

# Teno

A tale of use  
and distance



AUTOGUIDED TRAIL



PARQUE RURAL DE TENO



# A TALE OF USE AND DISTANCE

A journey through the past and present of this place will show just how authentic it has remained after so many centuries.

Teno is known as Teno Alto to distinguish it from the Massif and the Rural Park that were named after it, although, for the local people, it is still just Teno.

Up here, the pastures and bleating of the goats, the crafted roof tiles, heather and rushes will explain a way of life that still maintains a well-deserved place in today's world.



For better reading

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Texts: **Mária Mengual** and **Raquel Izquierdo**  
Design and illustrations: **Ángel Morales**

2022

# TECHNICAL DETAILS OF THE ROUTE

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**ROUTE:** Los Bailaderos—El Hoyo—Los Bailaderos

**START:** Plaza de la iglesia de San Jerónimo (Los Bailaderos)

**FINISH:** Plaza de la iglesia de San Jerónimo
- 


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**APPROXIMATE DURATION:** 1 h 30 min
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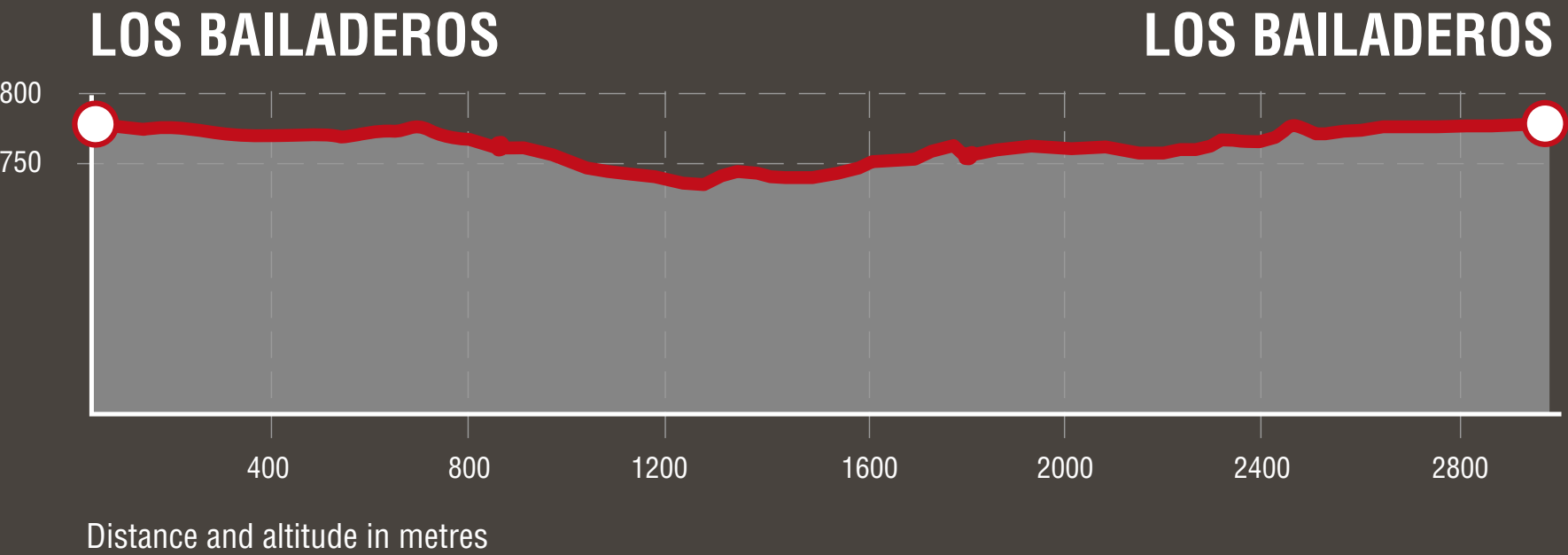
**APPROXIMATE LENGTH:** 3.000 m
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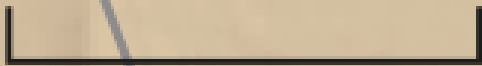
**FEATURES:** Most of the route runs along tracks and the climb/descent is almost imperceptible.
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**CLIMATE:** Variable, often windy. There are many days of mists.
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**RECOMMENDED EQUIPMENT:** Comfortable walking shoes, something warm to put on, water-proof jacket and a hat to protect you from the sun, sun screen, water and something to eat.

## ROUTE PROFILE





200 m



N

1

Press



El Drago

7



8



9



6



Montaña El Vallado

5



4



E l H o y o

3



10



La Mesita

11



12



2



1



Los Bailaderos





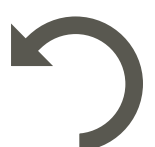
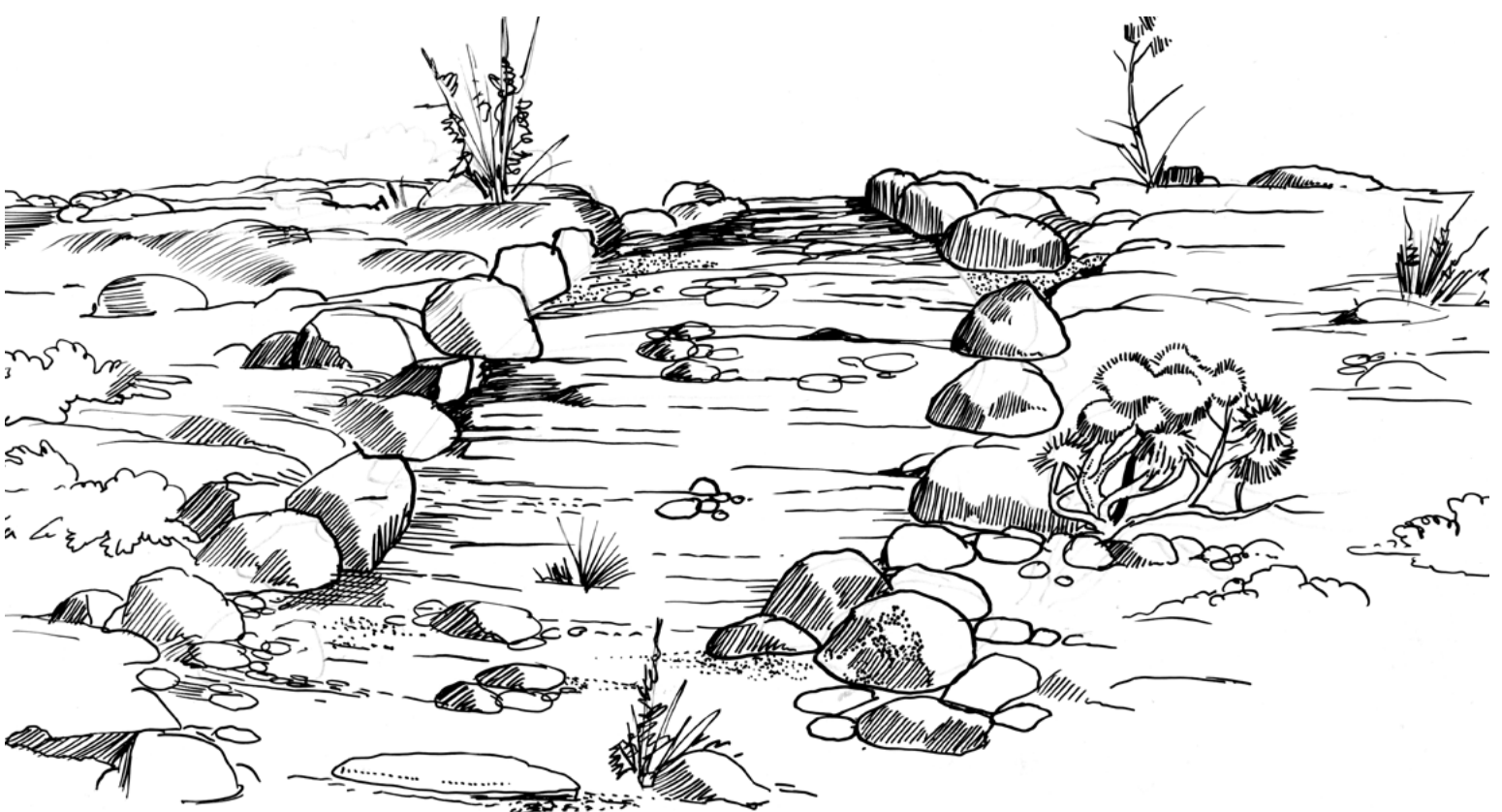
# 1 **LIVING IN THE DISTANCE**

The inhabitants of Teno have had to face their traditional isolation

Teno welcomes you. A few decades ago, you could only have got here on foot or on a horse or donkey, as the track was not built until 1972, and it was not surfaced for a further thirteen years.

Until then, any contact with other settlements was a laborious business. This enforced isolation, on the other hand, enabled the people of Teno to maintain much of their traditional way of life.

Ever since pre-Hispanic times, these lands have required their inhabitants to make an enormous effort to adapt to them. This route will help you to discover the secrets of this way of life in relative isolation.





# Los Bailaderos, goats, dances or witches?



You are now in the hamlet of Los Bailaderos. The origin of this peculiar name has at least three possible explanations:

First of all, the original settlers of the island ritually separated the baby goats from their mothers so that their bleating cries would cause the gods to send rain. This area could have been one of these “baladeros” (or bleating grounds).

Secondly, the most important dances and festivities of the village are held here, even now. (“Bailaderos” comes from the Spanish “Bailar”, to dance.)

Finally, they say that witches used to choose places like this for their covens (“bailadero de brujas”, or “witches covens”)





## **2 A HOME IN THE ROCK**

This house shows how ingenuity can overcome a lack of resources

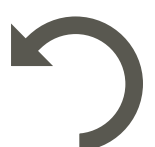
Up until the end of the 19th century, the inhabitants of Teno worked as the field hands on the large estates in this area, whose owners lived in Buenavista and other parts of the island.

The people of Teno used natural caves or dug into the rocks to take shelter from inclement weather and to rest after a hard day's work. When possible, they would build a simple house next to the caves, made with whatever materials they could find in the surrounding area.

The family would then move into the new building, which would usually have two rooms: a bedroom and a kitchen. In this case, the cave would then be used as a barn or stables.

The cave house in front of you, known as "Los Melros", is testimony of the recent past, as these caves were inhabited up until the mid 20th century.

But what was life like for the inhabitants of Teno?

