



Caminos de Agua

NOTAS DE CAMINANTE

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Water courses. Notes en route.

Water, for the common good

Water, ever since humans first acquired knowledge and learning, has meant prosperity. Water and its sources have defined the construction of communities and their living spaces. Now, when our disconnection with nature is becoming increasingly evident, is when we must preserve it for future generations. We must commit to a new culture of water, caring for it in a sustainable way. It is important to gather together and to tell personal and collective stories which foreground the vitality of water, in everyday life, in memory, and in the construction of common imaginaries. These pages form a sample of these stories, and represent a call for local and extralocal dialogue, in order to share the governance of these vital landscapes, contributing to a continuous action, and to a consideration of social creativity and active participation as ideal tools in the regeneration and preservation of our environments.

Doing the laundry

"We used to do the laundry at the Lavadero or the river. We did not have water at home. The laundering kept us busy all day. We carried baskets with our clothes, a washboard, and there, at the water's edge, with buckets and saucepans, we washed our clothes until our hands ached. We spent the day there. My sister, who was married, stayed at home, and I went out to wash. We stretched the clothes out in the sun after washing them. They were whiter, and they smelled clean."

"To do the laundry we used ashes and boiling water. We soaked the clothes for a whole day in water and homemade lye soap, then we washed them and rinsed them. The clothes for bleaching were put in the strainer, with a coarse canvas cloth over it, a *cernadero*, to strain out the ash. "

"... You made the cloth into a little bag to hold the ashes, and then you poured boiling water over it. The filtered ash produces a bleach which passes to the clothes and whitens them. You could collect the filtered ash and pour hot water through it again, you could do that several times. You could also filter the ash and cover the clothes for a few hours, or add some indigo powder, to achieve a bluish white. After all that, you washed the laundry again with soap and water and once it was clean, you rinsed and stretched the clothes out in the sun "

There are many versions of this process. In some, laundering clothes to whiten them occurs a few times a year, while in others it occurs weekly; in any case, it depends on the size of the family, and its economic level. There is also a difference between laundering with the bleach resulting from macerating ashes in water, or using the *clarilla*, pouring boiling water through the straining cloth. The process must be repeated several times, and it is important to dry clothes in the sun in order to whiten them.

In vernacular language:

Haber ropa tendida: To have washing hung out to dry. English equivalent; walls have ears, or, there may be eavesdroppers.

Lavar los trapos sucios: To wash dirty linen in public.

Chafardear (Cotillear): A derivation of the Catalan phrase *fer safareig*, to do the laundry in the laundry-house, but also, by extension, to gossip. From Catalan *safareig*, a laundry-house.

Laundry tricks:

For whiter clothes: use a paste made of blue indigo flowers

To preserve colours: use salt and vinegar

For getting rid of stubborn stains: soak clothes in a solution of bicarbonate of soda

For wax or oil stains: rub with turpentine and fuller's earth

For ink spots: rub with lemon juice

For fruit stains: soak in hot milk



FAT AND ASHES

Soap-making consists of mixing fat or oil with a strong aqueous alkali, usually in the presence of heat, so that saponification occurs, the chemical process by which fat is transformed by the reaction with the alkali, forming soap.

Homemade soap is respectful to the environment, good for skin and for clothes. The cold method to make soap uses any oil (which must be filtered before use). You must work in a well-ventilated space. Precautions should be taken in handling caustic soda, which is a highly corrosive material, meaning that skin contact must be avoided. Glass, stainless steel, plastic or wooden containers should be used, and the mixture stirred with the help of a stick.

Oil, 2 1/2 litres.

Water, 2 1/2 litres.

Caustic soda (sodium hydroxide), 1/2 kilo (for detergent soap) or 330g (for cosmetic or bath soap).

Prepare caustic soda by diluting the soda in the water, slowly and carefully, as it produces toxic vapors. The mixing process produces an exothermic chemical reaction, i.e. one that releases energy as heat, and needs some hours to cool down.

