Mask Producers and Mask Bearers in the Galician *Entroido* of the 21st Century

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ABSTRACT

Drawing on a selection of traditional masks present in Galicia, the paper focuses on the observation and analysis of the persistence and transformations of the Galician *Entroido*. The research is not concerned with bourgeois and urban Carnivals associated with modernity and contemporary society, but rather focuses on those manifestations typical of the rural world and linked to local peasant society. Over the last two decades, these *entroidos* have attracted the attention of public authorities and have become subject to processes of touristification. This research examines the know-how involved in producing the materiality of winter masks in the Galician *Entroido*: clothing, masks, and accessories, as well as how these objects adapt to the resources and time constraints allowed or imposed by the current post-industrial and hyper-connected society. The research also examines how the processes of knowledge transmission that arose in an oral culture, but continue to be reproduced in the 21st century, are being transformed.

KEYWORDS

Entroido; winter masquerades; Galicia; rural carnival; society of spectacle.

Ando rabudo como un peliqueiro.[1]
Traio a misión dun superguerreiro.
Mira, Marisé divorciou hai tres meses
e como lle prestou: está máis guapa ca nunca!
Baila tacón, despois a punta.
A festa rebenta cunha de Rocío Dúrcal;
quero Ana Kiro e ritmo de pandeiro
antes de que remate durmindo nun roleiro.

[I walk fiercely like a *peliqueiro*.
I bring the mission of a super-warrior.
Look, Marisé divorced three months ago
and how it suited her; she is prettier than ever!
Dance with the heel, then the toe.
The festival explodes with a Rocío Dúrcal song;
I want Ana Kiro and the rhythm of the tambourine
before I end up sleeping in a furrow.]

Bótalle caldo. Cumbia malandra. Malandrómeda.

Introduction. An approach to the rural Galician *Entroido*

> The Galician *Entroido* was threatening, with its texts of social criticism, the erotic swaying of its characters, encouraging enjoyment and an existence lived with pleasure, and its masks that laughed. Even before removing the day celebrating the Republic, the 14th of April, Franco banned the laughter of the *Entrudo* from the calendar. (Godinho 2023a)

The rural *Entroido* (Carnival) of Galicia forms one of the most fertile ethnographic settings for approaching the processes of patrimonialisation (heritagisation), touristification, and the appropriation of a ritual culture by communities and institutions. The Galician Carnival is part of a broad set of rural European carnivals characterised by winter masquerades, symbolic inversions, and rites of passage. Unlike the urban Galician carnivals, associated—though not exclusively—with the bourgeois culture of the 19th and 20th centuries at the dawn of modernity and with the emergence of a logic of spectacle and mediated aestheticisation, the rural Galician *entroidos* have been produced and reproduced within farming communities. In these communities, masks, clothing, and performative practices are socialised and transmitted intergenerationally through practical learning and oral tradition. This constitutes a form of community performativity inscribed in seasonal cycles and peasant sociability.

The scholarly literature agrees that these celebrations transcend mere fun and act as spaces of social cohesion, forming symbolic laboratories that function within a liminal time in which people reformulate and subvert social hierarchies (Godinho 2023a, Sotelino Losada et al. 2019). Federico Cocho (2008) highlights that the *Entroido* entails a genuine festive complex sustained by an active memory through which the participating community reproduces, reinvents, and negotiates meanings within the framework of rural life.

The transformations of the Galician rural world that occurred in the 20th century—including migration, de-agrarianisation, public education, the impact of the information society and mass communication, infrastructural development, political and administrative decentralisation, and digitalisation—in the context of the fascist *coup d'état* of 1936 and the ensuing National-Catholic dictatorship that lasted until 1975, profoundly affected the continuity of the *entroidos*. Some masks disappeared for decades, others survived with difficulty in the care of a few custodian families, and others experienced revitalisation processes driven by neighbourhood associations, town councils, and cultural agents, often in the wake of institutional heritage discourses. As Godinho (2023b) warns, these revitalisation processes must be understood not as mere nostalgic resurrections, but as reworkings emerging from the interaction between local memories, technical knowledge, and new political and cultural expectations.

In the 21st century, the rural *entroidos*[2] have experienced significant transformations resulting from processes of patrimonialisation, cultural institutionalisation,[3] and touristification. At the same time, the contemporary hyper-connected society has created new ways of making traditional masks visible, mediated, and interpreted. As Paula Godinho explains (2023b, 345-66), heritage policies in southern Europe tend to oscillate between institutional conservation and the risk of turning the living into a nostalgic object: a "heritage melancholy" that disconnects the practice from its social conditions. In this context, examining the current production and use of Galician *Entroido* masks aims to understand and interpret how rural communities negotiate their cultural continuity in a context shaped by tensions between tradition, market, and spectacle.

The reactivation of the so-called traditional *entroidos in Galicia* has been especially visible in the mass media since the 1990s, with the consolidation of inter-parish gatherings, municipal support networks, and growing media and tourist interest, culminating in 2025 with the declaration of the Galician *Entroido* as a *Ben de Interese Cultural* (Asset of Cultural Interest) by the Xunta de Galicia (Autonomous Government of Galicia). This institutionalisation, although significant for the preservation of these rituals, has also generated debates regarding the boundaries between conservation, spectacularisation, and commercial appropriation, as observed by Herrero Pérez (2021) and Marqués Valea, Castro Fernández, and López Facal (2020) in relation to the tension between the heritage community and the tourist community.

This work is based on ethnographic documentation of different Galician masks: *Volantes*[4] and *maragatos*[5] of the Ribeirao *Entroido*, *Oso*[6] (Bear) from Salcedo, *Vixigueiro*[7] from Samede, *Vello dos Cornos*[8] (Horned Old Man) from Merza, *Felo*[9] from Maceda and Esgos, *Boteiros*[10] from Vilariño de Conso and Viana do Bolo, *Vergalleiro*[11] from Sarreaus, *Mázcaras*[12] from Buxán, and *Pantallas*[13] from Xinzo. The production techniques and performative logics are described in detail in local sources, and inmaterials that have been provided by artisans, neighbourhood associations, and cultural entities. The article combines these descriptions with recent research on winter rituality, patrimonialisation, and rural carnival (Panero and Tiza 2023, Godinho 2023a and 2023b, Seixas 2022, Senén 2022, Vázquez Saavedra 2022, Cocho 2008, 2012, Rivas 1988, 2001), as well as with journalistic sources documenting the contemporary impact of the *Entroido* in the Galician public sphere.

