

Serie Trabajo de Campo

Esta serie surge de la colaboración entre La Alcordanza, Centro de Historia Oral y Tradiciones del Noroeste de España y la División de Ciencias Sociales y Estudios Globales de la universidad California State University, Monterey Bay. La iniciativa incluye varias series y está dedicada a la publicación práctica de resultados preliminares de investigación.

El proyecto de investigación *Trabajo de Campo* recoge las impresiones, análisis y materiales originales de investigadores y estudiantes que han participado en sesiones acogidas por La Alcordanza en comunidades del Noroeste de España.



Reporte de la Comunidad de Santa Colomba de las Arrimadas, León

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Prefacio

Las comunidades de Las Arrimadas son comunidades con una singular historia en esta parte de la zona de la Montaña Leonesa. Situadas entre los ríos Porma y Curueño, tienen una belleza y serenidad indiscutibles, pero aún más importante, tienen una andadura histórica y de frontera singular y fascinante. Los primeros registros de población de que se tiene conocimiento datan de tiempos pre-romanos en los importantes asentamientos militares de los castros cántabros. La presencia romana se deja ver en los vestigios de la infraestructura militar que dejan las legiones a su paso por estos lugares en su intento por pacificar a los aguerridos cántabros y astures, puesto que fue precisamente esta una zona de frontera entre estos dos grupos. También las estructuras visigodas en enterramiento y después medievales tanto en castillos, como torres defensivas, hablan de la gradual expansión de los reinos cristianos en la península dominada por los califatos y sociedades españolas musulmanas de los siglos octavo al quince. La zona pasa pronto a ser reino cristiano, y la presencia de los monjes templarios habla de la importancia gradual que fue adquiriendo el lugar para los peregrinos de la ruta de Santiago. Hoy en día las comunidades de Las Arrimadas aparecen por momentos como suspendidas en un tiempo indefinido. De hecho, la tendencia demográfica continúa perfilada por la pérdida gradual de población.

Sin embargo, y como esta serie de reportes de experiencias de estudiantes presenta, la comunidad tiene enormes posibilidades y potencial que está particularmente definido por el espíritu emprendedor de los jóvenes que habitan el lugar y sus alrededores, y por la enorme riqueza histórica, cultural y material de la zona que

guarda celosamente la población adulta de la región. El reporte de campo que nos presenta Gudi Ramsaran es una modesta contribución a la preservación de la cultura y tradiciones de Boñar y una manera de agradecer el apoyo recibido por tantas personas que nos apoyaron durante la realización de la práctica de campo en el mes de junio de 2013.

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Reporte de Campo de la comunidad de Santa Colomba de las Arrimadas, León.

Field Research Report, Community of Boñar Guddi Ramsaran

Introduction

As this trip comes to an end it is a bitter sweet time. I remember coming to Spain June 1 as if it was yesterday. I did not have any idea what I would discover here. I knew I was coming for research but what I found was more than that. I found a community and place that feels like home away from home, a place of belonging and people that are welcoming.

The first assignment, we had was to visit five communities and choose one to do research in; little did I know, not only would I be doing research but also building bonds and trust with these community members. The town I did my research in is called Santa Colomba De Las Arrimadas.

Santa Colomba is a small town off highway 4606, when coming from Vegaquemada; it will be the second Arrimadas you will get into, with Laiz being the first and Corral third, Barrillos fourth and Acisa being the last.

After seeing and visiting these small towns I had no idea what I would find or what I could structure my research on. But as time went on I realized that Santa Colomba was very important and was once very populated with over one hundred people. Currently only 14-16 individuals live there. That made me start to wonder why or

what was the reason behind this. So I decided I wanted to look at the past history of this town and the current state it's in. As you read along the lines of my paper I hope you can picture what this town was like before and what it like now. I definitely enjoyed picturing this town 50 years ago and how it was like. After doing a few interviews about Santa Colomba I had an even greater idea of what this town was and is like. I spend a full month looking into and researching the town and now which I consider my community Santa Colomba, and I hope you find this information relevant and interesting.

