



Fulling Mills and Traditions, The Wool Cycle in Barroso

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Photo Sandra Antunes

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Introduction

Wool once assumed a fundamental role in Barroso's traditional costume.

From shearing to making Burel capes, we find typical techniques and craft knowledge of these mountain people.

The arid climate, the interiority and the scarcity of financial resources sharpened the audacity and the ability to survive the cold winters.

Warm clothes that could withstand snow and rain were necessary – the Burel garments fulfilled those requirements.



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Introduction (continuation)

Blankets, socks, cloaks, aprons, trousers, leggings, vests or cloaks of wool, in Mandil or Burel, protected shepherds and farmers from the mountain's harsh winters.

The information, which I now share, was collected in the various villages of Barroso. It is the fruit of several interviews, collecting and hours of conversation with women and men who lived their childhoods surrounded by spindles, disks, cards and fireside evenings:

'Fulling Mills and Traditions' is a scheduling that brings the wool cycle back to Barroso – from raising sheep to Burel capes.



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E-book objectives

This eBook aims to:

- »Promote the Traditional Culture of Barroso
- »Publicize the wool cycle in Barroso: from shearing to Burel capes
- »Overspread Barroso's Material and Immaterial Heritage
- »Boost the economy and local development
- »Stimulate your curiosity

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Barroso

Património Agrícola Mundial

World Agricultural Heritage

Where is Barroso?

Barroso, or Terras de Barroso, is a region located in the north of Portugal. Includes the municipalities of Montalegre and Boticas.

In 2018, the Barroso region was declared a World Agricultural Heritage by the United Nations for Food and Agriculture (FAO).

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Why Barroso?

- »Because it is a region with very unique cultural, natural and human values
- »Because here we still find traces of an ancestral know-how
- »And because my love of the land, living beings and agricultural work was born in this place

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Who am I?

Graduated in Portuguese and Lusophone Studies from the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences at Universidade Nova de Lisboa and a Master degree in Cultural Project Management from the Universidad de Alcalá, Madrid.

Since I was a child I have had contact with rural communities. By the hand of my grandmother I learned ways of handcrafted knowledge that always aroused my curiosity.

In 2017, I started to collect, research and share Barroso's Traditional Culture. Guided by elders masters and teachers, it's possible to travel in this thematic universe which is linen, wool and rye.

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The various phases of wool cycle in Barroso

Some say that the Wool Cycle begins with shearing. Mine opinion is different and, later on, I will explain why.

There are several stages in the Wool Cycle: shearing, washing, carding, spinning, warping, weaving and treading. The various phases are carried out mainly by women, with the exception of the floor whose work is assured by the floor planter.

The manufacturing processes are relatively easy and do not require many utensils but to obtain fabrics made from wool, like Mandiz (or Mandil) and Burel, weaving requirements are already needed.



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Shearing

It's called shearing, the process of cutting or shaving the sheep's wool to remove the fleece or 'rapa'.

Shearing takes place since May and depends a lot on the state of the time. If the temperature is high, it's done early. When temperatures remain low, we postpone shearing for the month of June.



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Shearing (continuation)

Traditional shearing is done in a community way, that is, neighbors help breeders in this task. There is no monetary payment, but an services exchange.

To shear, scissors are used as a tool. The sheep is lying on the ox cart and sometimes, two people are needed: one to hold the sheep and the other to shear it.

The way we treat animals influences the shearing process and the quality of the wool. For me, the wool cycle starts exactly here, in the treatment of animals: with the quality of food and the beds where they sleep.

Well-maintained animals are synonymous with health and wellbeing and therefore, offering us wool of superior quality.



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Wool washing

The wool washing brings women together in the village tank. The conversation wanders between domestic labors and agricultural activities.

Cold water, soap and a large basket to soak the wool are essential when washing it. Plentiful running water helps in this process whose goal is to get the most of fat (lanolin).

After washing, the wool is left to dry on top of the firewood, under the porches.

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Scouring

To scouring the wool, we chose a small hank. With our fingers, we open the wool and arrange the wicks overlapping them and removing the knots.

Some spinners choose to exclude certain phases of the wool cycle. For example, they prefer to spin 'ludra' wool (not washed). Others, choose not to scour or card.

I believe that doing all the steps makes the wool softer.

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Carding

This is one of the stages that requires its own utensil – the cards. In one of the cards, we spread the wool.

When it's filled, we take the other card and comb it, several times, repeating the process until we get a clean, soft and uniform wool.

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Spinning

In Barroso, to spin the wool, distaff and spindle are used. With them, the fibers are twisted until the yarn is 'made', becoming thicker or thinner, with more or less twist, depending on the end use we want to give it.

This task was performed mainly in the evening by the fireplace, but it was also common to see women with the distaff around their waist as they went out into the field with their flocks.

