



# SILBO GOMERO

Canary Islands

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# WHAT IT IS

Silbo Gomero is a whistled language from **La Gomera** in Spain's Canary Islands, used to communicate across deep valleys. It's not a new language but a whistled form of Castilian Spanish.



# ORIGIN

It traces back to pre-Spanish times, used by the island's original **Guanche** inhabitants in the Canary Islands. After Spanish colonization (16th century onward), Silbo was adapted to encode **Castilian Spanish** via whistling.



# MODERN TIME

By mid-20th century, its use had declined due to technological change, migration, and shifting social attitudes.

In 1999, La Gomera made Silbo a compulsory subject in schools to help revive it.



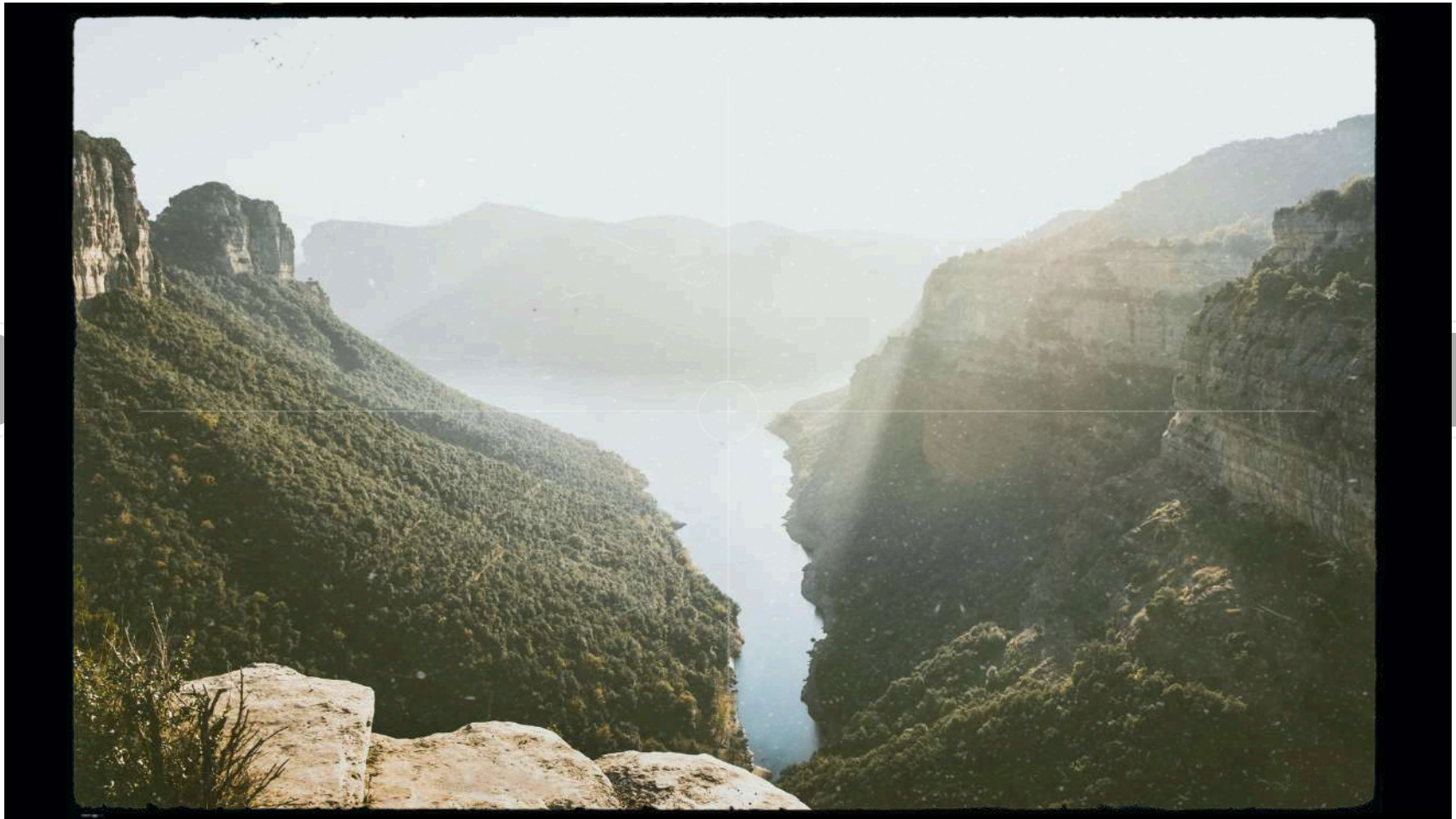
# HOW IT WORKS

Two distinct whistles represent the five Spanish vowels (high/low, continuous/interrupted), and four additional whistles represent consonants.

Because there are fewer distinct whistles than spoken phonemes, context and word choice matter to avoid ambiguity



# ACROSS VALLEY



Silbo users must learn to project their whistle across ravines and steep hills. The terrain itself becomes part of the message: echoes and distances shape how loud, sharp, or prolonged each whistle must be.

# A CULTURAL TREASURE

Although there are whistled “languages” in other places, Silbo Gomero is the only whistled language globally that is fully developed and actively used by a large community today.