Visualizing Santa Colomba

Before I can give you details on this town and what it is all about, I must give credit to my informants. I was very lucky that when I decided to do my research in Santa Colomba I was able to meet the most welcoming individuals in town. I got four interviews from different individuals and their time here in Santa Colomba, and what it was like 50 years ago compared to now. I interviewed a man living right in the first house as you enter Santa Colomba; his name was Jesús. As I arrived on my first day with my bike in Santa Colomba I saw Jesús. I introduced myself and told him where I was from and that I was trying to find out more information on this town for my research. I asked him if could park my bike in his yard. He was welcoming and said “yes” I could. I parked my bike and spoke to him for about 45 minutes. He gave me a brief description on the town. After that I walked around and did some mapping and picture taking. When I went to get my bike I spoke to Jesús for another hour and half. He was telling me about the “panadero truck” bread truck as he purchased his own bread. The second person I interviewed was Alfredo, then his wife Adelina and her brother Lupe. From these informants whom I now consider friends, I was able to gather the

information on this paper that I wrote.

The important thing 50 years ago in Santa Colomba was the religious perspective. According to my informant around 40-50 years ago when this town was much bigger in population, there were these individuals who called themselves “Frailes” (monk) and nuns. These individuals would come into the town of Santa Colomba and take the children away to go and study in a convent on how to become a nun or a priest. According to Adelina not everyone that went became a nun or priest some ran away. During this time each family had about 6-8 children. Now at this current time there are no children in the community.

During my informant's childhood she said the main source of work was mining and agriculture. The men would get up and leave at 5 am in the morning to walk 2 hours to get to the mines in Sabero. They would work all day long and come back around 6 -7 pm in the afternoon. When they got back they would take care of cattle.

Another job was agriculture, some people cultivated fruits and vegetables. They also had their own animals that they took care of so they could have meat to eat. According to one of my interviewees they would rear chickens, pigs and rabbits. She said they had food but didn't have things like bananas, chocolate and powdered milk. They got powdered milk years later.

Now at this current moment there isn't any mining going on in this community. There is a small agriculture where everyone has their own garden. Some people have chickens and rabbits.

Festivals are something that they really celebrated years ago. Now they do only one big festival that takes place on August 22nd in

Barrillos. It's to celebrate *Virgen de los Remedios*. This festival is for everyone and people even come by walking from Leon to this celebration, other places people come from are Valencia and Asturias. This procession in the streets is for one to ask for health, to find a mate or job. It's considered a sacrifice by walking barefoot to see the *Virgen de los Remedios*. I was lucky enough to see one of the small festivals, which took place on June 13, 2014; it called the San Antonio festival. It used to be a large celebration but now they only do a small church celebration. For this church service individuals came from all the other four communities to celebrate. I was there at the celebration, it was very nice about 14 people were in church for this service.

The celebrations are not as popular anymore, except for the main one in August 22. Around August, the children and grandchildren come back to visit and be part of the August 22 celebration. At this current time everyone in this community is over the age of 50 and lives on their pension.

At this current time, the individuals get their shopping and other chores done on Thursday. A bus comes and takes them to Cistierna for two Euros round trip.

Now that we have looked at and have an idea of what this town was like before and is currently, we should also know what assets/highlights remain.

As you enter Santa Colomba one of the first thing you see is a water fountain in front of the town which contains clean and drinkable water. If one is thirsty this fountain is a nice place to stop and get some water. At the right side of the water fountain is a *lavadero*. It may not be of much importance now but years ago when this town

had a bigger population, the men built this *lavedero* for the women to wash clothes, take water home. The men built a shed over it to protect the women from the rain and sun. It was not only a place to wash clothes but a place where the women gather and chit chat as they did their laundry. At this time its just there with water and no longer in use, the animals use it to get a drink of water sometimes. One of the most important assets of this town is the church known as an *Ermita*. It's a very old church that has been there for a very long time. The church's tower is Romanesque, and is the original tower, but something happened the church and they built a new one. The main church that was rebuilt is over 55 years old.