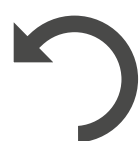
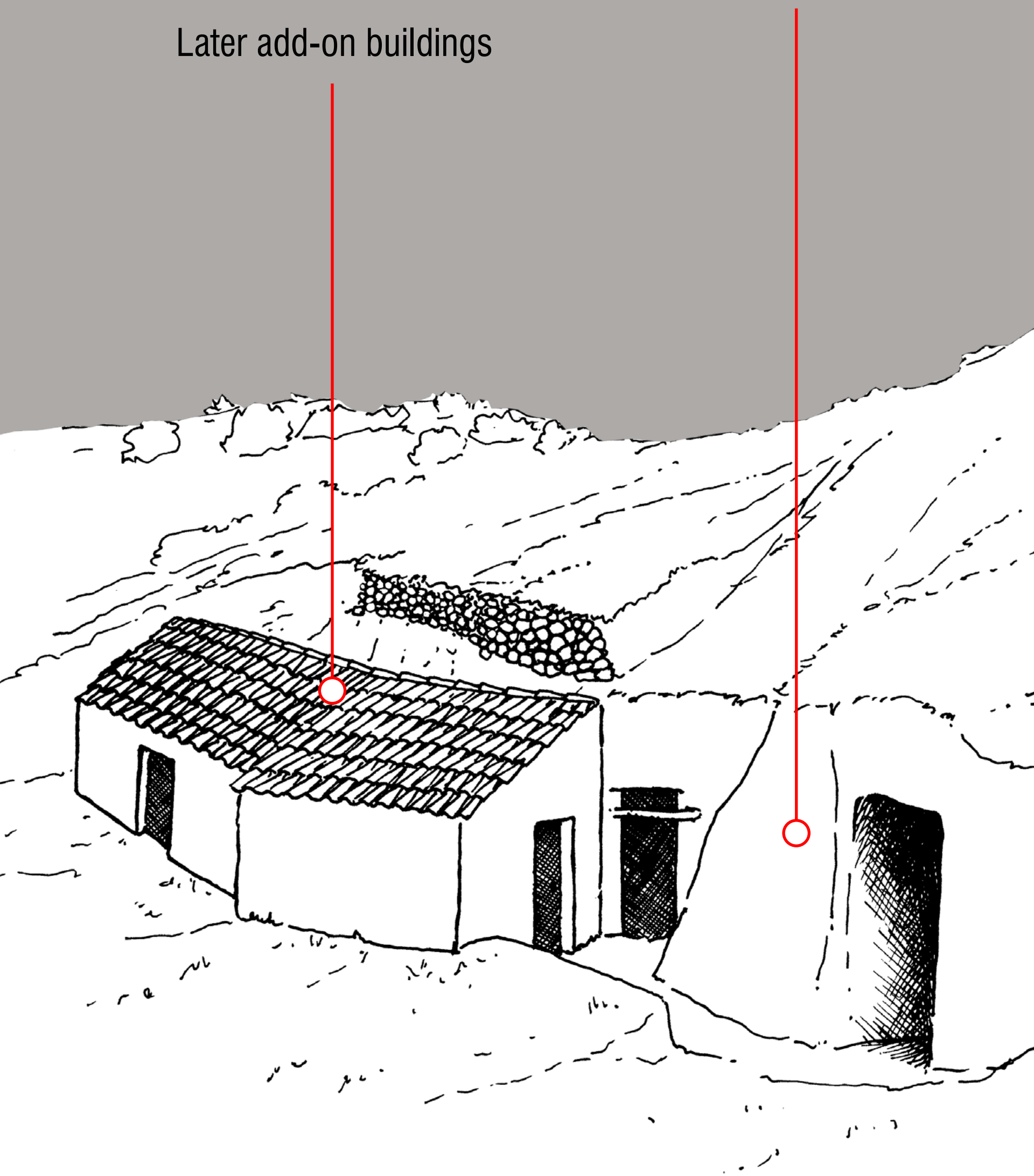




# The traditional house

Original caves

Later add-on buildings





### 3 COME HELL OR HIGH WATER

The fight for survival of the local inhabitants can be clearly seen in the Teno landscape

Here, you can see one of the few areas that is still farmed in the village, the El Hoyo lands.

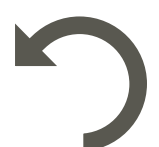
As you have already seen, the lands of Teno were owned by a very few people up until the end of the 19th century. The large estates were used for growing cereals and for grazing pastures. Most of the land owners also had smallholdings in more sheltered zones, like this one in El Hoyo, where they grew more fragile crops like potatoes and other vegetables. The land owners rented out their lands to the people of the foothills, demanding half their produce in return.

But the crises of the late 19th century and early 20th century made living conditions here even more difficult.

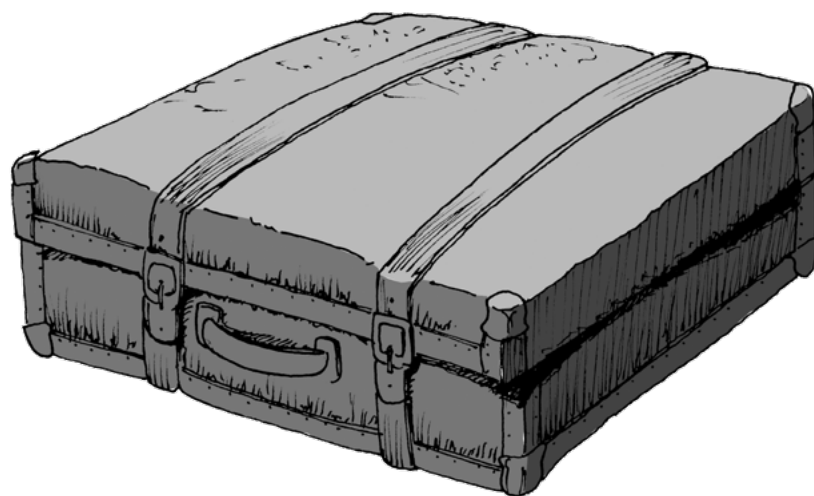
As in so many other places in the Canary Islands, the country folk from Teno were forced to emigrate, first to Cuba and later generations to Venezuela or to Europe, in search of a better life.

On their return, they invested their savings in buying lands in Teno, where they settled down to a life of farming and livestock rearing.

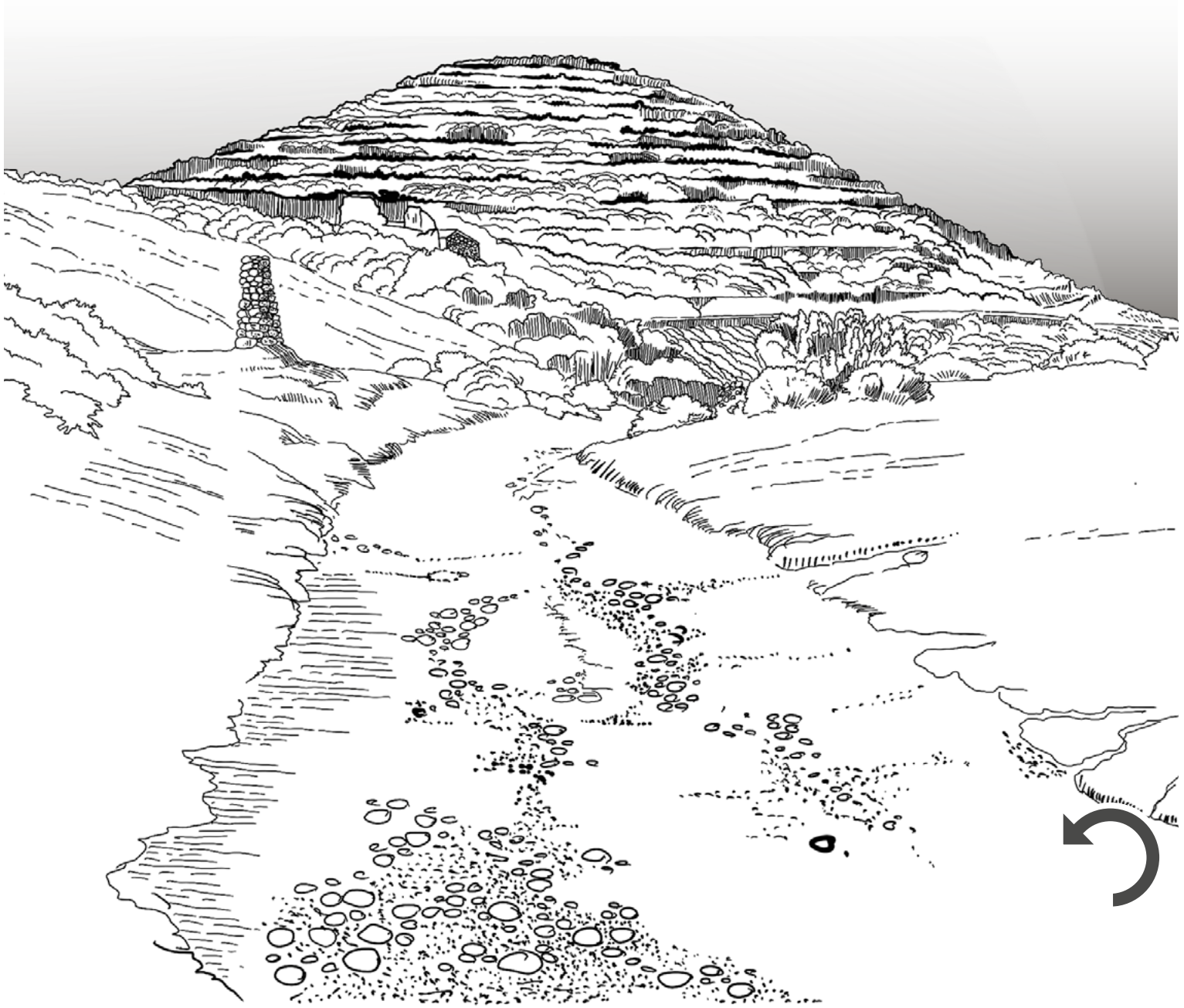
At the same time, the large estates were broken up to share amongst the heirs. All this has meant that the region of Teno is now more fragmented than it was in the past, although not as much as other parts of the Massif.







On your right, you can see La Montaña de El Vallado. Its peculiar stepped shape is the result of a recent intervention. In the 80s, the slopes were cut into terraces for sewing fodder crops, that is, plants to feed the livestock, like tagasaste and tederas. These terraces have now been abandoned and the tree heath has started to take back the land that it once occupied. The same can be said of the crests and damp water courses of this depression.