It is fundamental to focus the analysis on both mask producers—artisans, apprentices, and bearers of technical knowledge—and mask bearers—guides, dancers, and performative mediators—as subjects who articulate, through their praxis, the continuity of a living heritage that cannot be reduced to its material appearance (Santoro 2025). The mask is not just an object: it is technique, gesture, bond, transmission, improvisation, and social imagination. Contemporary ethnographic observation shows that the same hybridisation processes affecting Galician society—hyperconnectivity, the global circulation of images, and digital cultural markets—are transforming both the production and the use of these masks, without erasing their territorial anchoring. The methodological approach combines textual analysis, literature review, comparative study, and an anthropological perspective focused on artisanal continuity and its place in the digital age.

A diatopic journey through a selection of Galician masks

The diversity of Galician *Entroido* masks reflects a profound diatopic variability. Rather than being minor variants of the same festive type, each mask constitutes a cultural unit with its own genealogy, material techniques, dramaturgy, and forms of community presence. Available ethnographic descriptions allow us to observe the hybrid interplay between continuity and change that characterises the 21st century.

Southern Lugo presents a diverse ritual landscape, where practices such as those of the *Entroido* Ribeirao (Chantada), namely *Volantes*, *Maragatos*, *Mecos*,[14] and zoomorphic rituals like the *Oso* of Salcedo (A Pobra do Brollón) persist. Both constitute paradigmatic examples of artisanal transmission based on bodily memory and learning by accompaniment, which Freire Paz (2004) conceptualizes as heritage trades of a domestic nature.

In the *Entroido* Ribeirao (Santiago da Riba, a parish in Chantada municipality), the *Volante* represents one of the most spectacular masks due to its elaborate construction: layers of paper and linen joined with paste, a *pucho* (hat) crowned by dolls and ribbons, and a brightly coloured suit that reproduces models documented by Rivas Quintas since the 1980s. The functions of the *Volante*, associated with processional dances and the staging of ancient manorial tax collectors, remain active. Its companion, the *Maragato*, described in the glossary *Frampas* (2001), combines furs,[15] a wineskin, and a wine flask, acting as an aggressive figure in charge of protecting the retinue. The *Meco*, protagonist of the evenings of *Entroido* Tuesday, embodies the ritual lament for the end of the festive cycle. Its contemporary mask, made of cardboard and plaster, is an example of artisanal creativity that adapts tradition to new demands.

The *Ribeirao* complex thus constitutes a microcosm in which several artisanal techniques coexist:

a) paper and paste masks made on a wooden mould (*Volantes*).

b) fur masks, animal skulls, and bone mounts (*Maragatos* / *Peliqueiros*).

c) masks combining different materials, including plaster, cardboard, and sheep's wool, for the *Meco* character.

The *Volantes* exhibit an impressive mastery of layered work (paper–fabric–paper) and the paste technique, which requires precise control of the drying process. These techniques, already documented by Rivas Quintas (1988), persist today thanks to direct transmission between artisans such as Juan Carlos González and young local apprentices. The production of the *puchos*, wire structures covered with ribbons and flowers, is an example of collective work involving women from the parish and highlights the community dimension of festive craftsmanship (Varela-Portela et al. 2019).

The *Maragatos*, for their part, show the survival of traditional tanning practices based on ash and the resignification of animal materials. This work corresponds to what Herrero Pérez calls "low-institutional-intensity heritage" (2021, 68), where the technique is sustained by family lineages without a formalised transmission process.

The *Meco* of the *Entroido* Ribeirao illustrates a recent phenomenon: the mask-making process we document uses a plaster mould and was learned from Marcelino de Santiago, from the Compostela puppet company *Os Monicreques de Kukas*. We observe how an extra-local artisanal circuit is thus consolidated, forming an informal network of *Entroido* experts who travel between municipalities and festivals, a phenomenon also observed by Godinho (2023b) in the Portuguese case.

Without leaving the south of the province of Lugo, the *Oso* (Bear) from Salcedo (A Pobra do Brollón) belongs to the category of zoomorphic masks, prominent figures within European winter carnivals, such as those portrayed by French photographer Charles Fréger in *Wilder Mann: The Image of the Savage* (2012).[16] The *Oso*, accompanied by *Mordomos* (Servants) who capture and release the animal, connects with well-documented Alpine and Pyrenean motifs. The physical interaction of the bear, which smudges those it meets with soot and mud, maintains a liminal logic linked to the end of hibernation and the beginning of the period of fertility.

The process of making the *Oso* mask involves a combination of rural leatherworking techniques (cowhide moulded over wood for the mask) and organic materials (tartar, soot, ash), and is the product of orally transmitted knowledge. The advice of artisans such as Ramón Lleó or Ramón Taboada demonstrates a shift in traditional knowledge—previously purely domestic—towards a mixed model involving experts recognised as holders of this knowledge, in line with the artisanal accreditation phenomena described by Freire Paz

(2022). The spectacular nature of the *Oso* lies less in the mask than in the performativity of the smudging, a gesture that remains one of the Galician carnival practices preserving traces of a ritual logic of impurity associated with symbolic inversion.[17]

In the Deza region (Pontevedra province), we find another zoomorphic figure, indeterminate in form, halfway between a bear and a bull, and also displaying demonic traits. In the parish of Merza, Vila de Cruces, in an area known for the Napoleonic-style *Entroido* of the *Xenerais da Ulla* ("Generals of the Ulla"), the mask of the *Vello dos Cornos* ("Horned Old Man") from Merza stands out. Its obscene aesthetic—including the rod topped with horns—and its provocative interaction with the public and with its partner, *A Fiadeira* ("The Spinner"), constitute typical elements of peasant masquerades: inversion, symbolic sexual transgression, and the staging of festive conflict.

