

# SPICA

POSTGRADUATE JOURNAL FOR COSMOLOGY IN CULTURE

LES PLANTES

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**Cosmological beliefs of Galacian farmers**

**Exploring the mythology of Pluto**

**The meaning of clouds: a phenomenological study**

**Experiencing the summer sky: Amsterdam**

**Reviewed: *The Value of Astrology***

The Sophia Centre for  
the Study of  
Cosmology in Culture  
at



PRIFYSGOL CYMRU  
Y Drindod Dewi Sant  
UNIVERSITY OF WALES  
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# Editorial

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One of the exciting things about the field of Cultural Astronomy is that since culture is a living, experiential part of our lives, our studies are not just about the past but also the experience of the sky in the present day. This issue of Spica showcases both the meaning and use of the sky deep in history, and in the context of the contemporary world.

The fundamental value of studying the human relationship with the sky lies in its application to actual life, and nowhere is that more significant than in the application of cosmological beliefs to farming. Benito Vilas Estevez goes back to his roots to discover how cosmological beliefs influence the farming practices in a rural village in Galicia. His unique insider position gave him access to rare knowledge and makes for fascinating reading.



History is not the only place we find our relationship with the sky, and a number of students have undertaken reflexive research projects to examine the application of sky cosmology in their contemporary lives. These sky journals give us an insight into how the MA programme encourages a relevant and “living” approach to the ongoing unfolding of the human story revealed in how we see the sky. Ada Blair takes a phenomenological approach to the study of the meaning of clouds, creating a sky journal of her experience of cloud types and patterns in early summer in Edinburgh, while Elizabeth Hathway studies the sky over Amsterdam during the same period.

Astrology in Culture is also an important part of the students’ research, and in this issue Sanaa Tanha presents a deep textual analysis of the mythology of Pluto in various sources and compares them with the 20th Century astrologer Dane Rudhyar’s use of these concepts in the astrological Pluto.

Between the “family fun” of the annual Summer School and the close community on Facebook and in online classrooms, the students are also a dynamic and fertile intellectual resource in this growing field. Our inbox page this issue tells the story of how online ‘connectedness’ enables unexpected new avenues for research and discovery.

I hope you’ll find that reflected in this edition of Spica.

*Rod Suskin*

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# **A review of the cosmological beliefs and traditions that have influenced farmers in Bueu, a rural village in Galicia.**

*by Benito Vilas Estevez*

This paper explores the role that cosmological beliefs played in the traditional agricultural practices and planting cycles of the farmers and villagers of Bueu (Galicia), where plants were sown, tended and harvested in specific months and on particular days in relation to the lunar cycle. Data were collected in a series of interviews with elderly residents of the area conducted by the researcher, who has insider status in the community. The information collected concerning the specific lunar lore relating to each crop and other related subjects is reported and compared with relevant primary sources in Galicia and with secondary sources in Galicia and Spain; the lack of academic scholarship on this subject is noted and further research is recommended to capture traditional knowledge such as this before it is lost.

## **Introduction**

The aim of this project is to explore and compile information about the role that cosmological beliefs played in the traditional practices and views of planting cycles in Bueu, a rural village in Galicia, where specific plants were sown, tended and harvested in specific months and on particular days, in specific relation to the lunar cycle. I investigated what the people who maintain and use this traditional knowledge today think about how cosmology affected planting cycles, especially what they reported to have occurred when they did not plant at what was considered to be the appropriate time, and the implications of this. I also explored why they think these traditional practices are disappearing.

I interviewed people living in the village of Bueu, who have used these techniques and have lived according to their inherited traditional agricultural lore. The term “cosmology” will be used in this paper in line with a definition outlined by Juan Antonio Fernández De Rota Monter, who suggested “when in anthropology we talk about cosmology we refer to the specific way in which a

human group mentally and operatively as well as cosmically and socially organizes its world, because both are implied".<sup>1</sup>

### **Bueu: Geography and Locale**

Bueu is a council situated in Galicia (northern Spain) in the province of Pontevedra, in the Rías Baixas (Galician for lower Rias) on the peninsula of Morrazo. Bueu is integrated with the councils of Cangas, Marín and Moaña. The council of Bueu occupies 31.5 square kilometers. In the northeast, it shares a border with Marín, in the east with Moaña, in the south with Cangas and in the west with Aldán Ría and the Atlantic Ocean. Bueu contains three parishes: San Martiño de Bueu, Santa Maria de Beluso and Santa María de Cela and an island named Ons (Fig 1). The total population of Bueu is approximately 13.000 people, and their principal source of income is fishing.<sup>2</sup> The people from Bueu speak a dialect of Galician known as "Galego do Morrazo".<sup>3</sup>

Fig 1. Map of Bueu



Until the 1960s, Bueu was a completely rural area, and agriculture, stockbreeding, and coastal fishing were the most significant resources for its inhabitants.