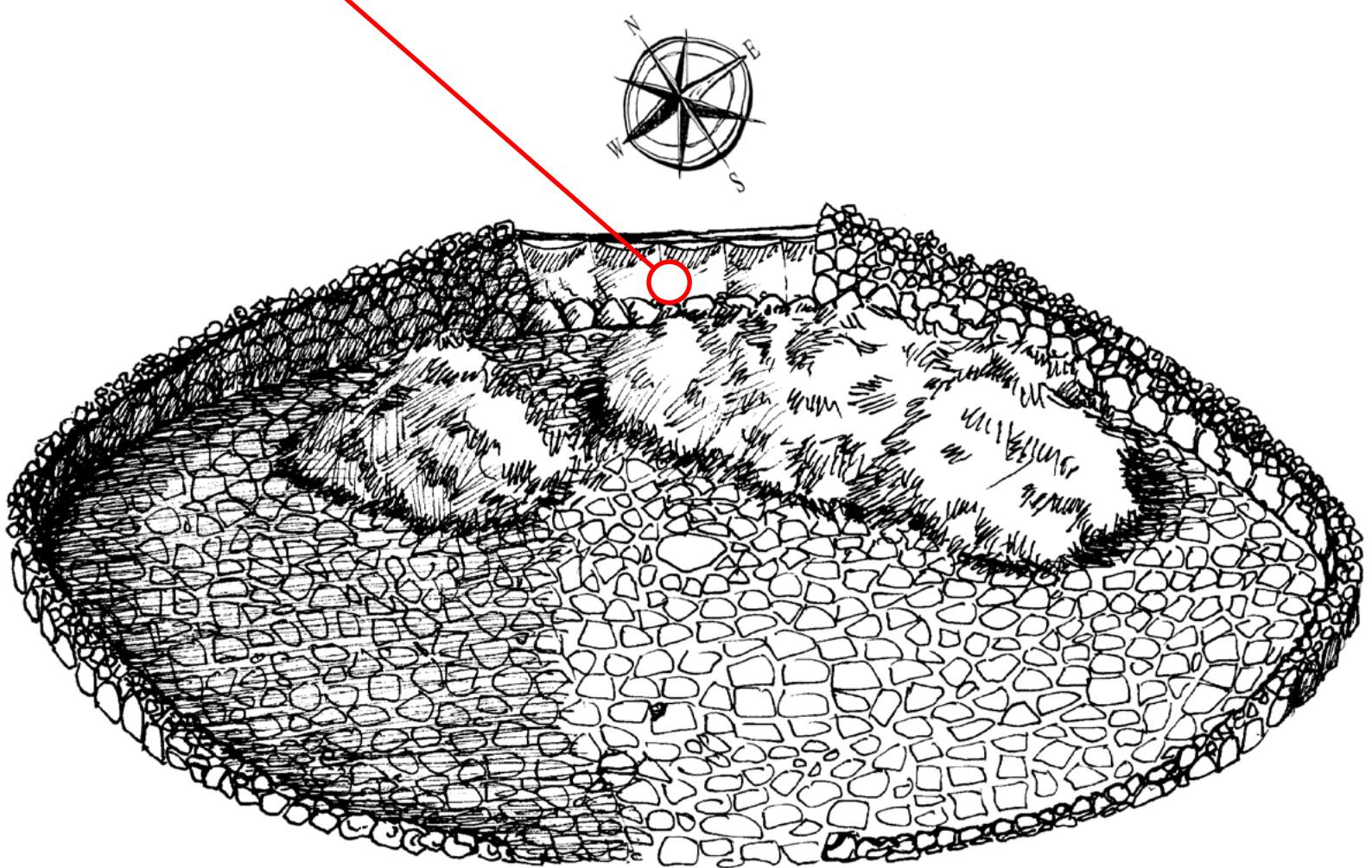
## 4 MEMORIES OF THE GRAIN

The threshing grounds, like stone moles on Teno's skin, tell us of a grain growing past

This circular area bounded by rocks and usually with a floor studded with stones too, is a threshing ground. Here the grain was threshed, that is, the grain was separated from the chaff. The Teno threshing grounds can easily be distinguished from those of rest of the island by their high stone walls and an "aventadero", a kind of window that was used to regulate the air coming in by opening or closing it with a cover of branches.

The grain was cut in May or June and carried to the threshing grounds in "costales", or woollen sacks.

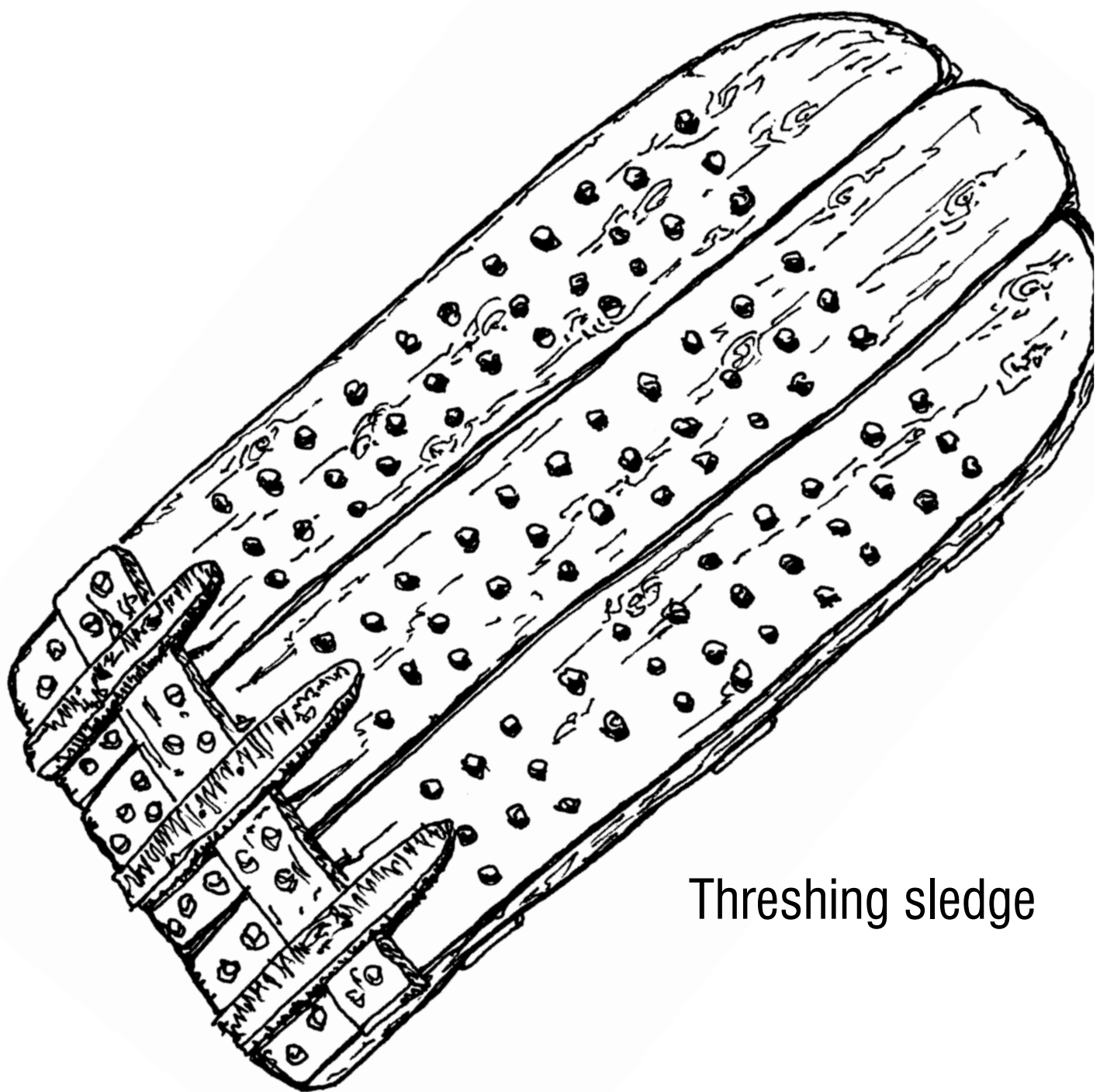
Aventadero



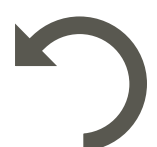
Wheat and barley have been threshed here, as well as pulses like kidney beans, chick peas, lentils and lupins, all of which were grown in Teno.

But emigration has meant that much of the farmland is now abandoned. The search for better living conditions has driven new generations to leave this distant village.

Despite this apparently one-way exodus, Teno offers financial possibilities for the inhabitants. Some of these, like Rural Tourism, are starting to show potential as a future alternative.



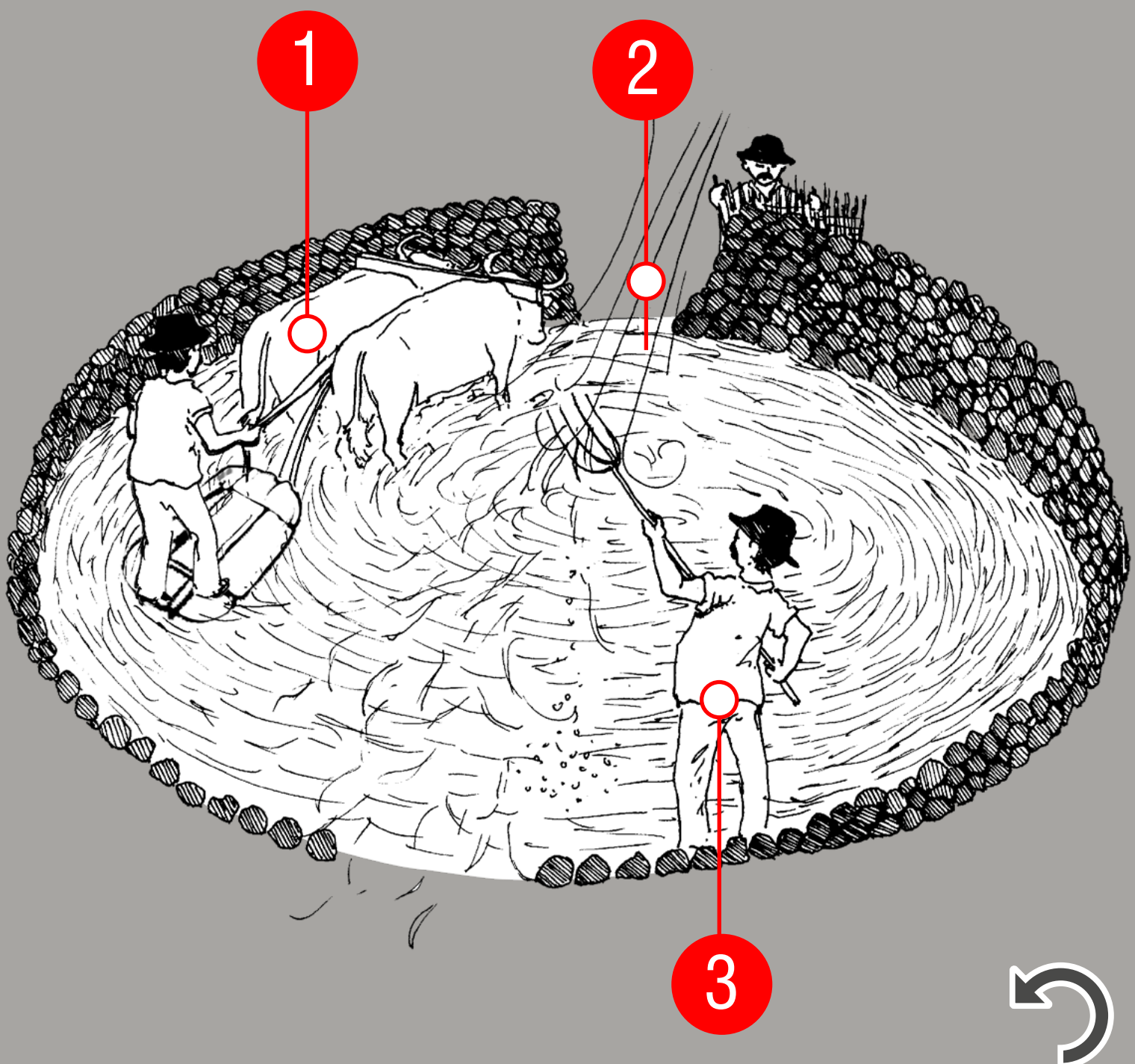
Threshing sledge





# How the grain was threshed?

1. Animals, usually oxen, led by farmers around in a circle in the threshing ground, treading and separating the grain. A threshing sledge was used at times to make the work easier.
2. When the threshing sledge had finished, some of the branches used for covering the “aventadero”, or window, were removed, opening it up in accordance with the strength of the wind blowing on the day.
3. The crops were then winnowed. The threshed grain was tossed in the air with a “gancho” or fork, for the air to separate the grain from the other cereal remains. The heavier grain fell onto the threshing ground and the “chaff” was separated by the wind.