Another thing for this town is that they have a Mansion which was owned by a gay couple and was a hotel that was successful for 2-3 years. Now it's closed down but before it was one of the place that they had parties and a place people could stay at. I was told that this place was only for gay visitors but before it closed down it was open to all.

There was also a school in this town where they teach children up to 14 years old. The school is not longer in use. I had the pleasure of meeting the teacher who taught at this school. Her name is Rita María Salas. She is from the town of Corral De las Arrimadas. She had many stories about the school and how it was run 30 years ago. The school was very small and she taught children until there were 14 years old. The system was very different back then. According to Rita all the children were in one room with children between 6-14 years old. It was very hard to teach the children she said. When she gave the older children math problems she would try to teach the younger children to read and write. I can just picture this time frame and how hard that could have been. She said the children weren't interested in learning history or geography. They just did reading and

writing that is all she could get them to do.

Some of the traditional foods this community has are *ensaladilla*, *cocido montañés* and the “*mantazas*” which is the butchering and cooking of the pigs. In the celebration of the patron saints the individual would go from house to house and the typical food on those events are *ensaladilla*, *cordero*, *pollo de corral*, *mazapanes*, *rosca* and *bollería*.

After working and doing research in this town for over a month, I was very pleased with the information I got. The people were all so welcoming and caring. It is hard to let a stranger in your home, but these individuals wanted to get to know us as we wanted to get to know them. I don't consider these people informant just because they gave me information but I consider them friends. Both sides had to let our guards down to get to know each other. It was scary for the community members and for me, we don't know who the people who are letting us in their house are and they don't know us, yet we found a way to bond and trust each other. This was a great town and I like to consider it my town and my people.

Appendices.

I. Interviews

Transcript of the interview with Alfredo, Adelina and Lupe.

At 11:15

The interview was conducted by Guddi and Maria. Maria let the family know that Guddi is not a Spanish speaker and she will be asking the questions to write a paper on the five communities. With the family's permission we conducted the interview.

Adelina started talking about her daughter who we met at the reception dinner. That she works in Leon, speaks English and that we could also talk to her.

Guddi went ahead and let them know the question she would be asking, Maria translated.

Adelina was born in Santa Colomba she had 6 siblings. Her dad worked in the coal mine. Her dad would walk to the mines every day, cross the mountain about 8km or more. They would go in a group; rain, shine, hot or cold. They would go and work at the coal mine and come home and then take care of animals in the stable. The stable was next to them it was also storage for hay and other animal feeds. Her mother worked in agriculture. In their house was a primary school.

Alfredo talked about how the school worked and also some people went to the monastery and convent. He said his wife went to study with the nuns.

Adelina: left the province of Negroyo a place called *Callgorreo* at the age of 10 to go study at a convent with the nuns. She would spend a year there and was allowed to return once a year to visit her family. To study at the convent they paid 300 *pesetas* (money) to study for the year. The earnings of her father were about 3,000 *pesetas* or a little more a year. One of her brothers went to the monastery and another was studying with the *frailes* (monks). And one of her sisters went to Madrid to study to become a hair stylist, the other sister always worked. Adelina studied with the nuns for three years. Her grandmother lived with her mom. Back then the sons and daughters took care of their parents and they all lived together the total number was nine individuals. As a custom her

mother would make the bread and butter. And they would take advantage of the milk when they could because they didn't always have milk. They always had chickens, rabbits and also raised a pig. They never went hungry even though they didn't have much. They did crave bananas and chocolate. They didn't see those things. Towards the end of her school they introduced powdered milk. How the dictatorship affect her?

Adelina: It affected her a little until she was 20 years old and then Franco died. She got married when she was 21. It was the custom to get married at that age. They left to Madrid because her husband worked at *Telefonica*. They stayed there for seven years and her two children were born there. Then they came back to León, her husband request work. They give it to him and they stayed in Boñar. Now that her brother is sick they are living with him in Santa Colomba. Since Santa Colomba and Boñar are close she would go walking back and forth it about 8km.