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<sup>1</sup> My translation from: "Cuando en antropología hablamos de cosmología nos referimos a la manera concreta con la que un grupo humano organiza mental y operativamente su mundo tanto cósmico como social, dado que ambos están implicados". Juan Antonio Fernandez de Rota "Cosmología popular Gallega" in *Antropología, una exploración de la diversidad humana con temas de la cultura hispánica*. edited by Conrad Philip Madrid, 6<sup>o</sup> ed, (McGraw-Hill, D.L, 1994) p. 400.

<sup>2</sup> Jose María Estevez Castro, *Reconocer Bueu*. (Servicio de Publicacións da Diputación de Pontevedra. 1996) pp. 11-12.

<sup>3</sup> Francisco Fernandez Rey "Variedades dialectais do Galego" *Revista de Filología Románica*, nº 3 (1985) p. 92.

## Literature Review

The study of the role that cosmology played in the traditional theories and practices of planting cycles in Spain has not been thoroughly explored, although some work on the subject has been published. Josep Maria Anglés I Farrerons studied the beliefs of Levant communities in Spain as they related to agriculture which he reported in his *Influence of the Moon in Agriculture*.<sup>4</sup> He reports that “in 1976 I started to compile beliefs that pointed to our satellite, in relation to the agriculture”.<sup>5</sup> But as he does not record details of the size or nature of his target group, his work is used in this paper as a primary source rather than a secondary source of scholarship. In 2001 Juan Antonio Belmonte Avilés and Margarita Sanz de Lara Barrios published *The Magicians’ Sky*, reporting details of their work in the Canary Islands.<sup>6</sup> They say that “this book presents the fundamental core and the more important results in a study about the use of natural celestial character phenomena (astronomical and meteorological) in the agricultural and stockbreeding practices among peasants living on the islands”.<sup>7</sup> Their study is based on 36 interviews with the shepherds and farmers in different parts of the Canary Islands, with an average age of 42 years (the youngest was 29 and the oldest was 88).<sup>8</sup>

As far as Galicia, the target area for this research project is concerned there is no evidence of any serious and documented studies on this topic having been published. A literature search revealed only a few articles, and not all were from academic journals. One paper entitled *Lunar Influence on Vegetation*, was written in 1954 by J.M.B (the journal provides no name) and published in *Alma Gallega*, a journal published in Montevideo (Uruguay) from 1919 to 1967 by Galician immigrants.<sup>9</sup> The author took what might be termed a scientific approach to the subject matter rather than a sociological one, comparing studies on the influences

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<sup>4</sup> My translation: “Influencia de la Luna en la Agricultura”.

<sup>5</sup> My translation: “En 176 empecé a recopiar las creencias que apuntaban a nuestro satélite en relación con la agricultura”. Josep Maria Anglés Farrerons , *Influencia de la Luna en la Agricultura y otros temas de principal interés* (Madrid, Mundi-Prensa, 1193) p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> My translation: “El Cielo de los Magos”

<sup>7</sup> My translation: “En este libro presentamos el núcleo fundamental y los resultados más importantes de un estudio acerca del uso de los fenómenos naturales de carácter celeste (astronómico y metereológico) en las prácticas agrícolas y ganaderas del campesinado isleño”. Juan Antonio Belmonte and Margarita Sanz de Lara Barrios, *El Cielo de los Magos*. (La Marea, Islas Canarias, 2001) p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Belmonte J and Sanz Margarita. p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> My translation: “Influencia lunar en la vegetación”. J.M.B. “La influencia lunar en la vegetación” *Alma Gallega*,( Montevideo Uruguay. 1954) pp. 88-90.

of the moon with studies of light and the magnetic field of the earth during planting cycles.

In 1998 the journal *Cuadernos de Estudios Gallegos*, which focuses on academic studies and historical research, and targets scholars, published two articles related to this topic, *Religiosity, Beliefs and Vital Practices from Galician Peasantry*, by Enrique Bande Rodriguez and *Galician Dance in Honour of the Moon* by Fina M. Antón and M. Mandianes.<sup>10 11</sup> Both articles deal with various traditional lunar-oriented practices of the Galician peasantry, and both present a little information about the attributed influence of the moon on planting cycles in Galicia, although this is not their central focus.

Finally, in 2002, Fernando Leis Pérez wrote *The Influence of the Moon on Crops*, which was published in *Feiraco*, an advertising magazine aimed at farmers (Feiraco is a brand of milk).<sup>12</sup> Pérez explains how to plant according to the phases of the moon, but unfortunately he does not give the source of the traditional lore he promulgates.