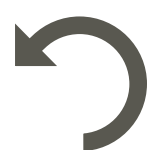
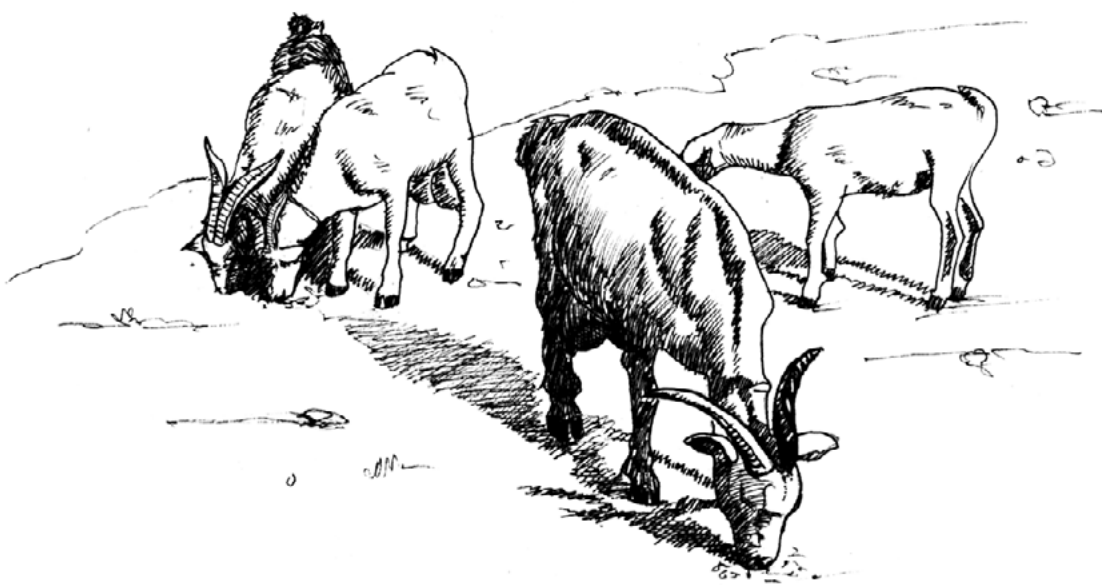
## 5 THE TENO SOUNDTRACK

The sound of the goats has formed an integral part of the Teno landscape ever since the times of the aboriginal settlers, and continues to do so

The stone structure in front of you is an old corral for penning goats. You may have seen them grazing somewhere along the path, and you have probably heard their bleating and jangling resounding along the gullies. Goats play a leading role in the history of Teno.

Goats wandered these hills long before the arrival of the Europeans in Tenerife in the 15th century. Sheep were introduced later too, to provide wool, and cows, generally as draft animals.

The gradual mechanisation of farm work led to a decline in cows in Teno, and the presence of sheep in the village is now merely testimonial.

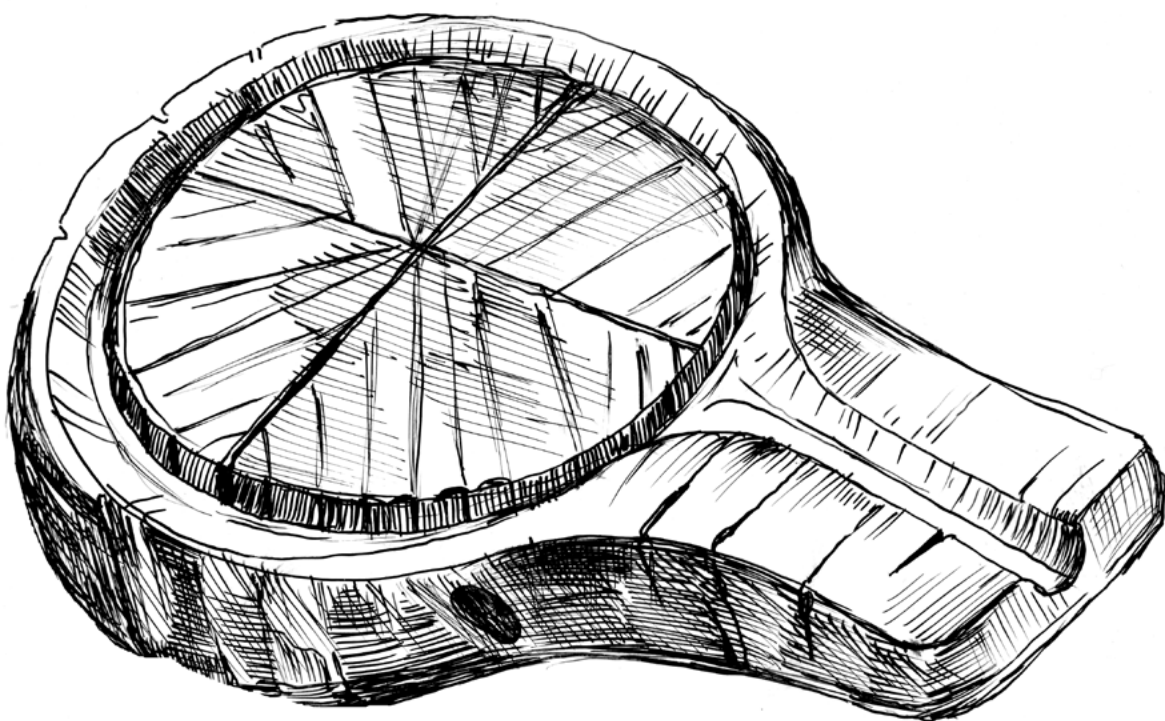




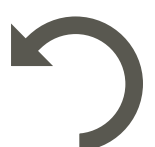
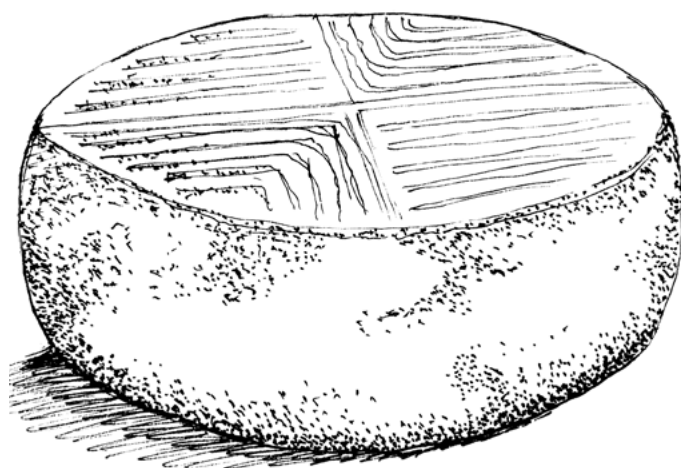
But the goat remains, or maybe it would be more accurate to say that the farmers will not give in. The village currently has approximately half a thousand head of livestock, so goats are now the mainstay of the Teno economy.

Most of the milk is used to make cheese. It is also used for domestic consumption and occasionally to make cottage cheese and livestock lard, the latter for medicinal purposes.

Cheese is still made in Teno, generally in the traditional manner, even in the cheese dairies with many head of livestock.



Cheese Mould

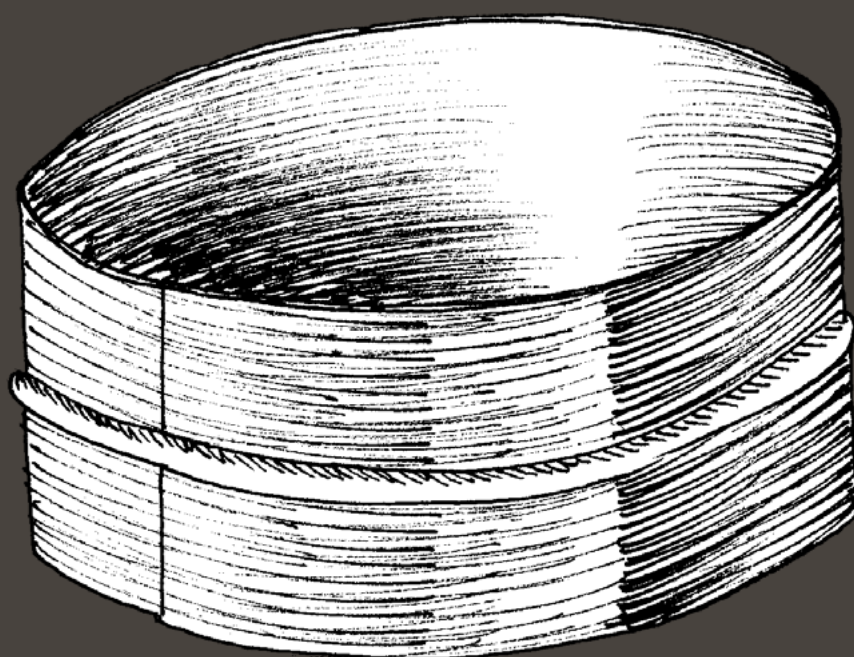


## How they make goat's milk cheese in Teno?

Animal rennet is used to curdle the milk, that is, the dried stomach of a baby goat (“baifo”) less than 8 days old.

First the rennet is dried in the sun, or smoked for 2 or 3 months. A small piece is then taken; it is soaked in water and ground up and added, in a liquid state, to the fresh milk. After leaving it to settle for an hour to “set”, it is kneaded into a ball that is then placed in a ring over the cheese mould to give it shape. Salt is added and the whey is left to drain off.

The next morning, you can have fresh cheese for breakfast, although if you prefer a more mature cheese, you will have to wait a while longer.