Alfredo said his wife liked to be in shape that why she walks from Santa Colomba to Boñar.

The house in Santa Colomba was full. Adelina said she knows the houses very well and has a mental image of how many people were living at that time. A total over hundred people living there more or less. And Jesús' house had nine siblings in their house as did she.

What was the average number of family member?

Adelina: The norm per house was four or six childrens. What are her thoughts on the community as being large then and small now?

Adelina: the children took their paths and left the community to live somewhere else to work. No one wanted to work in agriculture because it didn't produce. So the people left to the cities. And they decided to live at their own place and have kids and they haven't come back. They returned occasionally. Visit for a month, once a year and some don't come at all. Most houses are closed. Most people have two kids now.

In her generation were they more men or women?

Adelina: there was about the same. Her house had four girls and two boys. Another family name Amador had 6 girls. She corrected herself saying there were more women than men.

Alfredo agreed.

Did they have festivals there?

Adelina: yes, lots of festivals, especially of saints. Stating out today June 13, 2014 was the San Antonio festival.

Adelina told Alfredo to go and ask Xioni for the information on when the mass for the celebration of San Antonio's festival was going to start.

We asked if she knew the history of the church?

Adelina: said that that the church's tower is Romanesque, and is the original tower, but that the church something happened they made a new one. She didn't know what century it was made, but that her daughter might know since she likes the history she would be able to tell us more things. The main church that was rebuilt has over 55

years. That it had “respaldos” but that they are no longer there, that the priests take advantage of everything.

Guddi asked if there was anything besides the church that had historical significance.

Alfredo informed us that the mass in honor of San Antonio was going to be at 5:30pm.

He said that the place where the house of the gays was a Monastery of the Arramada, this is Arrimadas and that it appears that in the olden days arrimada was pronounced arramada. But that he didn't know if it was located there or not. He said that the one that would know more about it would be his daughter who would arrive at 2pm.

Adelina asked us if we have been in Barrillos that there was a guy there that would be able to tell us everything that we want, but that she didn't know if he was there because he lived in Barcelona, Cinti. She didn't know if he has come to Barrillos yet or not. That he would be glad to tell us everything.

Alfredo said that Cinti was a historian.

Adelina asked us how long we were going to stay.

We said that we would be in Vegaquemada until the 30th of June.

She said that then we would have time, that when we went to Barrillos to look for him. And see if he was here because he would be able to tell us everything. That he is the one that would be able to best inform us, because she had no idea.

We asked that aside from Agriculture and Mining if there were other jobs or resources in the community back then.

Adelina said that there only was agriculture and mining, and nothing more.

That currently the community is made up of people that have retired. Alfredo said that this was a community of old people and that the young people came to the community to see their parents.

That there are no industries, no factories.

Adelina: no kids, That there was in Bonar a talc factory, and asked us if we knew it. That they closed it and it ended.

We asked about the gay mansion?

Adelina said that they came about eight years ago, but she doesn't remember exactly. That they bought an old house they fixed it and conditioned it, and made a sort of gay hotel.

Alfredo said that at first it didn't function like that,

Adelina cuts in and said that well no, but it did become a gay hotel.

Alfredo: but well since they were gay, and they used the internet to let people know of the hotel. He said that there was a period of three to two years where the hotel was very successful, but one of them became sick. He was unsure of where they were from Tarragona or Gerona.

Adelina said that they were from Gerona

Alfredo: That one of them had to go get surgery in the US.

We asked if it was now closed

Alfredo said that it was now closed and it was now for sale.

We asked where in Spain Gerona was located.

They said that it was in Catalonia near Barcelona.

We asked how the community reacted to gay couple living in their community.

Alfredo said to imagine with the machismo that was there, for a couple of gay to come to a community like this.

Then both of them responded that the community responded well.

Adelina said that at first they were nice, but one of them was a little *quisquilloso*.

Alfredo said that one of them was a very good musician that played the piano. That he went to his house to listen to him play.