Fortunately there are some useful primary sources on this topic, some of which date back to the classical period. For example, Hesiod the Greek poet (eighth century BCE) wrote *The Works and the Days*, a long poem that contains at its centre a farmer's almanac that Hesiod used to instruct his brother Perses in the agricultural arts (verses 380-617).<sup>13,14</sup>

An important primary and historical source in respect of the area of Galicia is Saint Martin of Dumio (or Braga) (d.580 CE). He converted the Suevan Kingdom in the Gallaecia to Christianity (Gallaecia comprised Galicia and part of modern-day northern Portugal). Saint Martin of Dumio wrote several treatises, two of which are relevant to this project. *De Correctione Rusticorum*, is addressed to Polemio, bishop of Astorga after the second Council of Braga in 572 CE.<sup>15</sup> It focuses on ways in which to correct the beliefs of the peasantry, among whom

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<sup>10</sup> My translation: "Religiosidad, Creencias y Practicas Vitales del Campesinado Gallego". Enrique Bande Rodriguez "Religiosidad, Creencias y Practicas Vitales del Campesinado Gallego" *Cuaderno Estudios Gallegos* num 45 (1998) pp. 302-325.

<sup>11</sup> My translation: "Danza Gallega en Honor a la Luna ". Fina M. Antón y M. Mandianes "Danza Gallega en Honor a la Luna" *Cuaderno Estudios Gallegos* num 45 (1998) pp. 249-256.

<sup>12</sup> My translation "A influencia da lúa nos cultivos". Fernando Leis Pérez "A Influencia da lúa nos Cultivos" *Feiraco* n° 43 (2002) pp. 11-13.

<sup>13</sup> Hesiodo *Trabajos y los días* trans María Ángeles (Madrid, Alianza, 1998)

<sup>14</sup> Hesiodo, Verses 380-617

<sup>15</sup> Martiño de Braga, *De Correctione Rusticorum*, trans Urcino de Val (Madrid, Fundación Universitaria, 1990)

paganism and superstitions were more deeply-rooted than among the educated classes.<sup>16</sup>

In *Capitula Martini*, a work of canonical and liturgical character addressed to Nitigesio, bishop of Lugo, Saint Martin's objective was to recapture what he conceived to be the purity of the original canons.<sup>17</sup> He rewrote and adapted these canons to the Suevans, dividing them into 84 canons. Canons 69 to 84 are dedicated to the secular aspects of society and, reference uses of the moon by Galician peasantry, thus being particularly relevant to this study.<sup>18</sup>

## Methodology

I used qualitative methods to gather data by conducting informal interviews with people from the village of Bueu who have used the inherited lunar-related agricultural techniques under review. My enquiry centred on the question: Which were the cosmological beliefs and traditions that have most influenced farmers in Bueu? I interviewed a group of 16 people with an average age of 83, the youngest being 68 and the oldest 98. My focus was on the older members of the community because, among members of the adult population who are younger than 60, traditional agricultural lore has been compromised by the arrival of technology: devices such as television, radio, the Internet, watches, farm machinery, etc have created a different lifestyle, in which agriculture is no longer the primary occupation. The interviews were set up through personal contacts with the people of the village. Recently, during a course on archaeoastronomy in Galicia during which this project was discussed, one of the participants said to me:

I find your work very interesting, especially because we might do archaeoastronomy studies on structures in the future, and it will be practically impossible to do what you are doing in 15 years, because this knowledge is disappearing. So I find these approaches very interesting, because we have to understand that these approaches can be practised here, and not just in indigenous cultures.

I was persuaded to use qualitative research methods by the arguments presented by David Silverman, who says: "if you want to discover how people intend to vote, then a quantitative method, like a social survey, may seem the most appropriate choice. On the other hand, if you are concerned, with exploring people's life histories or everyday behavior, then qualitative methods may be

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<sup>16</sup> Martiño de Braga, *De Correctione Rusticorum* p. 145.

<sup>17</sup> Martiño de Braga, *Capitula Martini*, (trans Urcino de Val (Madrid, Fundación Universitaria, 1990)

<sup>18</sup> Martiño de Braga, *Capitula Martini*, prologue

favoured".<sup>19</sup> I was looking for personal experiences and responses to capture; to study what Alan Bryman calls "the uniqueness of individual cases and contexts".<sup>20</sup> I researched my own community from the inside because, as Bryman notes, "for qualitative researchers, it is only by getting close to their subjects and becoming an insider that they can view the world as a participant in that setting".<sup>21</sup>

Possible criticism of a researcher's predominant use of unstructured interviews has been countered by Charlotte Aull Davies, who states:

Interviewing carried out by ethnographers whose principal research strategy is participant observation is often virtually unstructured, that is, very close to a 'naturally occurring' conversation. However, even in such unstructured interviews ethnographers have in mind topics they wish to explore and questions they would like to pose, thus they tend to direct the conversation with the research in mind, without imposing much structure on the interaction.<sup>22</sup>

I opened each interview by introducing myself, and checking whether I could ask some questions and record the responses. Then I asked a general question: What was the agriculture like in the past and what was planted? Once this question had been answered, and I knew what was planted (which was fundamental information), I asked: "how did the phases of the moon affect the planting cycles?"