Ring for forming the cheese



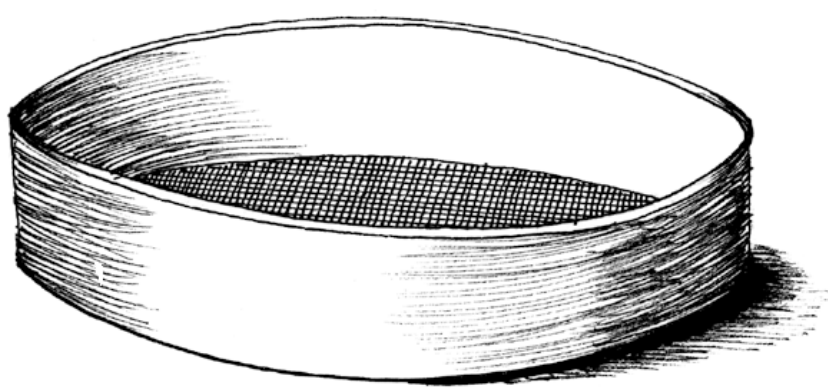


## 6 A CLAY UMBRELLA

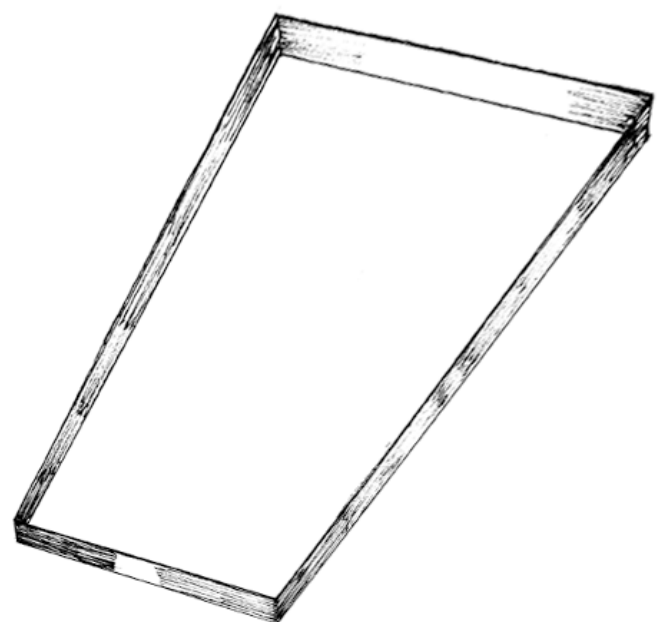
Hand made tiles is a craft that we are tryingto recover

The first master tile makers of Teno, who came from Los Carrizales and Masca, spread their know-how around the rest of the district.Teno is one area in which these kilns are most abundant, although they are generally in a pretty sorry state.

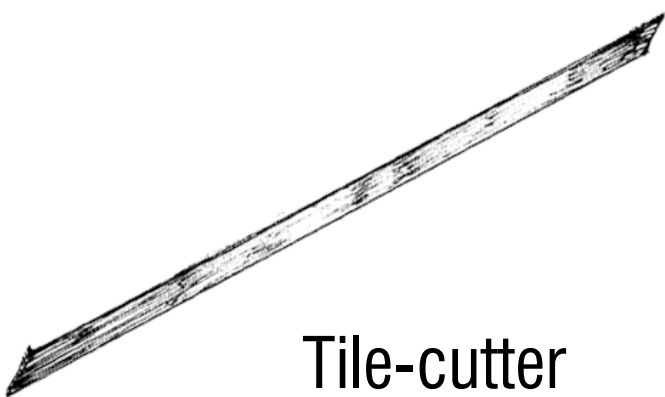
You can guess how these tiles were made by looking at the tools used by these master craftsmen:



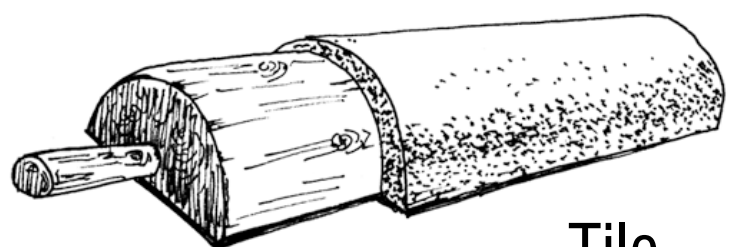
Sifter



Brick mould



Tile-cutter



Moulding  
block

Tile

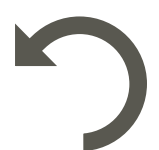
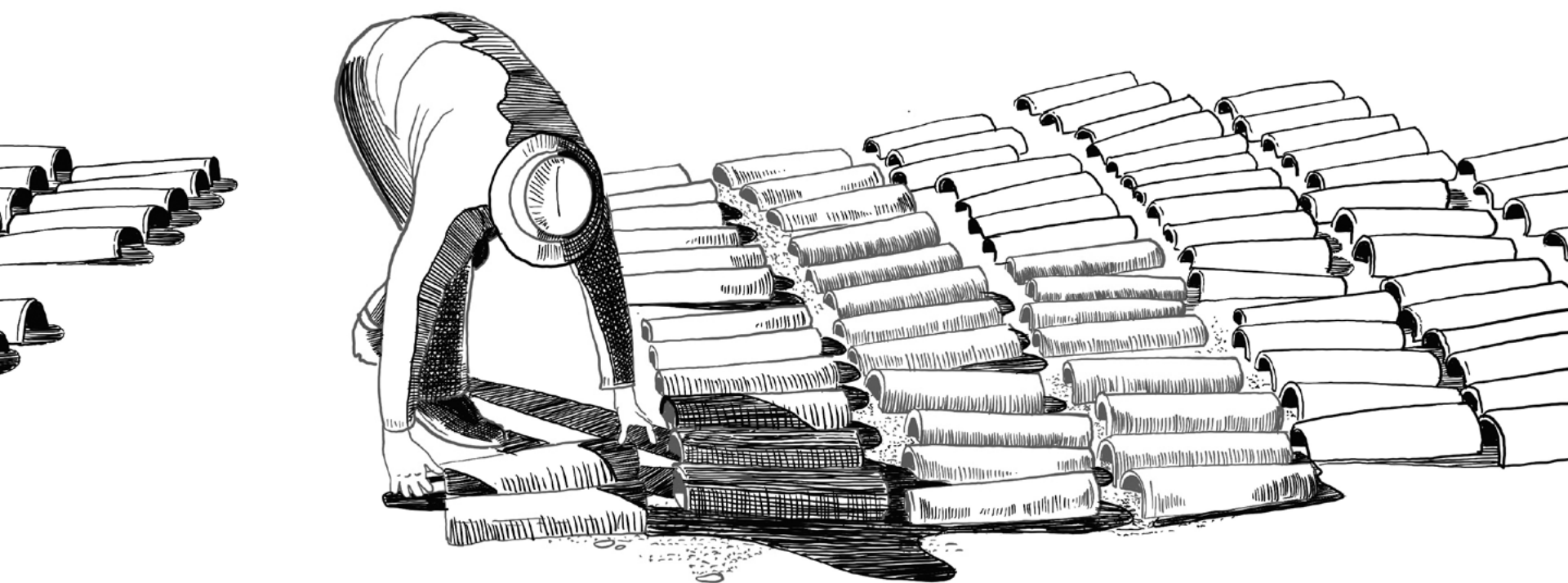


The firing of a batch of tiles was an event that brought the whole village along, spending the night in practically jokes and entertaining games while they waited for the tiles to bake.

The kiln in front of you is one of the best conserved in the entire Teno Massif, as you can see from the kneading trough and the mould, as well as the firing chambers.

This kiln was used up until 1953. In 2000, it was restored and a batch of tiles was fired using the traditional procedures. Since then, batches of tiles have been fired on several occasions and the kiln complex represents an important piece of Teno's cultural heritage.

As you have seen, water was needed for making tiles. Maybe you can discover where they got it from when you get back to the track.



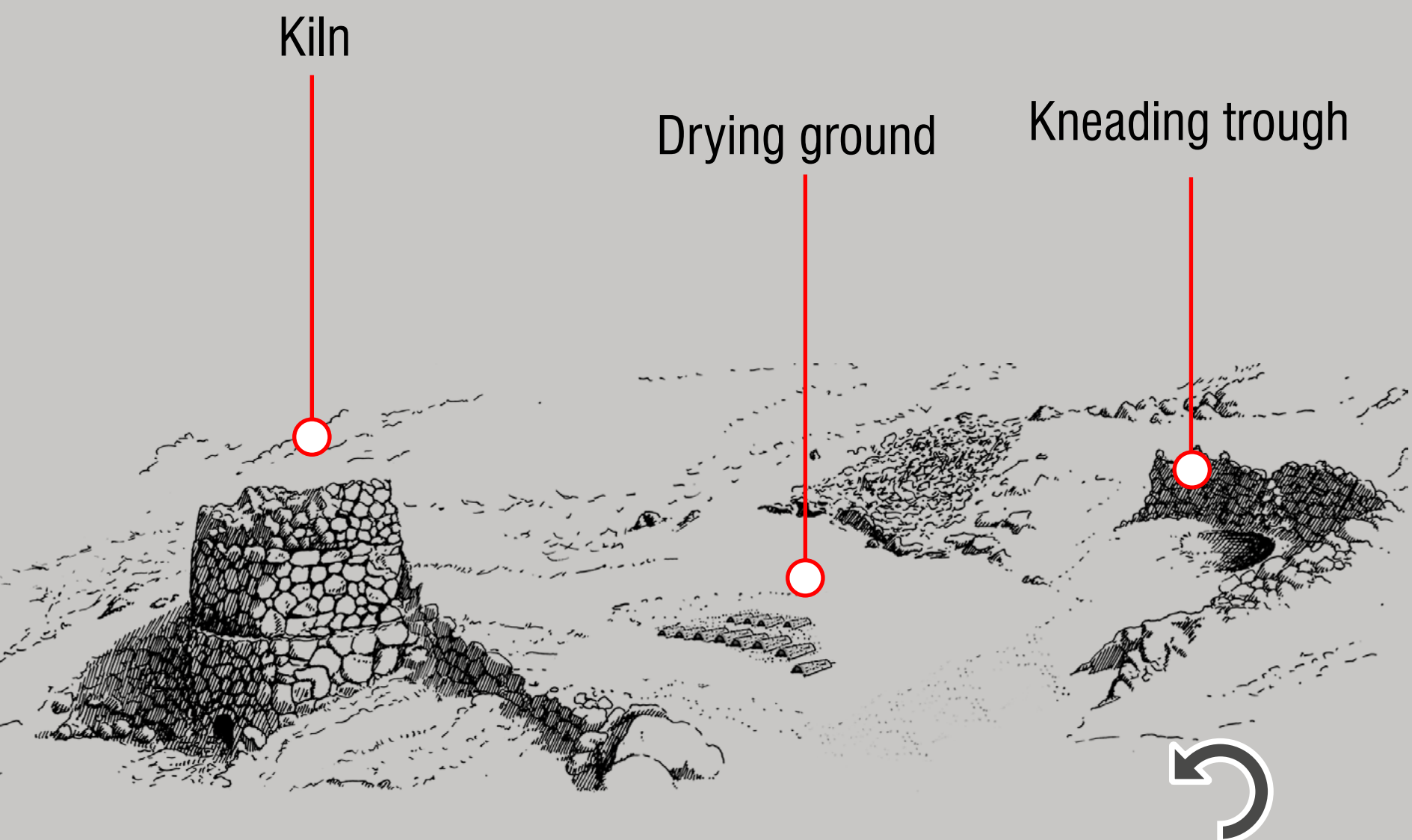


# How tiles were made?

In general, the kilns were built in places where there was good soil, water and firewood for firing the clay mix.