This mask, typical of the first section of the Ulla River, is made of cork oak—*sobreira*, in Galician—with horns and a sheepskin coat. The techniques of extraction, drying, and carving the cork require skill and forestry knowledge, embedded in highly localised practices involving the use of *Quercus suber*, a species much less common in Galicia than its relative *Quercus robur* (oak or *carballo*). Contemporary artisan Ramón Molina is a living repository of this knowledge and integrates recent adaptations, such as the use of resistant glues and mechanical tools, into the traditional process, without abandoning the traditional logic of the manual assembly of parts.

Among the rural *entroidos* of the province of A Coruña, we highlight that of Samede (Paderne municipality). The *Vixigueiro* (*vexiga* means "bladder," as the *Vixigueiro* carries a cane with two pig bladders) or *Farandulo* shows how certain figures have recently been recovered from fragmentary testimonies. As with other carnivals, the recovery of lost masks usually implies a negotiation between community memory and contemporary creativity. The *Vixigueiro* constitutes a notable example of contemporary recovery based on ethnographic archaeology: reconstruction from local memory and experimentation with traditional wicker weaving techniques, transmitted by artisans such as Carlos Fontales or Óscar Prieto.

The use of natural materials (wicker, corn husks, oak galls) evokes a peasant aesthetic that, as Marqués Valea et al. (2020) point out, reinforces the construction of a heritage community as a response to global aesthetic homogenization. A crucial aspect is that this mask introduces a type of hybrid technique into the *Entroido*: basketry applied to carnival gestures, which enriches the Galician material repertoire. Current transmission combines training workshops, audiovisual documentation, and collaborative practice, forming a model of extended oral tradition (Mostacero 2004, Cordón-García, Muñoz-Rico 2024) or pop oral tradition (Veiga Izaguirre 2016) that integrates recordings and social networks as new forms of mediation and transmission of local knowledge.

The area of the Serra de San Mamede and eastern Ourense concentrates some of the most recognised masks of the Galician *Entroido*, characterised by their high degree of stylisation and the coexistence of professional artisans with local amateur makers.[18]

The *Felos* constitute a universe of their own. Those from Maceda show notable symbolic complexity: the birch wood mask, the painted mitre, the beard and moustache, the *chocas* (cowbells), and the crook form a set that fuses military, bucolic, and carnival elements. Cocho (2012) relates the *felos* to logics of festive power and ritual hierarchisation. In Esgos, the *Felo* has a less militarised appearance and is more closely related to livestock protection: its historical identity is associated with the practice of scaring away wolves around the Rocas monastery, and its painted iconography incorporates animal and magical symbols.

The masks of the Maceda *Felo* follow a highly codified technical process: birch carving, the application of acrylic paint, the incorporation of furs (rabbit, kid, fox), wool tassels,

and metal elements on the *mitra* (mitre). The existence of recognised artisans, such as the aforementioned Kukas or Manuel Fernández, introduces notions of authorship and aesthetic value. This distinction coincides with the trend noted by Godinho (2023a) regarding the conversion of certain rituals into objects of heritage desire. In Esgos, the technique of shaping cardboard over a cylindrical mould predominates Being less rigid and complex than wood carving, this technique would *a priori* facilitate the transmission of artisanal knowledge and enable a greater number of people to participate in the production of the mask. The adaptation of current motifs reveals the influence of contemporary visual culture.

The *Boteiros* constitute perhaps the most recognisable figures of eastern Ourense. In Vilariño de Conso, the cylindrical cardboard mask—with marked features, prominent eyebrows, and a raised moustache—is accompanied by a screen made of paper and fabric, as well as the *monca*, an essential stick for marking the rhythm of the *folión*.[19] In Viana do Bolo, the *Boteiros*, whose *carauta*[20] is carved from birch wood, show a different aesthetic, with marked teeth, dark skin, and a large screen. Their function of clearing the way for the *fulión*, composed of groups of people armed with bass drums, hoes, and other agricultural tools, creates an unmistakable sonic dimension in the Vianese imaginary.

The clothing of the *Boteiros* constitutes one of the most complex cases from a material point of view: a cylindrical cardboard mask, a rectangular screen decorated with paper, a handmade ribbon shirt, and *chocas* fastened in hybrid techniques. This mask rests on a deeply communal production model, where the clothing is made by several women in the village. The ribbon shirt, for example, represents countless hours of work, and its making constitutes a ritual process.[21]

The *Vergalleiro* of Sarreaus, recreated in the 1990s according to local documentation, combines a mask with a laughing expression, a screen crowned by a bull's head, and a whip (*vergallo*) whose sound marks the ritual dominance of the character. The reactivation of singular or disappeared characters usually responds to community desires for cohesion and territorial differentiation. In this case, it is the artisan América Soto who oversaw the revival at the request of the Sarreaus Town Council.

The *Vergalleiro* uses a mask of carved wood or hardened paste, with exaggerated features and vivid colours. Its most distinctive feature is, as mentioned, the *vergallo*, made from braided rods, whose technique—similar to that of traditional basketry—is transmitted between families in an almost initiatory way. The making of the mask usually includes carving, sanding, priming, painting, and final varnishing. The aesthetic resembles that of the *Felo* at times, although its bodily movements are more aggressive and its sound materiality, especially the cracking of the *vergallo*, constitutes the essence of its performativity.

The *Mázcaras* of Buxán (O Bolo municipality) stand out for their baroque and changing aesthetic. The conical *pucho* adorned with old postcards, dolls, flowers, and long ribbons, together with masks that change every year, gives these figures an especially dynamic character in the carnival *fuliones*. Their dance of continuous jumps, from the Saturday before Fat Sunday to *Entroido* Tuesday, is part of a singular movement pattern that differentiates them from other Ourense masks.