As an insider within the community, it was easy for me to connect with the residents and they agreed that I could interview them. We speak the same language, and to some extent, they "know" me. I was easily recognised due to my family's nickname (*Ministro* from my grandfather, and *Da Cova* from my grandmother).

In my otherwise advantageous insider position, the only challenge I encountered was that my informants were willing to give me extended periods of their time and expected me to conduct lengthy and detailed interviews with them. Because I conducted informal interviews, they often told me about things unrelated to the research subject, veering away from the main topic. However, in the course of the time I spent among members of my target community, I learned

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<sup>19</sup> Silverman, D., *Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook*, (London: Sage 2000) p. 105.

<sup>20</sup> Alan Bryman, "The Debate About Quantitative and Qualitative Research: A Question of Method or Epistemology?" *The British Journal of Sociology*, Volume 35, No.1, March 1984 p. 77.

<sup>21</sup> Alan Bryman. *Quantity and Quality in Social Research*. (London Routledge, 2006, first published 1988) p. 94.

<sup>22</sup> Charlotte Aull Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography*. (London Routledge, 2008, first published 1998) p. 105.



much and gained a fuller understanding of how people of this area lived in the past. The rich data I collected have provided ideas for possible future research projects aimed at capturing traditional knowledge which may otherwise go unrecorded and be lost to the research community.

In what follows I will present the information collected from my interviews, and report the beliefs of the people of Bueu as described to me with reference to the literature reviewed above. As far as my role as a researcher with an 'emic' or insider bias is concerned, it will do well for me to remember the words of Dell Hymes who, elaborating on the attributes of the 'emic' orientation and the insider position, was clear that "the notion does not imply that those whose behavior manifests an emic system are conscious of its nature or can formulate it for the investigator".<sup>23</sup> The 'emic' perspective of my research has, therefore, been complemented by an 'etic' or outsider perspective to assist in analysing the broad-based data I have collected.

The advisability of moving between insider and outsider perspectives is argued by David J. Hufford, who suggests that "we can also speak personally about our beliefs, and at times that may be useful to our students or colleagues-but only if we are aware and clearly state that we are now using our personal voice ... We must distinguish our personal voices from our scholarly voices".<sup>24</sup> Jo Pearson considers the insider position to be as valuable as outsider information and, if the two perspectives can be combined, it is possible to achieve an understanding that is ethical and informative.<sup>25</sup>

Therefore I have attempted to be an insider in terms of the community and an outsider in terms of the vantage of the researcher, taking into account that to be absolutely objective is impossible, a chimera, and that the research field and its residents will always have an effect on the researcher.<sup>26</sup>

## Findings and Discussion

According to the literature review relating to Galicia, the moon was the only planet used to guide agricultural labour; this was corroborated by my field-

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<sup>23</sup> Dell Hymes, "Linguistic Method in Ethnography: its development in the united States" in *Method and Theory in Linguistics*, (The Hague: Mouton, 1970) pp. 281-282.

<sup>24</sup> David J Hufford. "The scholarly Voice and the Personal Voice: Reflexivity in Belief Studies", *Western Folklore*, vol 54, no 1 (1995) p. 65.

<sup>25</sup> Jo Pearson, "Going native in reverse: the insider as researcher in British Wicca" in *Theorising Fait: the Insider/Outsider Problem*, edited by Elizabeth Arweck and Martin Stringer, (Birmingham: University Press, 2002) pp. 105-107.

<sup>26</sup> Jo Pearson p.108.

work in Bueu. One interviewee noted “it was she who guided us,”<sup>27</sup> and this was the case not just in agricultural labour, but also in wider related and seemingly unrelated activities such as slaughtering pigs, fishing, and even conceiving children. It is important here to note that this appears consistent with the definition of cosmology by de Rota above. This project however, will focus only on the influence of cosmological lore on planting cycles (in relation particularly to the moon).

The focus of my informants on the moon is at variance with Hesiod’s work, in which the stars seem to have been more important in the agricultural working seasons; therefore it seems that Hesiod’s work has not been disseminated as far as the surviving folklore of contemporary villagers.<sup>28</sup> However, in Galicia it appears that there has been a connection between the influence of the moon and agricultural cycles dating from the fifth century CE, as evidenced in the *Capitula Martini* by Saint Martin of Dumio. Canon 82 refers to “taking the elements, the course of the moon, or the stars into account with regard to the construction of housing, sowing or tree planting or the celebration of marriage”.<sup>29</sup> The problem here is that unfortunately it is not possible to ascertain which particular cycles of the moon the ancient Galicians took note of.