On spinning overnight nights ('serões fiadeiros'), at the ox's court, in the light of the 'abrôegas', the girls spun and sang, enchanting and courting the boys challenging them to dance.

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Warping



To warp is to dispose the threads of the web in an organized way, according to its length and to be later mounted on the loom.

To weave the web, we use a tool called a warper.

For the Mandil or Mandiz, traditionally was used the linen tow ('estopa'). Later, it started to weave with cotton, for being less costly and laborious. In the case of Burel, we use a wool warp.

"Whoever warps and weaves, everything grows" – popular wisdom, cited by Father Fontes.

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Weaving

It is said, that in Barroso, there was no street where you could not hear the looms hitting. Almost all houses had a loom or weaver. It was a profession that required skill, subtlety and some physical resistance.

"Poor weaver | There is hell in life | stick in the foot and stick in the hand | stick in the ass and stick in the belly"
- oral tradition.

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Fulling

Of all the phases of this process, going to the Pisão (fulling mill), is a magical moment.

The fulling mill is the device that transforms, through a process of stomping and felting, wool in Burel.

Always located next to a water line, it worked night and day.

The profession of fulling was performed by men who, during a period of the year, lived there.

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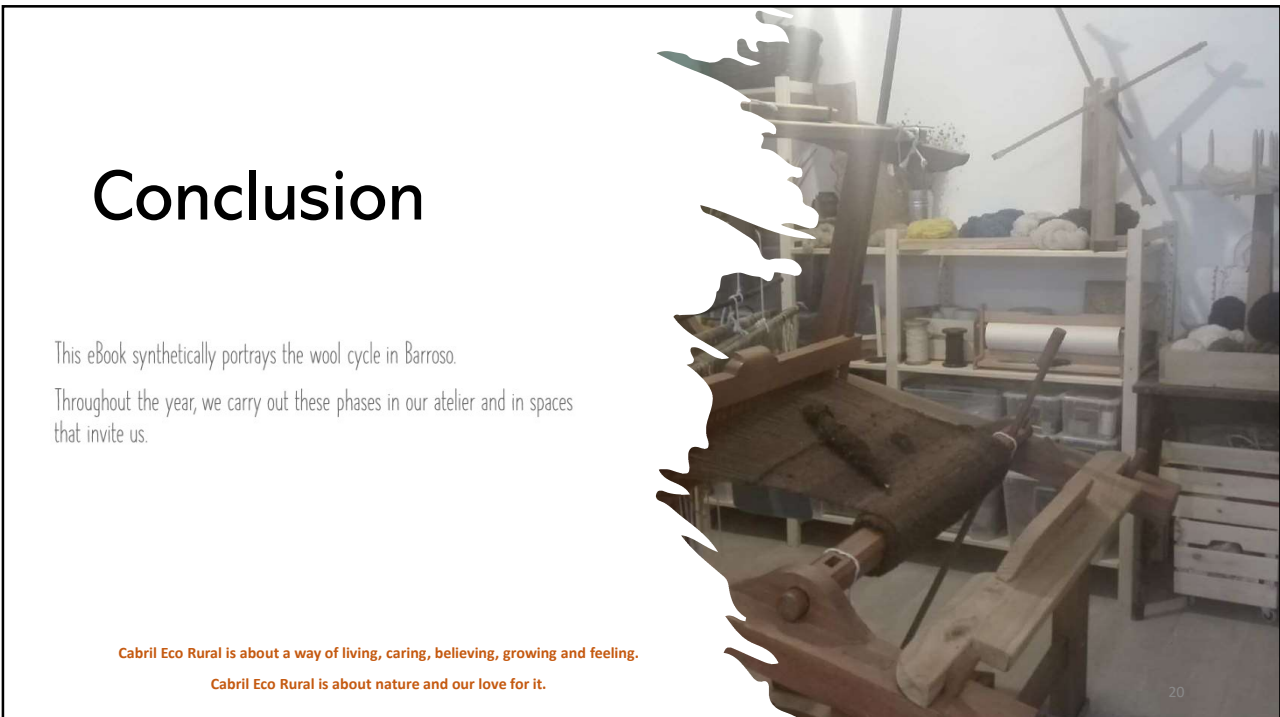


Burel capes

Burel capes are a symbol of Barroso's Traditional Culture. Fundamental in the cold and rainy days, there was no pastor that didn't have its cape.

Even today we find faithful followers of this tradition.

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Conclusion

This eBook synthetically portrays the wool cycle in Barroso.

Throughout the year, we carry out these phases in our atelier and in spaces that invite us.

Cabril Eco Rural is about a way of living, caring, believing, growing and feeling.

Cabril Eco Rural is about nature and our love for it.

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Where to find us



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