The *Mázcaras* of Buxán present a singular case due to their strong contemporary transformation: in recent decades, artisanal wicker masks have been replaced by industrial masks that are purchased by the community. Likewise, the shawls that came from Cuba until the early 20th century are now replaced by others made from flowered fabrics bought in local shops or online. However, the *puchos*—conical structures covered with old postcards, Christmas ornaments, and ribbons—maintain local creativity and the practice of community

customisation, showing how the *Entroido* can absorb elements of global material culture without losing its territorial identity.

In Xinzo de Limia, the *Pantalla*[22] constitutes the most emblematic figure. Its mask has a curved mitre decorated with astral or animal motifs and is accompanied by inflated bladders with which the *Pantallas* whip those who are not dressed in costume. The *Pantalla* goes out to *correr o Entroido* (run the Entroido) from *Domingo Fareleiro* to *Domingo de Piñata*, during the five weeks that the Limia Carnival lasts. This Carnival is one of the longest in Europe.

Carnival begins in some municipalities of the central massif of Ourense, such as Laza, with the chimes of New Year's Eve. In general, the cycle of the Galician *Entroido* is considered to begin with *Domingo Fareleiro* (Bran Sunday, traditionally involving the throwing of flour), followed by *Domingo Oleiro* (Pottery Sunday, marked by games involving clay pots), *Xoves de Compadres* (Men's Thursday, dedicated to playful rivalry in which women mock or symbolically challenge men), *Domingo Corredoiro* (Running Sunday, featuring parades and preliminary celebrations), *Xoves de Comadres* (Women's Thursday, the counterpart to *Compadres*, when men mock or symbolically challenge women), and then *Domingo*, *Luns* and *Martes de Entroido* (Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday of Carnival, the main Carnival days, with Tuesday also called *Martes Gordo— Fat Tuesday*; equivalent to Mardi Gras). This is followed by *Mércores de Cinza*[23] (*Enterro do Meco*) (Ash Wednesday, featuring the Burial of the *Meco*, a satirical effigy), and finally *Domingo de Piñata* (Piñata Sunday, which closes the festivities).

Recent news reports provide examples of *Pantallas* participating in art exhibitions, sporting events, and urban events (La Voz de Galicia 2025, La Región 2025), showing their growing media prominence. The *Pantallas* stand as one of the most photographed and reproduced icons of the Galician *Entroido*. Their masks, made of hardened cardboard, with a black moustache and eyebrows, and crowned by a large arch painted with figurative scenes, combine artisanal design with contemporary materials and techniques. The traditional technique consisted of successive layers of paper and paste over a mould. Today, synthetic glues, latex, and fibreglass reinforcements are used for a *carauta* that was traditionally carved from birch wood. The *Pantalla* must be light and durable, as it accompanies clothing designed for intense movement: the distinctive "cheche,"[24] produced by the inflated bladders that *Pantallas* carry in each hand requires rapid and constant movement. The making of the pictorial arch constitutes a local school of plastic arts: new motifs, reinterpretations, and visual dialogues appear every year, demonstrating the creative vitality of the system.

This journey shows that, far from uniformity, the masks of the rural Galician *Entroido* constitute a complex mosaic in which each territory articulates its own materiality, embodiment, and social dramaturgy.

A retelling of ancient traditions for contemporary times: impact of mass culture and digital culture

In the last two decades, the rural Galician *Entroido* and, particularly, its masks have undergone a profound transformation marked by artisanal continuity, symbolic reconfiguration, and growing public exposure. Institutional patrimonialisation, tourism development, aesthetic appropriation by mass culture, and the central role of cyberculture have placed these practices at the crossroads between community reproduction and global circuits of visibility. The triangulation of our fieldwork, recent academic studies, and contemporary

cases of appropriation allows us to observe both the opportunities and the risks associated with this expansion.

The first vector of analysis concerns the material and technical processes sustaining mask production. We have detailed a range of procedures that constitute living and highly specialised forms of technical knowledge. The *Volante* of *Entroido* Ribeirao is built with layers of brown paper and linen over a wooden form; *maragatos* use kid skins tanned with ash and ram skulls; the *Meco* combines a plaster mould, cardboard, and sheepskin eyebrows; the *Oso* from Salcedo uses hand-sewn cowhide over a wooden mould; the *Vixigueiro* from Samede is made with braided wicker, felted merino wool, and vegetal structure; the *carautas* of the Maceda *Felos* are carved from birch and decorated with acrylic paint and various furs, including rabbit, kid, fox tail; the Esgos *Felos* use cardboard on a cylindrical mould; the *Boteiros* of Vilariño de Conso and Viana do Bolo combine cardboard, crepe paper, fabrics, and wicker structures; the *Mázcaras* of Buxán are built with a wicker base, dyed natural wool, old postcards, and a cardboard mask; and the *Pantallas* from Xinzo are made with cardboard, plaster, newspaper, and astral or animal pictorial decoration. Recent photographic reports show that some of the motifs chosen to decorate the mitres of masks such as the *Cigarróns*[25] from Verín should be interpreted as expressions of contemporary identity rather than tradition: a portrait of Alfonso Daniel Rodríguez Castelao,[26] considered one of the patriarchs of the Galician nation; a reproduction of Galicia personified as a woman[27] from a poster by Camilo Díaz Baliño[28] calling for votes in favour of the 1936 Statute of Autonomy; or even an octopus that resembles a kraken[29] from Scandinavian mythology or speculative fiction rather than the octopus served with paprika and olive oil at Galician fairs.[30]

Our ethnographic fieldwork corroborates that this set of techniques reveals an intergenerational continuity that contradicts any simplistic reading of the *Entroido* as a static folkloric relic. Rather, it is a dynamic artisanal field, capable of integrating contemporary motifs and industrial materials, such as crepe paper, fibreglass, acrylic paints, and prefabricated parts, without abandoning the traditional logics that shape its cultural identity. However, the increase in demand from tourists, museums, and the media has favoured a certain professionalisation and standardisation: plaster moulds to produce a greater number of pieces, simplification of details for exhibition events, and the replacement of slow techniques with readily available materials. These transformations fit with the diagnoses of Santamarina and Del Mármol (2020), who describe the logic of the "heritage bubble" for other cultural manifestations such as tango or *fallas*:[31] by institutionalising local practices, incentives are introduced for their simplification, decontextualisation, or tourist aestheticisation.