Once the water with soda has cooled, slowly pour in the oil, stirring constantly and in the same direction, to avoid splitting the soap (that is, separating it into solids and oil, similar to what happens when a cream sauce goes wrong). This soap can be coloured and fragranced with natural dyes and essential oils, adding them as the water and soda mixture cools down.

A common plant which was used to dye soap green is the *mastranto*, a plant from the mint family, widely used in folk medicine. Once the mixture of oil and caustic bleach has emulsified, it is poured into moulds and left to harden for approximately one month.

The soap was often used with a scrubbing pad made with stems and leaves of the *matagallo* plant. *Saponaria officinalis*, a plant of the carnation family also known in English as the common soapwort, was also used in a few houses, obtaining a washing solution by boiling between 40g – 100g of rhizomes and flowers in a litre of water for ten minutes or so.

(Important safety note: The above should be considered as a general guide. If you should be inspired to try this at home, please do further research on the Internet or at your local library. Make sure you have adequate equipment, ventilation and skin protection before starting, and take special care when handling caustic soda.)





WORDS

JOFAINA: WASHBASIN

BALDEAR: WASH DOWN WITH BUCKETS OF WATER

CAUCHÍ: SEWER, DRAIN

JOZIFA: FLOORCLOTH

PANERA: WASHBOARD

CERNADERO: THICK CLOTH ACTING AS A SIEVE

AGUAMANIL: WATERPITCHER

CUADRIL: HIP (part of the body holding the pitcher)

CÁNTARO: PITCHER

CAO/ACEQUIA: IRRIGATION CANAL

REGADERO: IRRIGATION DITCH

LAVANDERA: LAUNDRESS

AGUADOR/A: WATER VENDOR

REPARTIDOR DE HIELO: ICE DELIVERYMAN

JABONERA/O: SOAP-MAKER

ARTESANOS DE FIBRAS VEGETALES:

CRAFTSMEN WHO USE NATURAL FIBRES (MAKING BASKETS, BRUSHES,...)

MOLINERO: MILLER



" We used to fill the pitchers at the fountain, when there was water, or at night. Sometimes we left the pitchers at night, or early, waiting, in line ... nobody touched them. Everyone knew their neighbours' pitchers. Sometimes, the kids kept place in the queue, waiting for some reward, a homemade sweet, most of the time ..."

From La Ribera, and in memory of the mills:

RECIPE for HOME-MADE CRACKERS

200 g of flour.

35 ml of water.

25 ml white wine

50 g of olive oil.

Half a teaspoon of salt

1 teaspoon of sesame seeds.

