

SOCIETY AND CULTURE

Marine society and its cultural world

All around the world of fishing there is a social and familiar structure with women as main characters.

Surrounding fishermen's families there is a very important cultural richness treasured through generations and it is reflected in proverbs, traditions, legends...

Women have a leading role in marine societies

Traditionally, men spent most of the time away. They are in charge of fishing, and once in land it is women who are in charge of selling fish, managing money for the needs of the house and the education of the children.

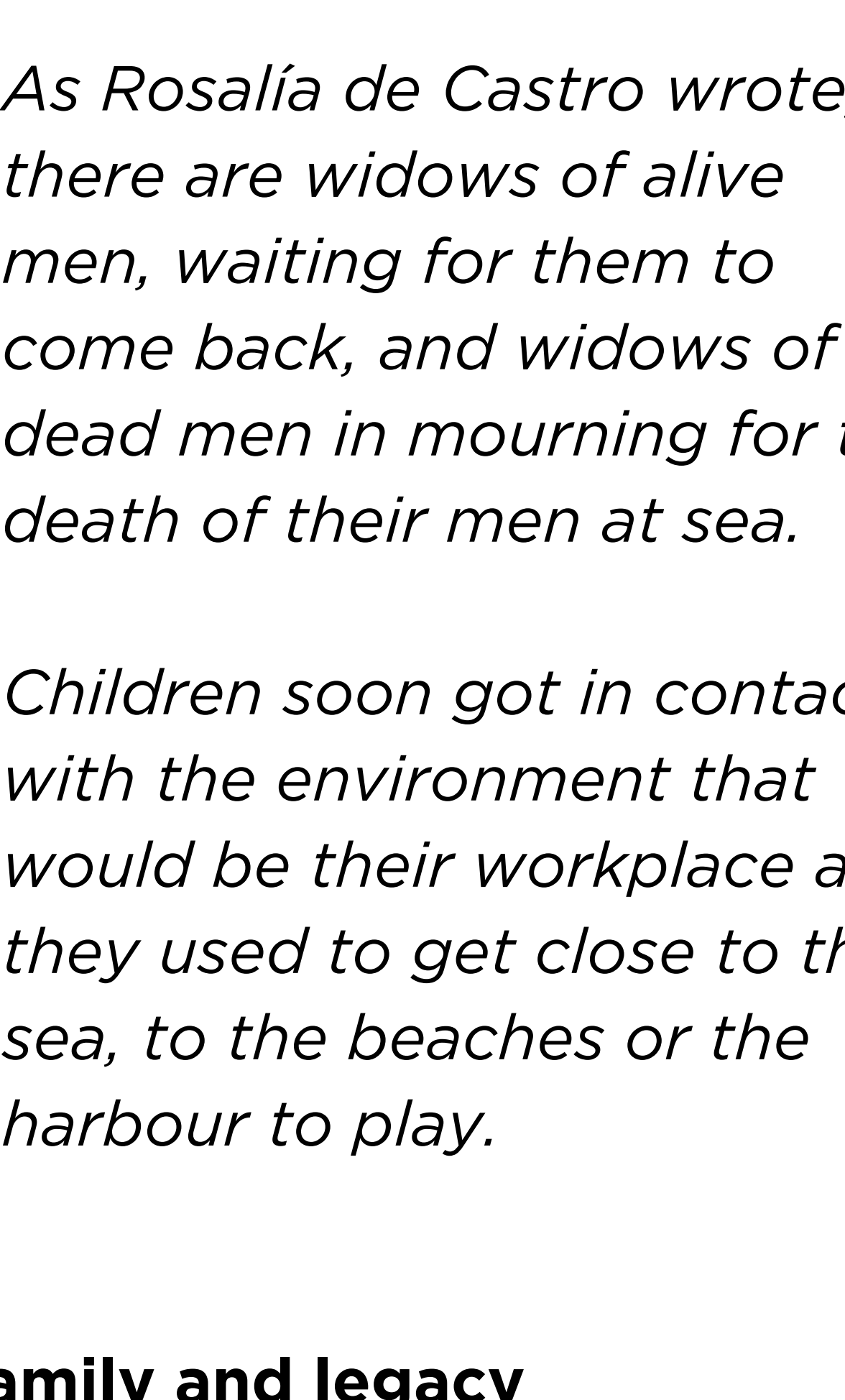


Image courtesy of Milagros Riveiro

As Rosalía de Castro wrote, there are widows of alive men, waiting for them to come back, and widows of dead men in mourning for the death of their men at sea.

Children soon got in contact with the environment that would be their workplace and they used to get close to the sea, to the beaches or the harbour to play.

Family and legacy

Since men very soon collaborated in economy, because with only eight or nine years of age already sailed to sea seamen families used to have a lot of children.

When men got married, they left their homes, which were usually inherited by the youngest daughter, the last one to marry and the one in charge of taking care of the parents when they grew older.

When there wasn't enough space at home, the older sons used to sleep in the boat.

Sayings, superstition, traditions and legends: a rich heritage

Por San Xoán a sardiña molla o pan (literal translation: Near St. Johns day, sardine soak the bread) it is an example of the many proverbs related to the world of the sea and an example of traditional knowledge and culture. It means that close to the date of ST John, at the end of June, is the best time to eat sardines because they are more greasy and tasteful.

Marine superstitions are many, including the fact of priests not being very well accepted near the harbour, nor named on board, or when there weren't any catches, fishermen made a child to urinate on the boat or the gears.

One of the most known traditions is the maritime procession with the boats nicely decorated in the day of the Carme. Another ancient tradition in some ports was to walk up to a hermitage when the wind didn't favour fishing or the returning of the boats.

Among the legends related to the sea we can find the one explaining that in many places near the coast they feared the presence of the Orco, a dreadful being that used to walk down from the woods to the beaches in stormy nights to dive into the sea.



Image courtesy of Milagros Riveiro

Many common expressions in the coast as "Bótame un chicote" (Literally "Give me a rope", which means give me a hand) or "Non me enlees o palangre" (Lit. "Don't mess with the nets", which means, leave me alone), have their origins in the world of fishing.