The declaration of the *Entroido* as an Asset of Cultural Interest by the Xunta de Galicia in 2025 confirms this institutional movement but also amplifies the dilemmas. As Godinho (2023b) warns, patrimonialisation can become a "melancholic" gesture that tends to fix and musealise the living cultural practices, reducing the transformative capacity of rituals. Herrero Pérez (2021) warns that these policies can reproduce a frozen image of what is, by nature, changing and performative. In this context, the challenge is to ensure that protection, documentation, and cataloguing processes do not become mechanisms of external control, but rather instruments for community sustainability.

The second critical dimension is touristification. Eleven Galician carnivals have been designated as being of tourist interest. One of them is of international tourist interest (Xinzo de Limia), four are of national tourist interest (Verín, Manzaneda, Viana, and Vilariño de Conso), and another four are of regional tourist interest: Laza, Viana do Bolo, Cobres (Vilaboa), and the *Xenerais* da Ulla (Vila de Cruces, Silleda, Touro, A Estrada, Vedra, Boqueixón, Teo, and

Santiago de Compostela). The growing attention to the *Entroido*, especially in what has come to be called the "Magic Triangle of the Ourense *Entroido*," comprising the municipalities of Laza, Verín, and Xinzo, has generated a flow of visitors that drives rural economies, sustains artisanal workshops, and strengthens community networks (Varela-Portela, Sotelino-Losada, and Rodríguez-Fernández 2019). Recent research highlights that the festival can function as an axis of local development (Campos Álvarez and Sotelino Losada 2025), capable of strengthening the social fabric, generating temporary employment, and renewing community self-esteem.

However, tourist dynamics alter—sometimes profoundly—ritual temporality. The multiplication of parades, the scheduling of exhibitions outside the traditional period, and the creation of "shows" for visitors generate tensions affecting the lived authenticity of the festive cycle. A paradigmatic example is the effort made by the Xunta de Galicia, not without the collaboration of the bearer communities, to "de-seasonalise" the *Entroido*. Thus, to adapt to the rhythms and flows imposed by tourism in capitalist society, Galician and local authorities decontextualise a celebration embedded in the annual cycle of peasant society and move the rural winter masquerades to the end of summer and to Compostela's Praza do Obradoiro filled of *turigrinos* (pilgrim-tourists) and visitors. Prats (2019) indicates that the intangible heritage industry tends to reinforce stereotypes of authenticity and produce emblematic images that circulate more easily than the complexity of real practices. In Galicia, recent newspaper archives (La Región 2025) show how municipalities with a strong presence of masks have incorporated routes, exhibitions, and hybrid events that, although they increase income, risk turning the ritual into just another product of the cultural industries.

In this respect, we observe how the intangible benefits of the *Entroido* are also measured in quantitative terms and carry weight in municipal culture and tourism budgets. Thus, we know from the provincial press (La Región 2025)[32] that the Xinzo de Limia City Council invested 140,000 euros, 80,000 of them from its own funds, in a carnival programme that lasted for five weeks. Similarly, journalists report that in 2025 the province of Ourense recorded "its third-best *Entroido* for tourists,"[33] with 25,000 visitors and 45,000 overnight stays, a figure only surpassed by the pre-pandemic record of 51,000 nights in hospitality establishments in 2019. However, the report also notes that despite the growing appeal of Ourense's rural masquerades, the province ranks last in Galicia for visitor numbers and overnight stays, including during the *Entroido*.

The balance is delicate: touristification may contribute to revitalisation, but it also displaces community logics. These tensions are particularly visible in their impact on artisanal production: some artisans are pressured to accelerate processes, homogenise designs, or resort to faster techniques, with the risk of eroding the diatopic diversity that characterises the *Entroido*.

The third major element in the contemporary transformation of the *Entroido* is media circulation. The appearance of masks in music videos, documentaries, social networks, and advertising strategies has radically expanded their audience. A paradigmatic case is found in the work of Tanxugueiras, the tambourine group that spearheads a movement combining pop and folk revival and that, since 2019, has contributed to a golden age of Galician music drawing on oral tradition (Freire Paz & Veiga Izaguirre, in press). In the video[34] for the song *Averno* (*Diluvio* 2023), created in collaboration with Madrid rapper Rayden, the *Entroideira* aesthetic is reconfigured as a symbol of female strength, ritual transgression, and post-folk performativity, turning masks into symbolic resources capable of resonating in global circuits. This use raises two theoretical questions: on the one hand, the renewed visibility of the mask as an identity sign in mass cultural circuits; on the other, aesthetic appropriation,

through which traditional signs become stylistic resources in pop culture. Once again, the community cut these elements off from the broader cultural whole and detaches the family ties from their original functions. In the meantime, public interest in the original practices seems to grow.

This phenomenon should not be understood solely as appropriation or aesthetic tribute, but also as an expansion of the field of signification of the *Entroido*. Following Godinho (2023a), ritual laughter opens a "field of possibilities" where the carnivalesque can be politicised, resignified, or hybridised without losing its community potential. In today's digital environment, this field expands.[35] Artisans document technical processes on TikTok and share performative choreographies of *Felos*, *Pantallas*, or *Boteiros*. On social networks such as BlueSky we find[36] the mask of the *Festa da Pita* (*pita* means "hen") from the *Entroido* of Eiroás (Cudeiro, a parish in the city of Ourense), built from LEGO bricks by Ourense mining engineer Pablo González, one of the 25 official designers accredited by the Danish brand worldwide.[37]

Pierre Lévy defines cyberculture as the "universal without totality" and the centre of gravity of the cultural galaxy of the 21st century (1997). It can be understood as a further stage in the development of mass communication and the information society, according to the definition of Horkheimer and Adorno (1944).[38] It refers to the characteristic culture of societies in which digital technologies act as some of the main means and channels for communication, access to knowledge, and entertainment. They also play a fundamental role in activism, artistic creation, administration, research, and forms of social organisation. This constant connection between people generates a specific lifestyle and a shared con(s)cience of the common (Veiga Izaguirre 2024).