The information that it is only the moon which influenced planting cycles is echoed in the modern Galician works presented. In his Spanish publications, Angles - I Farrerons confirmed that it was the moon that ruled the fields in the Levant communities.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, Belmonte and Lara Sanz proved that, in the case of Canary Islands, it was not only the moon which was influential but also stars such as the Pleiades and Sirius, and constellations such as “*El Arado*” (the belt and sword of Orion), Mars and even the Milky Way.<sup>31</sup>

Because not all crops followed the same cultivation pattern, they will be presented separately in what follows. In Bueu, as I discovered from my informants, the crops they used to sow consisted of the following: rye (no longer sowed in Bueu), corn, potatoes, lettuces, onions and legumes. The moon was also consulted in the application of fertilizer, the pruning of trees and the making of wine, all of which activities were conducted in line with its prescribed phases.

When talking to me of the moon’s phases, my informants did not use the expression “the waxing moon”; rather, they always referred to “the strong of the

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<sup>27</sup> “Ela era quen nos guiaba”

<sup>28</sup> Hesíodo, verses 380-385.

<sup>29</sup> My translation “Recollendo os elementos, o curso da lúa, o das estrelas en relación coa construción de casas, da sembra, da plantación das arbores e dos casamentos”. San Martiño de Braga, *Capitula Martini* canon 82.

<sup>30</sup> Angles I Farrerons p. 45.

<sup>31</sup> Belmonte and Sanz Lara pp. 34-43.

moon”, and the full moon was sometimes referred to as “when the moon is strongest”. This is particularly curious as Anton and Mandianes use the expression ‘waxing moon’ and report that their informants refer to the full moon as “the old moon”.<sup>32 33 34</sup> Even Bande Rodriguez according to their informants uses the expression “the old moon” to refer to the full moon too, but he also adds the expressions “the bad moon” (referring to the new moon) and “the good moon” (meaning the full moon) as common expressions of the Galician peasantry.<sup>35</sup> I can report that, according to my data, these expressions are no longer used in Bueu.

Also absent from the literature reviewed is any mention of how people knew the current phase of the moon or for that matter the date and day of the week. The latter would have been significant in historical times as, in relation to some crops, there existed and indeed still exists the notion of important calendrical days. People from Bueu had a poetic proverb: “Paunch looking to the West means waxing moon and Paunch looking to the East means waning moon”.<sup>36</sup> To inform themselves of the day, the date and the current phase of the moon, the people of Bueu have, in modern times, been able to avail themselves of a copy of the farm almanac or calendar *O Gaiteiro de Lugo* which was published continuously from since 1857 to 1973.

As regards the sowing of rye, the sixteen interviewees were all in agreement that “with rye you do not pay attention to anything external; the most important thing was to sow at Saint Stephen (26<sup>th</sup> December)”.<sup>37</sup> To schedule when to harvest rye, again people did not look to the moon: “we cut it when it was ready”.<sup>38</sup> This contrasts with work by Fina and Mandianes in which it is stated that “rye sowed with the full moon would produce only straw”. On the other hand Bande Rodriguez stated “the rye was better sown with the full moon or the waning moon”, and Leis Perez noted the following variation to the rule for the time of sowing: “rye, corn and wheat, if the soil is good with the last days of the waning moon, but if the soil is poor it is better to sow with the waxing moon”.

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<sup>32</sup> Cando ten toda a forza

<sup>33</sup> A forza da lua

<sup>34</sup> Fina M y Mandianes p. 251.

<sup>35</sup> Enrique Bande p .313.

<sup>36</sup> Barriga para ponente cuarto crecente e barriga para Levante cuarto mingunte

<sup>37</sup> O centeo non se lle facía caso, o importante era botalo por San Esteban.

<sup>38</sup> Cortábamolo cando xa estaba listo

<sup>39</sup> <sup>40</sup> <sup>41</sup> In the context of the Levant communities, Anglés I Farrerons agreed with Leis Perez.<sup>42</sup>

To move from rye to corn, all interviewees said that it was not important when they sowed this crop, although one noted that “it does not matter, but the waning moon does something”.<sup>43</sup> The most important aspect of tending this crop was not the sowing but the cutting of the tassels: “The important thing was to cut the tassels when they were big and yellow in order for the ear to get stout. This task was carried out between Saint John (24<sup>th</sup> June) and Saint Jacques (25<sup>th</sup> July)”.<sup>44</sup> But when it came to harvesting the corn, all the interviewees said that this task was carried out at the time of the waning moon: “the corn was cut with the waning moon to better conserve it, to give to the animals during winter” and “to make a loft full of straw, this was also done during the waning moon, because shucking the leaves of the corn, at that time, was held to conserve them and make them tan better”, otherwise “if it was cut with the strong of the moon and allowed to go mouldy, then what were you going to give to the animals? And also, to sleep on, because the good corn leaves were used for the beds or do you think that we had beds then as we have today”.<sup>45</sup> <sup>46</sup> <sup>47</sup> Curiously all studies referencing corn discuss the time for sowing corn as being the same time for sowing rye; yet none mention what happened during the harvesting process although, for the people of Bueu, the latter was the time when the moon’s phase was important.