First of all, the soil was sifted with a sifter to sort and remove the larger lumps. The soil was then placed in the kneading trough, where it was left to soak in water for a day. The kneader would then get in the trough to knead the clay mixture with his feet. Portions were then taken out of the trough for the master cutter, who used a brick mould and a moulding block as a template.

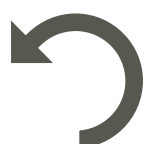
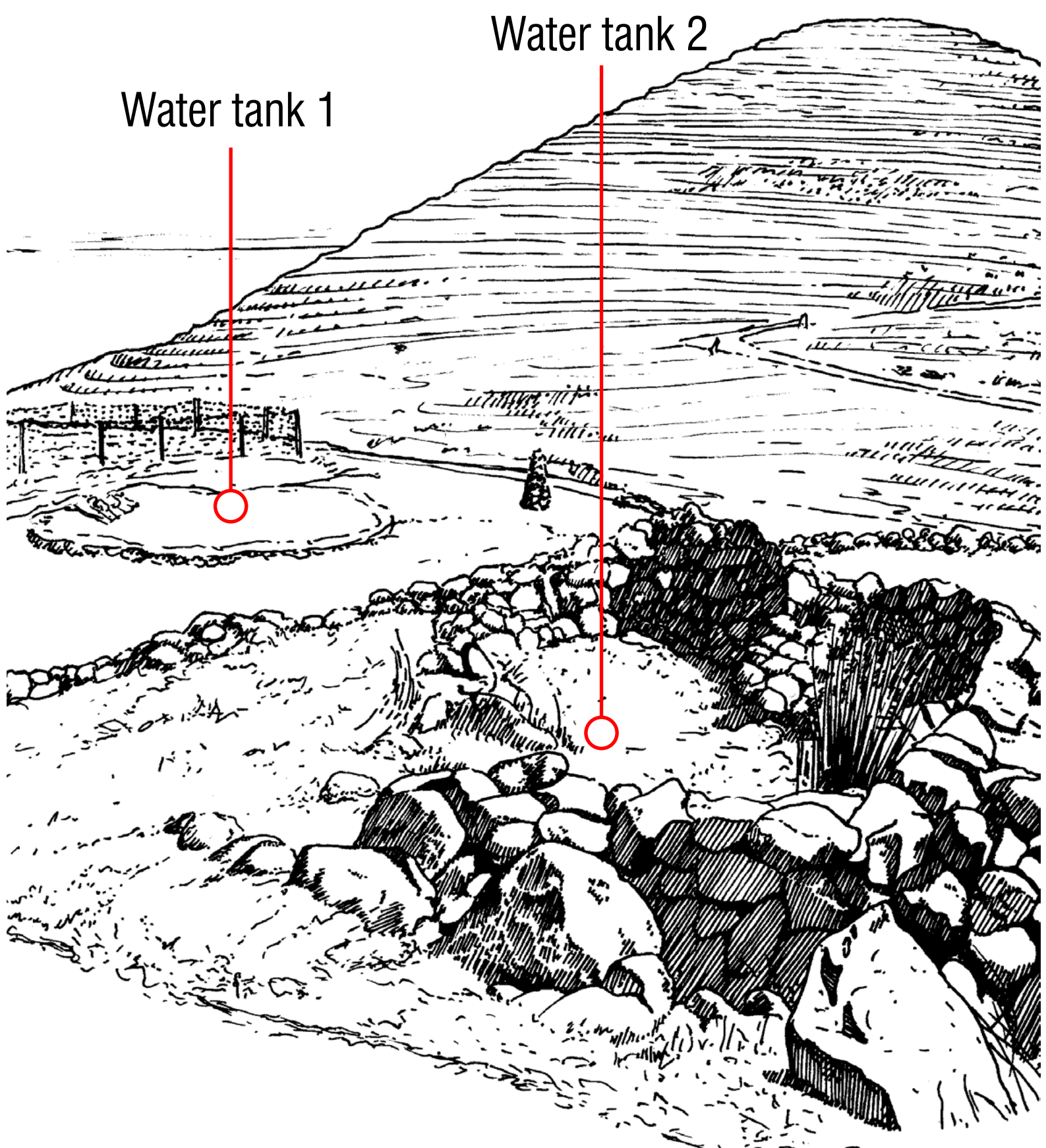
Once the tiles were cut and shaped, the master tenter placed them in the mould, where they would be left to dry for a day or two. They were then taken to the kiln and carefully arranged in the upper chamber, while the firewood burned for hours in the lower chamber.



## 7 FINDING WATER

Water is vital for life and it has to be guarded like treasure

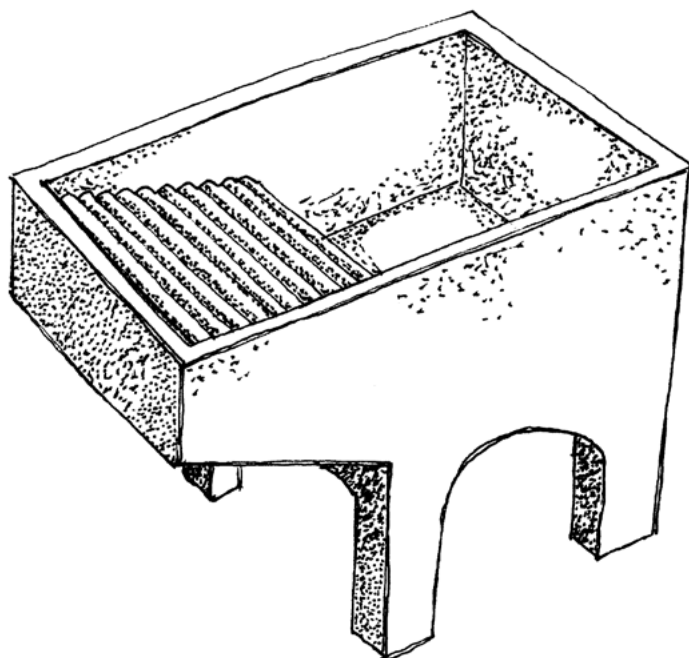
The structures you can see are “aljibes”, i.e., water tanks dug into the rock to store rain water. They were built in the early 20th century to store the water that rose from the nearby spring during the winter, for the summer time.





Water used to come from local springs, some of which are still used today. The women of Teno washed the family's clothes in the pools to be found in nearby ravines, and when these dried up, they had to go all the way to El Carrizal or El Palmar to do their washing.

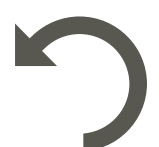
These water tanks made life a lot easier for the women, as rudimentary laundries and drinking troughs for the animals were usually built next to these tanks.



A large reservoir was built in Montaña de La Sahorra in the mid 80s to ensure a supply of running waters for all the houses in Teno.

Moreover a large pool was dug on the Las Siete estate (Las Siete Fuentes) and a network of pipes was laid for irrigating the crops.

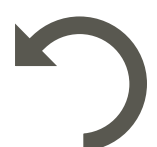
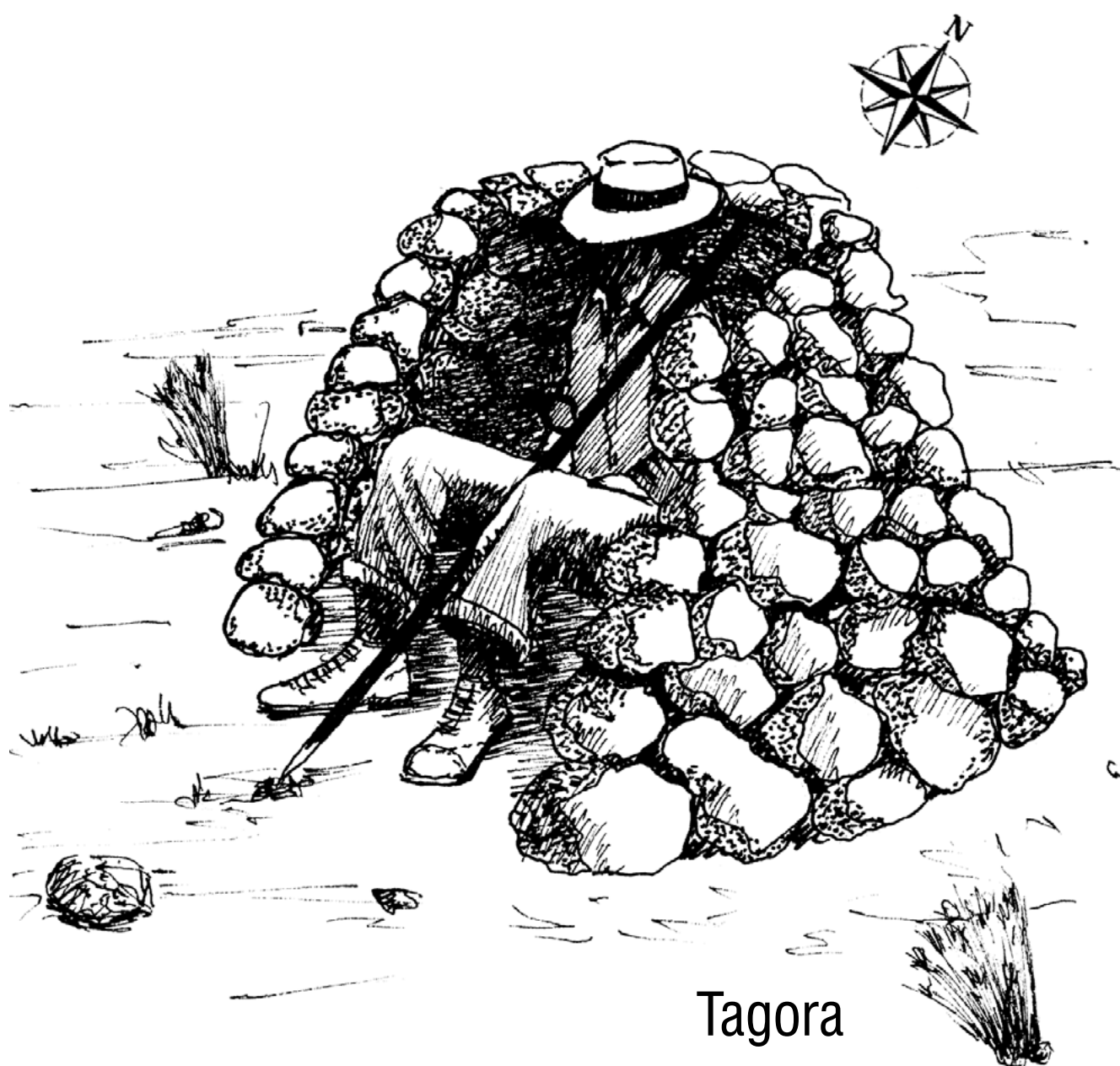
Despite all these improvements, the move away from the countryside has been unstoppable. The only economically feasible alternative to emigration to date has been goat herding.