In the society of mass communication, any cultural manifestation that does not fit within the logic of industrial processing is relegated to the margins. This is precisely what happens with the popular classes and geographical peripheries, whose artistic expressions, however, end up being appropriated and distorted: "What the culture industry extinguishes outside as truth, it can reproduce within itself at will as a lie" (Horkheimer and Adorno 1998, 180). In the era of mechanical reproduction, works of art lose "their aura and detach themselves from the realm of tradition" (Benjamin 1994, 22). In the narrative constructed around the *Entroido*, the media repeat *ad nauseam* the litany that the Galician rural *Entroido* is "the most ancestral in the Peninsula," as part of a strategy of exoticisation and an attempt to assert a cultural distinctiveness that, in the specific case of Galician winter masquerades, does not exist. On the contrary, the rites and performativity of the *Entroido* place Galicia within a tradition that is not only Iberian but also European and that wass shared across pre-modern peasant societies (González Reboredo and Mariño Ferro 1987).

The context of digital culture does not necessarily imply a loss of authenticity, but it does mean that we voluntarily hand over community memories—preserved at the local level and carefully guarded by a few families for generations—to the vastness of a global sphere, where it is impossible to control how and for what purpose the aesthetics of Galician masks and some of the most distinctive traits of the rites will be used. It is true that rural Galician communities possess the agency to select which elements circulate and how. In this sense, digital culture offers a space of symbolic autonomy that supplements, though also strains, traditional transmission. Masks thus become mobile icons, capable of moving between the local and the global, but can also end up emptied of meaning and reduced only to a shell of bright colours and showy clothes.[39] One example is the 2018 Dolce & Gabbana collection that was clearly inspired by the clothing of the *Boteiros* of Viana do Bolo and Vilariño de Conso (Faro de Vigo 2018).[40]

On the other hand, mass culture has integrated masks into unexpected contexts. As noted before, Compostela's Praza do Obradoiro receives the winter masks of the rural Galician *entroidos* to mark the end of summer. *Cigarróns*, *Felos*, and *Pantallas* have appeared in football stadiums, sporting events, and advertising campaigns for both institutions and food companies (Nós Diario 2025). These presences expand the visibility of the *Entroido* but can also decontextualise it, transforming symbols with specific ritual functions into mere aesthetic motifs with a high potential for circulation.

Among contemporary cases of appropriation by institutions or entities, *Raíces* (Roots), the communication strategy (2023-2025) of Real Club Celta de Vigo, the Galician football club in Spain's first division, stands out for incorporating identity elements—language, music, and imagery—into its transmedia storytelling (Jenkins 2003).[41] Thanks to *Raíces*, Real Club Celta managed to go from 13 million views on X in the 2022-2023 season to more than 43 million in 2024-2025. The production in 2025 of the documentary *A cor do Entroido* (The Colour of *Entroido*),[42] covering the Ourense carnivals of Verín and Viana do Bolo, with images of *Cigarróns*, *Boteiros*, and *fulións*, and narrated by Hugo Álvarez, a Celta first-team player, constitutes a clear example of how a sports club can become a platform for cultural dissemination (Vázquez 2025). Both Gael García Cochón, head of communication for Celta de Vigo, and André Taboada, in charge of digital content, explain that the motivation behind this documentary is driven more by identity and emotion than by metrics:

> If we believe we have to tell a story and that story requires a slower form of storytelling that allows us to *go deep* on a specific topic, the fact that 1,000 people watch it will have much more value than another video watched by 100,000," he adds, citing the report on the Entroido in Verín and Viana as an example. "For us, it is an effort to mobilise teams, write scripts, and edit the material, and if someone judged this work solely based on metrics, they probably wouldn't do it, given all the hours involved. But for us, it is fundamental because we know that that audience, even if not very large, is a collective we have impacted emotionally in a very, very powerful way, unlike what a slightly more superficial communication on Instagram can be, which you see, give a like, and that's it. We value data a lot, but we are not slaves to it," assures [André Taboada] (Vázquez 2025).

This appropriation has ambivalent effects. On the one hand, it expands the media reach of the *Entroido*, introduces it to young and urban audiences, and legitimises the practice as a contemporary symbol of Galician identity. On the other, it poses risks of spectacularisation, symbolic simplification, or institutional instrumentalisation.

Triangulating these elements—field notes on artisanal production, cultural policies, tourism, and digital and institutional mediation—reveals several interpretative patterns:

1. Patrimonialisation must be questioned and negotiated. It provides resources, prestige, and continuity, but can introduce tensions between lived authenticity and regulated authenticity (Santamarina and Del Mármol 2020, Prats 2019).
2. Digital culture and mass culture expand the visibility of the *Entroido* but require mechanisms to ensure community agency.
3. Institutional and sports initiatives generate new opportunities but must avoid folklorisation or unilateral appropriation.
4. Technical transmission remains at the core of continuity. Fieldwork confirms that, without active artisans, patrimonialisation would be an empty shell.

Conclusions and new questions

The integrated analysis of patrimonialisation, touristification, media appropriation, and the digital culture environment reveals a rural Galician *Entroido* undergoing profound transformation, but sustained by the strength of its community practices. The masks—their making, their performativity, and their symbolic circulation—constitute a laboratory in which tradition and change, memory and experimentation, identity, and market intersect.