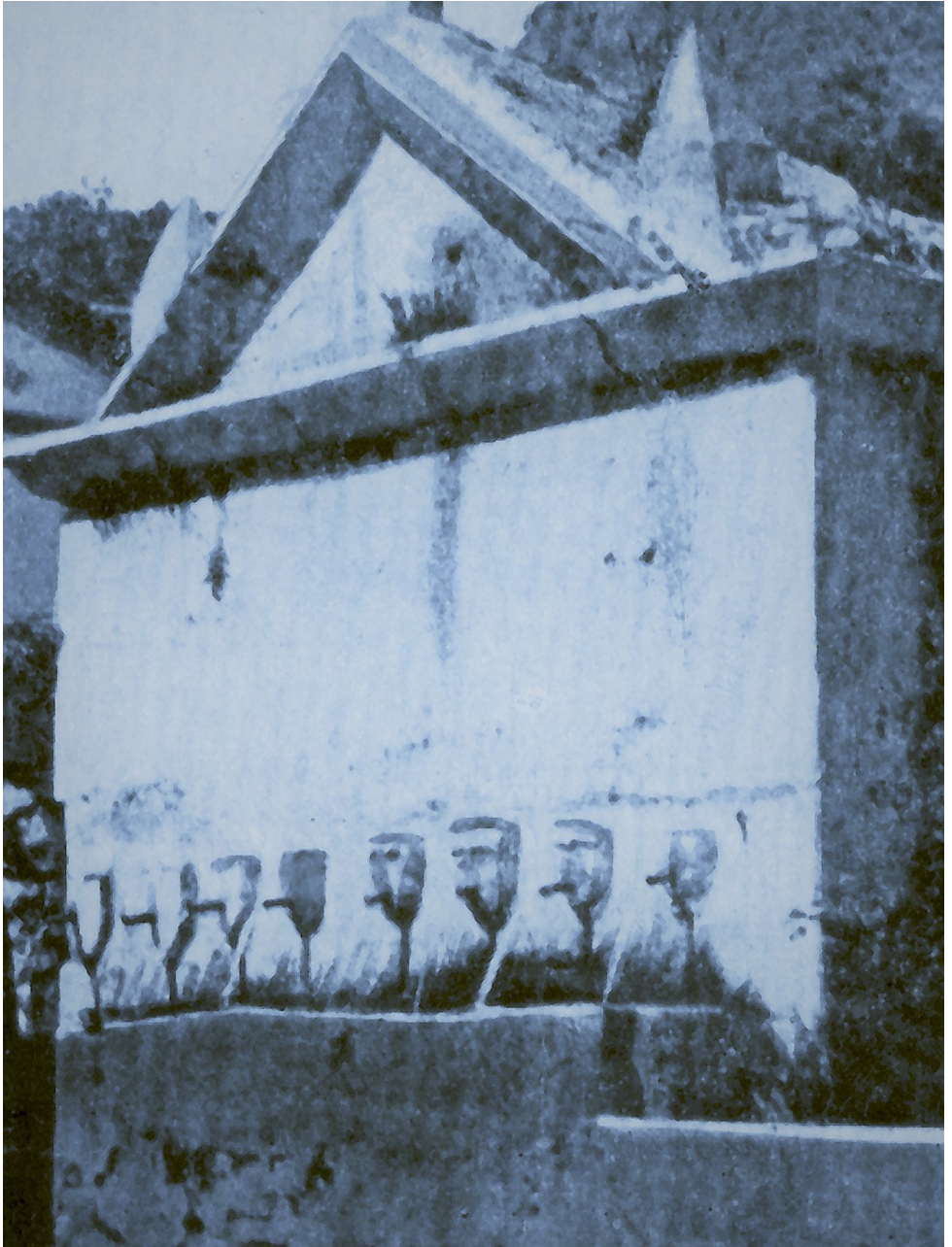
Mix ingredients together little by little until achieving a smooth and even ball.

Flatten the dough, thick or thin, according to personal taste.

Take care that the edges do not crack (lack of water).

Bake in a preheated oven at 180° for 22-25 minutes.

Crackers may be preserved in a tin.



MUSHROOMS

Leaving the bakery, I find some neighbours showing off a whole bucket of Morels (cagarrias). I ask about their origin and they tell the mushrooms are from the Pinsapar, where the soil and the rain favour their appearance. These mushroom, much appreciated by chefs, cannot be eaten raw, or without a process, which, according to experts, must combine drying and cooking; they must be dried out, then rehydrated (discarding the water) and then cooked for about 30 min at a temperature between 70 and 90 ° C. They are used especially to flavour dishes and sauces.

THE RAIN

In the first few minutes of a storm, the air is cleansed, and purified of pollutant particles. After that, the water which falls from the atmosphere is a completely pure water, with a low concentration of salts, free from chlorine and other chemical components. A better water than tap water, essential for watering the fields and filling the water reserve.

Benefits of its use:

Skin hydration. Hair care.
Cleansing and purification of the air.
Improvement of mood.
Regulates the environmental temperature.
Provides nutrients to plants.
Improves the quality of wool in sheep.
Rainwater can be used for:
Watering plants
Cooking food
Ironing
Making homemade soap and bleach

THANKS TO:

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Water, road, sky, river,
mountain, bird, mud,
rain, sun, sand, fog, fire,
wind, fabric, noise, nap,
plant, metal, tree, stone,
school, pitcher, word,
dream, remoteness,
skin, orchard, hour, wait,
memory, party, bread,
sound, mill, fountain,
lime, summit, cave,
history, esparto grass,
flower, house, book,
wood, ... journey