Regarding potato crops, according to my interviewees “potatoes were sown with the waning moon and the new moon, and they were dug with the waning moon, because with the strong of the moon it was always said that the plants

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<sup>39</sup> My translation “El centeno sembrado con la luna llena producirá solo paja”. Fina M y Mandianes p. 251.

<sup>40</sup> My translation “El centeno, el maíz y el trigo si el suelo es bueno deben ser plantados con la luna menguante, pero si el suelo es pobre es mejor sembrar con la luna creciente”. Bande Rodriguez p. 313.

<sup>41</sup> Leis Perez p. 12.

<sup>42</sup> Angles I farrerons p. 41.

<sup>43</sup> Non importaba cando se botase aínda que a minguanete algo lle facía

<sup>44</sup> O importante era cortarlle o pendon cando xa está grande e amárelo para que engorde a espiga, cortábase entre San Juan e Santiago

<sup>45</sup> Se empalleiraba coa minguanete, para que despois o esfollar se conservara e curtirá mellor

<sup>46</sup> A palla do maíz córtase coa minguanete para que se conservara millor para darlle o inverno os animais

<sup>47</sup> Se o cortabas coa forza da lua enton aborolecía, e despois haber que lle dabas os animais, e ademais para durmir por que o follaco bo empregábase para durmir, ou pensas que tiñamos camas como as de agora.

grew a lot of foliage and little fruit".<sup>48</sup> This is potentially ambiguous, and when I asked the informants to clarify when they thought the new moon started to wax, their answers were very different. According to five of them, during the first three days of a cycle the moon is still weak, while others thought the weak period lasted for the first five days, and just one of them thought it was the first seven days. They were only in agreement that after the 'counting days', the moon started to get strong and you could not sow then. According to Enrique Bande and Fina and Mandianes, potatoes sown with the new moon produce only foliage,<sup>49</sup> which seems to be the opposite of what the people of Bueu think, although perhaps not if the differences in opinion regarding how long the new moon remains weak and when it begins to strengthen are taken into account. At the same time, in the Levant communities, according to Anglés I Farrerons, "all the operations that concern potatoes should be performed with the full moon and if it is possible with the waning moon".<sup>50</sup> According to Belmonte and Sanz Lara, referring to the Canary Islands, it is better to sow and to harvest potatoes with the waning moon, because if done with the waxing moon they will rot.<sup>51</sup>

In the case of legumes I discovered that this is a crop about which my interviewees disagreed. According to fourteen of my informants, legumes should be sown with the waning moon, but two disagreed. Another said that "a little bit of the strong of the moon is good" while another asserted that "legumes have to be sown with the strong of the moon".<sup>52</sup> <sup>53</sup> As far as the literature on this subject goes, J.M.B held that legumes should be planted with the waxing moon and Leis Pérez agreed.<sup>54</sup> <sup>55</sup> Of interest here would be to explore how widespread this discrepancy is in other regions.

Concerning lettuce, there was no discrepancy of opinions among the interviewees, all of whom told me that it has to be sown with the waning moon "Lettuces with the waning moon, for if they are sown with the strong of the moon, they do not close well, and I have said that to everybody".<sup>56</sup> J.M.B concurs

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<sup>48</sup> A patata botábase coa luna nova, e cavábase coa mingunte, pois coa forza da luna sempre se dixo que medraba moita ramada e pouco fruto

<sup>49</sup> Enrique Bande p. 313.

Fina M y Mandianes p. 251.

<sup>50</sup> My translation "Todo lo relacionado con el cultivo de las patatas debe ser hecho con la luna llena y si es posible con la menguante". Angles I Farrerons p. 86.

<sup>51</sup> Belmonte and Sanz Lara p. 41.

<sup>52</sup> Un pouquiño da forza da lúa non ven mal

<sup>53</sup> As legumbres teñen que levar a forza da lua

<sup>54</sup> J.M.B p. 84.

<sup>55</sup> Leis Pérez p. 11.