Artisanal techniques constitute the heart of the *Entroido***.** Carving in birch, tanning with ash, wicker basketry, and the construction of *puchos* and *Pantallas* are living practices whose continuity depends on intergenerational transmission and institutional recognition. The ethnographic material shows a remarkable technical diversity that resists standardisation. However, these processes of institutional recognition and patrimonialisation bring visibility but also entail risks. The institutionalisation of the *Entroido* generates legal protection and resources but can produce frozen images, induce aesthetic homogenisation, or displace local agency (Herrero Pérez 2021, Santamarina and Del Mármol 2020). Along the same lines, touristification alters the ritual calendar. Economic opportunities coexist with tensions arising from the transformation of ritual acts into shows scheduled for visitors, with risks of commodification (Prats 2019).

From the late 1990s onwards, cyberculture has opened up new forms of creativity and transmission. Masks now circulate globally, largely through community agency. The practices and techniques treasured for centuries at the micro level become diluted at the macro level. The local community gives the key to the chamber of our family secrets and rituals to a vast and largely anonymous audience. The central question is who controls the narrative and whether local communities can maintain the leading role. Appropriations by institutions and other entities**,** with the paradigmatic case of the Celta de Vigo football club, show the potential of cultural alliances, provided that the dissemination of these traditions is accompanied by mechanisms of community participation and reciprocity. Finally, the 21st century has brought internal transformations in the ritual, including greater female presence as mask bearers,[43] the incorporation of younger people, aesthetic re-readings, and material experimentation, showing that the *Entroido* is not preserved by freezing the ritual, but by updating it.

Looking ahead, the future of the rural Galician Entroido raises a series of interconnected challenges for research and action. One of the most pressing concerns is how to establish shared heritage management models capable of guaranteeing community control over mask production and the media use of *Entroideira* imagery. Equally important is the need to identify legal and pedagogical tools that can effectively integrate schools and artisan workshops into processes of intergenerational knowledge transmission, while avoiding processes of bringing the folklorisation of these traditions into educational settings. At the same time, it is necessary to develop tourism impact metrics that move beyond economic indicators to evaluate dimensions such as social sustainability, the availability of artisans, the continuity of ritual practices, and community perceptions of tourism.

Another significant challenge lies in defining protocols for the respectful circulation of *Entroido* imagery across documentaries, music videos, institutional campaigns, and other media formats, ensuring that these representations do not result in decontextualised appropriation. Future research should also examine the consequences of rural depopulation and migration on the availability of cultural bearers, artisans, and the community spaces that sustain these celebrations. Furthermore, the accelerating pace of digital communication

raises questions about the relationship between media temporality and ritual time, prompting reflection on whether it is possible to preserve the rhythm of traditional festivities within an ecosystem that demands continuous content production. In this context, digital culture may also offer new opportunities for safeguarding through the creation of community-based digital archives, tutorials, technical documentation, and collaborative learning platforms that strengthen the transmission of traditional knowledge.

These questions highlight that the *Entroido* remains a living system: a practice that is transforming because it continues to fulfil essential symbolic and community functions. Its vitality and vulnerability make it a privileged observatory for understanding how European festive cultures negotiate their place in a globalised, digital, and accelerated world, where the tension between memory and the present defines the prospects for their continuity.



NOTES

1. A *Peliqueiro* is a traditional masked character from the Carnival of Laza in Galicia. *Peliqueiro* comes from *pelica*, a Galician noun used to refer to the skin of an animal, especially when separated from the body and tanned. Dressed in an elaborate costume with a mask, bells, and a whip, *Peliqueiros* run through the streets during Carnival.

2. *Entroido* is a generic noun used to refer to Carnival in Galician.

3. In urban contexts, Rodríguez Campos has identified "the new local powers that emerged from democratic elections in the municipalities" as the makers of urban governance that encouraged "local associations and neighbourhood groups in each neighbourhood and village of the municipality, rural or urban, in the production of carnival shows, made up of troupes and neighbourhood entourages that filled the Galician cities" (Rodríguez Campos 2012, 114-5).

4. *Volantes* are elegant, masked figures from the Ribeirao Carnival (Chantada municipality) in Galicia. The noun *volante* in Galician refers to a piece of wrinkled or curled fabric that serves as an ornament for clothes. *Volantes* wear elaborate costumes with large, decorated hats, masks, ribbons, and bells, and perform ritual dances.

5. *Maragatos* are comic and grotesque characters of the Ribeirao Carnival. *Maragato* is the demonym for people from the Maragatería region in León. Dressed in worn or exaggerated clothing and with their faces covered, they parody everyday life and social roles.

6. The *Oso* ("Bear") is a wild and animal-like character from the Carnival of Salcedo in Galicia. Covered in animal skins and soot, the Bear runs through the streets chasing people.

7. The *Vixigueiro* is a masked figure from the Carnival of Samede in Galicia. *Vixigueiro* comes from *vexiga*, meaning "bladder." Wearing a distinctive costume and mask, *vixigueiros* move through the village making noise and interacting with the community, embodying vigilance and satire.

8. The *Vello dos Cornos* ("Horned Old Man") is a traditional Carnival character from Merza in Galicia. Wearing horns and rustic clothing, he represents ancestral and mythical elements of rural culture, blending humour, fear, and symbolic authority within the festivities.

9. *Felos* are traditional masked figures from the Carnival of Maceda and Esgos in Galicia. The noun *felo* in Galician can refer both to an object that represents a face, used to cover one's face and transform their appearance, and to a ridiculous facial gesture used to mock someone. Dressed in elaborate costumes with masks, bells, and whips, *Felos* run through the streets asserting symbolic authority.

10. *Boteiros* are dynamic masked figures from the Carnival of Vilariño de Conso and Viana do Bolo in Galicia. The term *boteiros* comes from the verb *botar* and the noun *bote*, which mean the jump made by an elastic object when it collides with a hard surface. Wearing tall, decorated headdresses, colourful costumes, and bells, these masked characters jump and dance energetically.

11. The *Vergalleiro* is a masked Carnival figure from Sarreaus in Galicia. The word *vergalleiro* is related to *verga* or *vergallo*, both nouns referring to a flexible stick or even the male sexual organ in mammals. Armed with a whip (*vergallo*), he chases and playfully strikes participants.