## 8 A STONE SHIELD

The goats graze for hours and the herdsman needs a place to shelter from the wind and the rain

These stone structures, called “tagoras”, have been used since the times of the original native settlers of the island. The highest wall faces north east, to provide shelter from the winds that whip across the Teno Massif. You can usually find several large stones inside the tagora, which are used as seats.





The aboriginal settlers were vertical nomads. So the flocks spent the winter down on the coast, moving up to the foothills in spring and, in the summertime, they took the flocks up to the highlands, where there was an abundance of fresh pastures. Rotating the grazing in this way ensured the conservation of the natural resources.

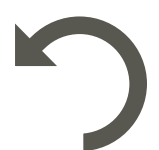
After the island was conquered by the Spaniards, the practise of only bringing the flocks of goats together for milking continued in Teno until the 20th century. Since then, in times of bad weather, the goats were put in pens for milking and to shelter them at night.

This semi-free and semi-stabled form of grazing has since evolved into the model used today.

Nowadays, the only time the flock spends out in the country is when they go out to graze, and even then, they usually graze within fenced pastures, thus preventing possible conflicts between land owners.

On your right is one of the cheese dairies of Teno. They still use the traditional system for making their cheeses.

As you can see, the livestock has survived. Farming on the other hand, is undergoing a serious crisis, as you can see from the abandoned fields.



## **9 WHERE THE LAND IS GOING TO SEED**

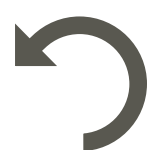
The move away from farming is a key factor of the present landscape here in Teno

Until the mid 80s, these lands produced large quantities of cereals and legumes. But the hardship of dry land farming and the import of cheaper produce drove the local people to abandon their lands and emigrate.

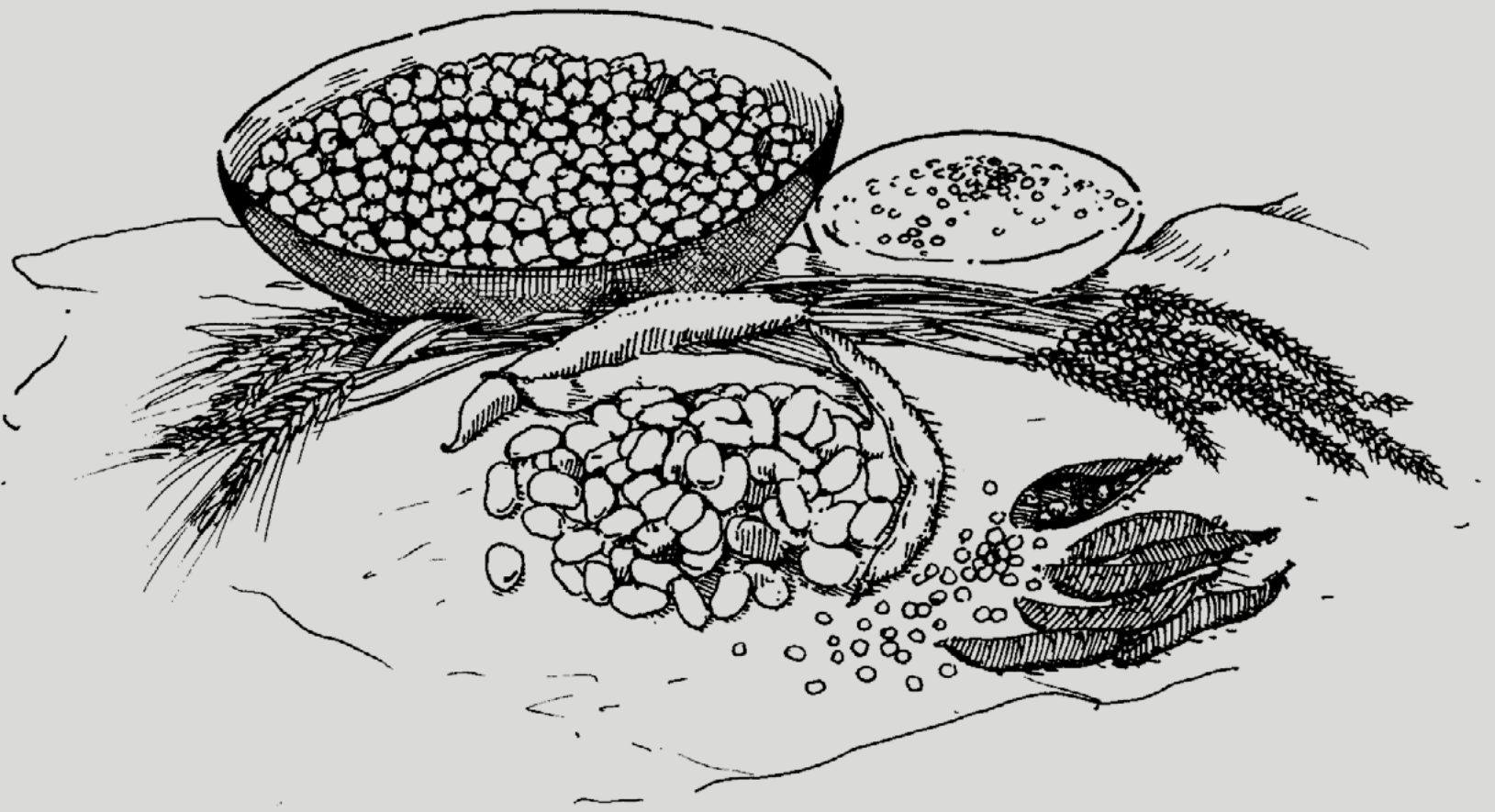
The few smallholdings that have survived produce potatoes, maize, grape vines, fruit trees and the famous Teno saffron. This is all small scale farming, for family consumption.

From here, you get a close up view of the eye catching bulrush fences that used to separate fields. These plants were also used as rope for tying, in basket making and as fodder, especially for cattle, until the cattle disappeared from the Teno landscape.

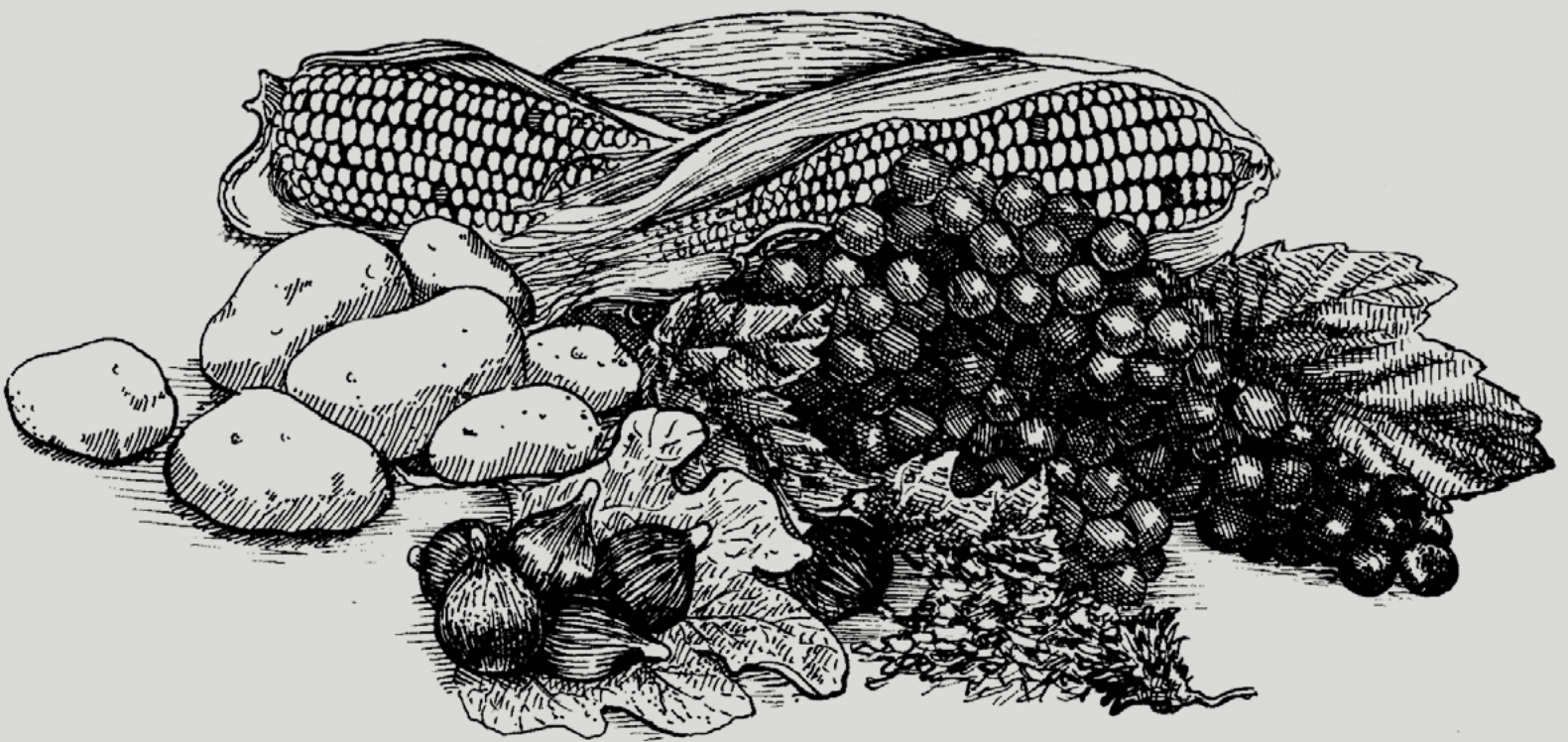
But this landscape has not always been the way you see it today. You can now only find the last remains of the mantle of vegetation that covered this area in the past. Some of these plant remains have reappeared in the area around you.







Main farm produce in the 70s  
(20th century)



Main farm produce today



## 10 THE SILENT ADVANCE

The wax myrtle and tree heath are recovering their ground with the disappearance of farming and forestry activities

With the arrival of new ways of life in the 15th century, the natural landscape of Teno was changed significantly.

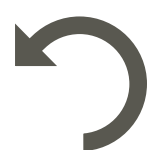
Clearing the land for farming, the need for fuel, materials for building houses, etc. were the main reasons that explain why the natural vegetation disappeared from this area.

Centuries ago, a forest of Canary wax myrtle and tree heath covered the slopes of this valley, until it was all cut down.