<sup>56</sup> As leitugas teñen que ser plantadas coa mingunte, senon non pechan ben e iso dígollos eu a calqueira.

with the view of my informants, stating “when we look to the profit of the vegetative part, it has to be sown with the waning moon”.<sup>57</sup>

In the case of onions, this crop must be sown and collected with the waning moon for, if it was not done this way, the result would be, as one of my interviewees stated, “When onions sprout with a brown wooden shaft inside it is because they were harvested when the moon was with the strong. And that happens today, because now young people do not look to the moon; before it did not happen”.<sup>58</sup>

When it comes to fertilizing the fields, all of the interviewees were in agreement that “fertilizer has to be applied with the strong of the moon, if it is not it creates crack and mould”.<sup>59</sup> Anglés I Farrerons supports this assertion in the case of the Levant.<sup>60</sup>

To prune trees, there is a proverb that all of the interviewees related to me. “After Saint Vincent (22<sup>nd</sup> January) nor waning nor waxing”, which means that, after Saint Vincent, it does not matter when the pruning is done.<sup>61</sup> When I asked the reason for this, one of the informants answered, “it is due to the fact that after Saint Vincent, the sap is more or less already at the top of the tree, and this makes it bleed no matter what, even so, if you want it to bleed less you prune with the waning, but it does not matter at that point”.<sup>62</sup> But before Saint Vincent it is important to prune trees with the waning moon. This is especially important for pruning the ‘Xestas’ or *Cytisius scoparius* (a kind of woody bush) for the vineyard, because “the vineyards before were made of wood, and there were no wire fences, that came later. So to do the vineyards you pruned the ‘Xestas’ with the waning moon in order not to leave the wood to season, with the waning moon they were resistant”.<sup>63</sup> Enrique Bande supports the idea that pruning with the waning moon does not leave the wood to season, but he does not mention the proverb. In the

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<sup>57</sup> My translation “Cuando lo que se pretende es el crecimiento de la parte vegetativa, tiene que ser plantada con la menguante”. J.M.B p. 85.

<sup>58</sup> As cebolas cando lles medra como unha rama de madeira marrón por dentro, é por que foron recollidas coa forza da lúa, e iso antes non pasaba, sucede agora por que os xóvenes non mirades para a lúa, antes non pasaba.

<sup>59</sup> O abono ten que ser pousado coa forza da lua, senon cuártease e colle barolo.

<sup>60</sup> Anglés i Farrerons p. 53.

<sup>61</sup> Depois de San Vicente nin minguate nin crecente

<sup>62</sup> Débese a que depois de San Vicente mais ou menos a savia xa chegou acima da árbore, e este vai sangrar se o cortas, aínda así se o queres podar millor coa minguate por que sangra menos, pero xa non importa.

<sup>63</sup> As viñas antes eran pura madeira e había que traer muita madeira, facíanse coa madeira da xesta, o alambrar as viñas e moi moderno, e podábase coa minguate para que non se apollillara, coa minguate aguantaba máis a madeira.

case of the Canary Islands, Belmonte and Sanz Lara said that people also used the waning moon for this task.<sup>64 65</sup>

To make wine, the interviewees said that the waning moon was crucial, as it influences the entire process. The first step should be to clean the barrels from the previous year, and this task should be performed with the waning moon. "The barrels to make the wine have to be cleaned with the waning moon, because if you do this with the strong of the moon, they get dry and mouldy and create a bad substance".<sup>66</sup> The next step is the grape harvest, "This is done with the waning preferably, because the grape has all the sugar, but if it is raining you grape the harvest with good weather, because you cannot wait for the waning or the grapes could be damaged".<sup>67</sup> Once this was done, at the end of grape harvest, "People put in the vineyard, a branch of a laurel".<sup>68</sup> Saint Martin of Dumio, in the "*Correctione Rusticorum*" drew attention to this tradition of using branches of laurel.<sup>69</sup> Next, to press or tread the grapes people used the waning moon: "it (wine) was made with the waning moon because then it would ferment well".<sup>70</sup> Decanting and bottling the wine were also done with the waning moon: "we bottle the wine with the waning moon, if you have a lot of bottles because they will hold up better".<sup>71</sup> The work of Angles I Farrerons only makes mention of the belief that the waning moon was considered important to the wine harvest.<sup>72</sup> Belmonte and Lara Sanz note the influence of the waning moon on the grape harvest and on the decanting of the wine once it was made.

Another important aspect related to the moon and to the sun, the latter having been so far unmentioned, was the influence on crops attributed to an eclipse. There is no mention of eclipses in any of the literature reviewed. The people of Bueu refer to eclipses as "moon crises and solar crises", a crisis being suggested by the apparent disappearance or deviation from the usual colour of the sun or the moon.<sup>73</sup> The Galician anthropologist, Cristina Sánchez Carretero, told me that this terminology could be accounted for as example of popular

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<sup>64</sup> Bande Rodriguez p. 313.

<sup>65</sup> Belmonte and Sanz Lara p. 41.