Adelina said that he did play the piano very well, and that the other one was a massage therapist. That later on it became a hotel only for the gay community. That once the change took place the hotel started to go downhill from there since the one that was sick had surgery in Leon, but then he was terminally ill. That after that they returned to Catalonia, and the affected one said that he was going to go to Houston to have surgery. She said that whatever they do there they

do the same here, but that once you are like that you seek out any kind of hope.

Alfredo said that they were just over 40 something years old. Adelina said that they were either in their forties or fifties, and that people would come from all parts to the hotel.

Alfredo said that people from all over Spain would come to the hotel.

Adelina said that not that many people, but they would come from Madrid, Andalucia...

Alfredo said that the musician promoted himself on the internet, in promoting it, and lots of people came.

Adelina said that one of them was a dreamer.

We asked that if there were any highlights in the community aside from the church that people would like to come and visit.

Alfredo said that when the Festivals take place that that is when the people from the other communities come, because there are two days of festivities for the “fiestas patronales”. That the people gather together to celebrate the saint's day, dance like any other place.

Adelina said that aside from that there was nothing else.

We asked about how many festivals take place now.

Adelina said that there were there San Antonio today, San Roque in August, and Santa Columba that is in December.

We asked which one of the festivals was the biggest

Adelina said that the August festival was the biggest

Alfredo said that that was when more people come

Adelina said that aside from that there was nothing else

We asked if there are any traditional foods that the community has.

Adelina said that well they have the *Paella*, *ensaladilla*, *cocido montañés*, and the “*mantanzas*” the killing of a pig. That when her father lived there would be festivals, and people would go to the house of the person that did the killing, and go from house to house and then when the patron saint's festival takes place that the typical food served is *paella*, *ensaladilla*, *cordero*(lamb), *pollo de corral* (caged chicken, *Conejos* (rabbit), *mazapanes*, *rosas* of everthing (*bolleria*) it's the typical food. She talked to us about the festival that takes place in Barrillos in August that that festival gets really big. It takes place on the 22 of August to celebrate the *Virgen de los Remedios*. She compared it to the Virgin of Guadalupe in Mexico that people come in a pilgrimage.

Alfredo: That there is a procession in the streets to ask for health, to find them a boyfriend, for job and that some of them go barefoot to see the Virgin,

Adelina: that some of them come from the capital of León walking sometimes

Alfredo: that from other provinces as well Valencia, and Asturias a

lot of people come

We asked that if many of the communities have festivals that take place in the month of August.

They responded that the months of June, July and August were the months that many of the festivals take place in the surrounding communities , Alfredo said that in the last 15 years he has gone to take photographs in Barrillos, and make a report on the event and that one year more than three thousand people came to the festival. That he has to get up in the street to take pictures and get a good image to show the amount of people attending the festival of Barrillos.

We asked for what purpose the horses were used in the community

Alfredo said that they have them not because they are passionate about them, but because people have land and they have the horses graze in the grassy fields to keep the grass under control and it doesn't become over grown with grass and becomes a fire hazard when the grass dries, because people don't have the machines to take care of it or people, so they use the horses.

She said that there they used to raise cattle cows, that they didn't have many horses, and that they used donkeys.

Alfredo that the donkey was used as a working tool

Adelina said that there was only one doctor for the whole region in La Ercina that now she believes it only comes three days a week that everyone needs to go there for checkups

We asked if they went to Boñar for food,

Adelina said yes to Bonar and Cicstierna to both places, that the method of transportation has always been the train.

We asked where it was that they took the train from and she said that they have always taken it from La Losillia, that Pelayo was from there.

Organize all your field notes and materials in documents and labels as indicated below:

Text files: Include all relevant text files labeling them with your last name and date.

For example: gomez_06182013.docx

Sound files: All your sound files should be included in a folder and the files labeled as follows: thomas_001_06122013.wav

II. Images

Images: There should be two different folders for images. The first folder includes only your selection of the best 20 ethnographic images. The second as many images as you would like to store in the La Alcordanza archives. The 20 selected images represent the best of your experience and study. Each image will be labeled with your lastname, unique number, and date.

For example: davis_001_06272013.jpg

II. Maps and Charts

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