoral exploitation of the dehesa. Their rusticity and adaptation to the environment explain the persistent presence of Iberian pigs in the countryside of Salamanca.

The pigs eat acorns during the *montanera* which begins end September and lasts up to February. This type of alimentation favours the regeneration of the dehesa and evidently, the quality of final product: healthy meat and a unique taste.

The Iberian hog survived not only because of its rustic characteristics and its easy adjustment to the dehesa ecosystem but also because the meat is excellent raw material for dried meat of well-known quality in the world's gastronomy.

The way of life centred on the breeding of Iberian pigs in an extensive system and the processing of dried meat, in particular the Iberian chorizo, has forged some identity traits embedded in the collective memory of the Province. These traits have inspired artists. Their art work, such as paintings, photographs, literature or folklore, evoke the annual cycle of Iberian pig breeding, dehesa landscapes, crowded livestock fairs or chorizo peddlers.

As a final conclusion we emphasise that nowadays this cultural heritage has become an asset for gastronomic tourism eager for experiences and aiming at social, economic and territorial cohesion of Salamanca. In this respect fairs, museums and interpretation centres are the new challenges.