12. *Mázcaras* are masked figures from the Carnival of Buxán in Galicia. The word *mázcara* is a variant of *máscara*, one of the several Galician words for mask. Wearing handmade masks and rustic costumes, *Mázcaras* roam the village creating mischief and satire.

13. The *Pantallas* are iconic masked figures from the Carnival of Xinzo de Limia in Galicia. *Pantalla* is a noun that has several meanings in Galician. It can refer to a person who acts to hide another person, a cloth on which images or shapes are projected, or a device used to protect or shield against certain forms of radiation, such as the heat from a fire. Identified by their white costumes, masks, capes, and inflated bladders, they patrol the streets during the festival.

14. The Dictionary of the Royal Galician Academy (*Dicionario da Real Academia Galega*) provides several meanings for the noun *meco*. The first two refer to a lustful man and an anthropomorphic dummy that is burned at the end of Carnival.

15. The use of animal materials raises contemporary ethical debates, especially among young artisans, who in some cases opt for recycled or synthetic leathers.

16. https://www.charlesfreger.com/fr/portfolio/wildermann/.

17. The association between smudging, chaos, and liminality has been widely studied in European carnival anthropology since Caro Baroja (2006) and has recently been taken up by Panero García (2020) in her analysis of winter masquerades.



18. For a more detailed account of the *Entroido* in Ourense, see, among others, González Pérez (2009) and Fidalgo Santamarina (2009).

19. The Dictionary of the Royal Galician Academy (*Dicionario da Real Academia Galega*) defines *folión* or *fulión* as a group of young men and women who go out armed with drums, sacks, hoes, and other objects, making a lot of noise and animating the streets during the days of Carnival. https://academia.gal/dicionario/-/termo/foli%C3%B3n.

20. *Carauta* is one of the Galician words used to refer to a mask.

21. The ribbon shirt has been compared by anthropologist Miguel Losada (informal conversation) to a "community text" in which each ribbon functions as a mark of intergenerational female participation.

22. The *Pantallas* of Xinzo have one of the most stable artisan communities, but also one of the communities most influenced by media, given the enormous visibility of the Xinzo Carnival in the Galician press.

23. Although there is a certain popular consensus regarding the pagan—and even pre-Roman—origins of some rites associated with the rural Galician *Entroido*, the fact remains that its celebration is embedded within the Catholic calendar. The cycle of Galician winter masquerades takes place between the Advent, in the Christmas season, and Lent and Easter. The noun *Entroido* itself derives from the Latin *introitus*, meaning opening, entry, or introduction. *Introitus* stems from the supine of the verb *introire*, which translates as to enter or to gain access, as well as to invade. Thus, *Entroido* can be interpreted as an introduction to spring, but also to Lent, which begins with the observance of Ash Wednesday. Likewise, the semantic weight of *Entroido* also encompasses the notion of an invasion—a non-peaceful entry into public spaces.

24. Onomatopoeic name for the sound made by the inflated bladders.

25. The *Cigarrón* is a Carnival mask typical of Verín and Laza. The word *cigarrón* refers to *cigarro* (cigarette), a small portion of tobacco rolled in thin paper for smoking.

26. https://bsky.app/profile/das27.bsky.social/post/3lkaudfxei22z.

27. https://www.lavozdegalicia.es/noticia/gradario/2025/03/10/span-langglfoi-emocionante-levar-balaidos-nos-sentimos-pola-nosa-tradicion-entroidospan/00031741614782453139593.htm.

28. Galician visual artist and intellectual murdered by Falangist gunmen on 14 August 1936, in Palas de Rei.

29. https://www.facebook.com/asociacionocigarron/posts/se-buscan-cigarrones-para-desfilar-en-el-estadio-def%C3%BAtbol-del-celta-de-vigo-jun/941363588101835/.

30. One of Galicia's national dishes is *polbo á feira*, boiled octopus seasoned with salt, hot paprika, and olive oil and served on wooden plates.

31. *Fallas* is a pyrotechnic festival in Valencia, coinciding with the religious celebration of Saint Joseph on 19 March.

32. https://www.laregion.es/xinzo-de-limia/entroido-2025-costo-xinzo-140_1_20250507-3515947.html.

33. https://www.laregion.es/ourense/provincia-firma-tercer-mejor-entroido_1_20250424-3499492.html.

34. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8xx7Tv_lga0.

35. This phenomenon can also be traced in the broader European context. One example can be found in the work of Stoicescu (2025).

36. https://bsky.app/profile/lscgz.bsky.social/post/3lo4pcvphb22d.

37. https://www.laregion.es/ourense/pieza-selecto-constructor-lego_1_20251030-4037013.html.

38. Horkheimer and Adorno understood mass culture as implying the collapse of culture itself under the conditions imposed by capitalism. From less pessimistic perspectives, Williams (1958), Hall (1973), and Umberto Eco (1985) argue that mass culture arises from tensions between emerging and hegemonic forms, and that consumption and cultural creation represent forms of negotiation rather than uncritical acceptance.

39. See the master's thesis of Álvaro Corral Cid (2023), titled *D.R.A.G. (Dressing Resembling A Galician): condiciones identitarias del traje regional en España a través de las prácticas artísticas de perfomatividad textil* ("Identity conditions of regional dress in Spain through artistic practices of textile performativity").

40. https://www.farodevigo.es/ourense/2018/07/09/dolce-gabbana-Boteiros-plagio-o-15948560.html.

41. Transmedia is a communication strategy specific to digital culture, in which different media—analogue and digital, print, and audiovisual—as well as platforms, social networks, and textual formats are used to develop a narrative. In contrast to crossmedia (Boumans 2004) or multiple platforms (Ytreberg 2009), transmedia necessarily implies that each medium is responsible for presenting the part of the narrative for which it is best suited.

42. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jalc_ZoaBxM&t=19s.

43. Understanding how women come to take on this role requires examining the political, economic, and social factors identified by Cabana and Freire (2016).

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