The wood of the tree heath was highly appreciated as it was hard and tough, so it was collected in large quantities from around here. The remains of twigs, leaves, etc. were also collected as bedding for animals and later mixed with their excrement as manure.

In recent times, species like the wax myrtle and tree heath are recovering the lands that used to belong to them, as the fields are gradually being abandoned. That is what is happening on the crests and moist water courses of this valley.

If you look around, you will see how these trees are “spilling” down from the mountain peaks in a slow but unstoppable advance.





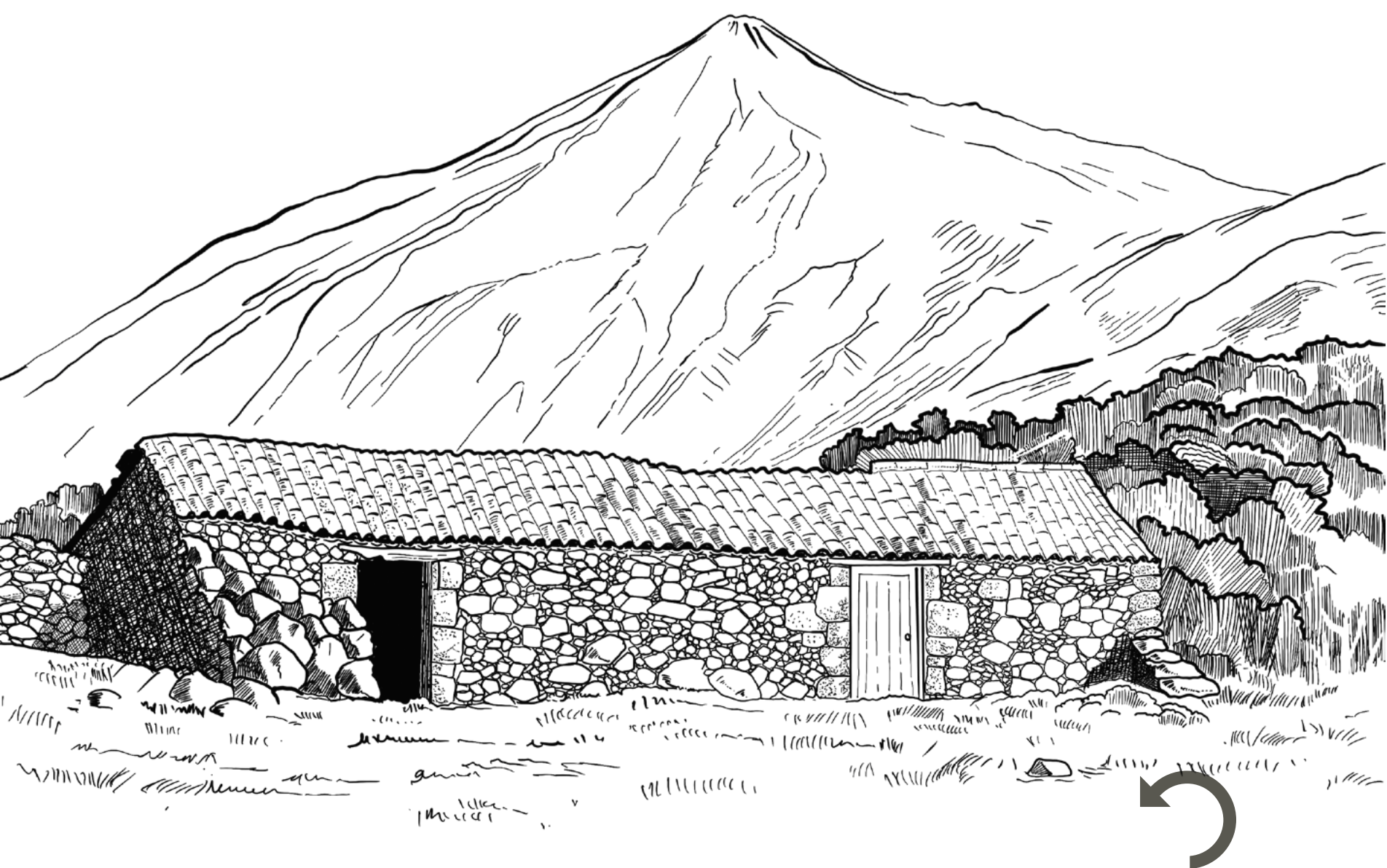
# 11 THE TILES HAVE A STORY TO TELL

You can follow the history of this village and its people by following the path laid out by the roofs of Teno

By reading the passage of time in the walls, you can discover much of the history of Los Bailaderos.

Traditional houses are small, low and rectangular in shape. But the evolution of popular architecture over the centuries is evident, both in the materials used and in the form of the buildings.

Houses were built with basalt stone and mud from the surrounding area, and cow dung was sometimes added too. These materials make for a cool, fresh atmosphere in summer and for more warmth in winter.



To provide shelter from the fearful north east winds, the classical construction had a single opening in the south or west facing wall.

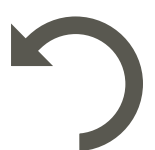
This is where the door to the house was placed, with a gap at the bottom for the cat to come in and go out: the “cat flap”.



Later on, windows were opened in the houses and roofs changed from two pitches to four, and some of the materials used were replaced.

The most obvious architectural changes occurred once the access track to Teno was opened up in 1972.

Since then, most of the old houses became tool sheds or barns for storing the crops. Breeze blocks and cement replaced the traditional building materials, in a search for a little longer for comfort.



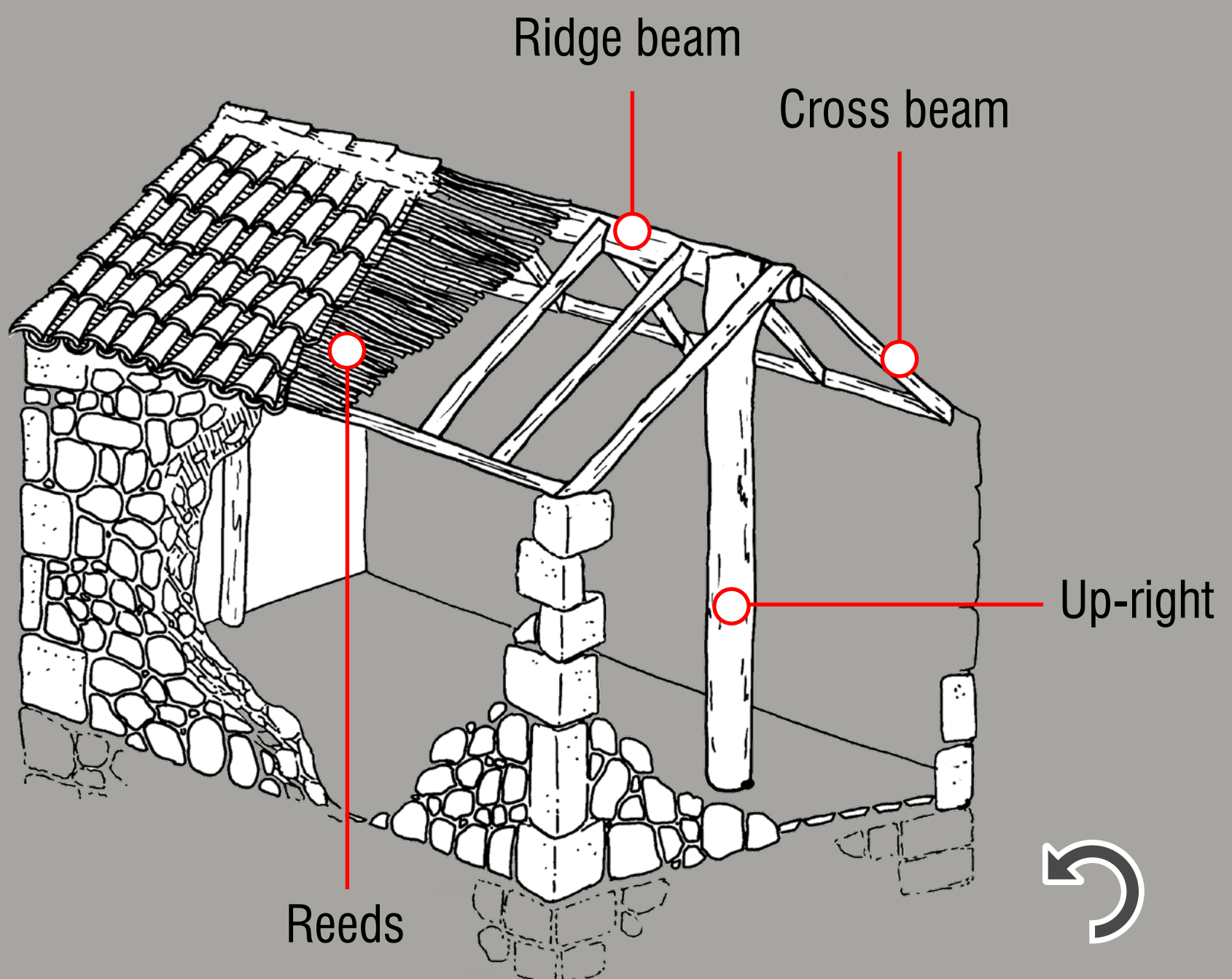


## How the traditional roofs were built?

The roof was pitched with two slopes, that is, one on either side of the ridge beam. This beam, normally made of picconia, wax myrtle or holly, was cut from the nearby Monte del Agua, in Los Silos. The enormous trunk was dragged here by oxen, along the track known as El Callejon de El Palmar, or El Callejon de Teno.

The cross beams were then put in place, normally made of tree heath and sometimes wax myrtle, and these were covered with tree heath branches or reeds. The whole structure was then covered with the tiles made especially for the occasion.

To spread the weight of the roofing, up-rights were used to take the weight of the ridge beam.



## 12 A LESSON IN LIFE

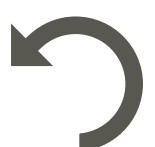
The first step to valuing the life of a people is to get to know their cultural heritage

This route has shown you some of the keys to understanding and appreciating the character of a people with centuries of relative isolation behind them.

Emigration is putting a heavy burden on this village and on the entire Massif in general. Teno survives today thanks to cheese making and more recently there is a growing income from the tourist boom.

Visitors, like you, who come here, are searching for an insight into a way of life that is slipping away like the grains of sand in the hourglass of time.

You can help to maintain this natural site with an attitude of respect and by consuming local products.





On your visit, you can take an active part in the conservation of this area, by following a few of our recommendations:



Use the paths indicated and respect the way of life and the privacy of its inhabitants.



The less noise you make, the more life you will discover around you.



Take away all your rubbish, including biodegradable waste. That way, you will contribute to conserving the beauty of the countryside and keeping rodents under control.



Collecting plants, animals and other objects from the area could cause the loss of irreplaceable items.





Red Canaria de Espacios  
Naturales Protegidos



**Teno**  
Parque Rural



Atención Ciudadana | Citizen's Advice Bureau

**901 501 901**

**EMERGENCIAS | EMERGENCY 112**