<sup>66</sup> Os barris para facer o viño teñen que lavarse coa mingunte, por que se o fas coa forza da lua, están secos igual pero aborolecidos e crían mala substancia

<sup>67</sup> Isto faise coa mingunte preferiblemente por que así a uva ten todo o azucre. Pero se está chovendo as colles co bo tempo, porque senón se esperas as uvas botáanse a perder.

<sup>68</sup> Cando se terminaba de vendimiar unha finca púñase unha rama de loureiro na finca.

<sup>69</sup> Saint Martin of Braga *Correctione Rusticorum* p. 27.

<sup>70</sup> Facíase coa mingunte para que fervera ben o viño

<sup>71</sup> Para embotéllalo coa mingunte, se tes muitas botellas por que aguanta máis.

<sup>72</sup> Angles I Farrerons p. 29.

<sup>73</sup> Crises de lúa e crises de sol.

etymology: people take one word that has a certain meaning for them and link it with a similar word with a different meaning. In the Galician language “eclipse” and “crise” sound similar.

According to my interviewees, eclipses are a bad sign and “solar crises are worse than lunar, because the day turns to night, they were longer and shorter [the terms longer and shorter refer to the difference between total and partial eclipses]. They were held to affect the crops in the sense that they could be accompanied by unusual winds which scorch the crops”.<sup>74</sup>

When I asked my interviewees if they still believe in the influence of the moon, fifteen answered unequivocally “yes”; only one said “no”, despite recognising that the moon has an effect on wine. As one informant said, “if we did not follow the rules, it was very difficult to eat. Before we could not choose what we wanted to eat, the mission was to put food on the table, and eat”.<sup>75</sup> This powerful idea of following these rules in order to increase the chances of survival is present in the work of Hesiod:

Strip to sow and strip to plough and strip to reap, if you wish to get in all Demeter's fruits in due season, and that each kind may grow in its season. Else, afterwards, you may chance to be in want, and go begging to other men's houses, but without avail; as you have already come to me. But I will give you no more nor give you further measure. Foolish Perses!<sup>76</sup>

Regarding the question of why they think these practices are disappearing, my informants remembered that “life was a misery and younger people do not want to live like that anymore ... Young people do not listen and they do not want to learn, they believe that it is just old stuff ... With the chemical products for everything there is no need to see ... Now as you have watches, television and the Internet you know everything”.<sup>77</sup>

## Conclusion

What, then, can it be concluded, is the influence of the inherited horticultural lore, based on the traditional cosmology of the region, on

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<sup>74</sup> As crises de sol son peores cas de lúa por que o día voltábase noite, as había mais largas e menos. Afectáballes os cultivos en que traen uns aires raros que queimaban moito as cosechas

<sup>75</sup> Senon seguíamos estas regras era moi difícil comer, antes non se podía escoller que querías comer, a misión era poner un plato enriba da mesa e comer.

<sup>76</sup> Hesiod verse 388-392

<sup>77</sup> Esa vida era unha mseria e a xente xoven non quere vivr diso nunca mais.

A xente xoven non escuita e non quere aprender, eles cren que son cosas de vellos.

Coa química para todo non fai falta nada.

Agora como tendes reloxes, televisión e internet o sabedes todo.



agricultural practices in Bueu? In terms of Fernandez de Rota's definition of cosmology given, at the beginning of this paper, it is clear that the sowing and harvesting of all crops and related agricultural tasks were planned and executed in line with the moon's phases. It can therefore be said that the rhythm of the life of this agricultural community was dictated by the moon in line with the received wisdom of its members. This knowledge was considered essential by members of the community who were dependent on the food crops which they grew as fundamental survival tools. Consequently they inhabited an interactive cosmos as was evidenced by their responses to my questioning; they paid attention to the moon's phases in order to live and farm in accordance with them. The moon's phases drove the organization of their lives and their manner of pursuing their livelihoods.

It is regrettable that, with the exception of the work of Belmonte, there have been no other serious and scientific research projects conducted into traditional Spanish moon-related agricultural lore. This small case study has endeavoured to capture and report some small part of the hitherto unrecorded knowledge of a bounded community, in order to ensure its survival. It would be interesting to expand this investigation beyond its narrow focus on crop production to include the other areas mentioned above as having been thought susceptible to lunar influence, such as fishing, slaughtering pigs and human conception. It is to be hoped that further studies of all the above subjects to extend to the wider ethnoastronomy of the Galician region will be conducted in order to record variations between villages and judge whether, despite these, the inherited lunar lore conforms to an overarching regional cosmology or is separately devolved.

Future research should additionally consider the opinions of younger members of these communities to gauge whether this knowledge is in fact disappearing; and if this is found to be the case, to collect young people's views on this subject.

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