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A Study of Italian and Spanish cases

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Article abstract

This paper deals with European experiences of inscription of traditional cultural practices on UNESCO’s Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH). It will first establish the institutional context of the UNESCO’s listing within the framework of reflections on cultural rights. Then, the author briefly presents four European masterpieces in the Mediterranean area. A comparative analysis follows which specifically focuses on the multiplication of practitioners and on translocality; on the overlapping between institutions and artisans; on the use of intangible cultural heritage as a driver for local development via cultural tourism; and on the multimedia “museification” of the intangible. The comparative study of the listing of these intangible cultural heritage traditions also questions the value of customary law versus freedom of expression and creation. It reveals the tensions between the “purity” and “impurity” of cultural practices and social agents, as well as exclusions related to ethnicity, sex or territory. These tensions create new social divisions and remodel the link people have with cultural practices. An examination of gender sheds light on the marginality of women in public space.

CULTURAL RIGHTS AND “MASTERPIECES” OF LOCAL AND TRANSLOCAL ACTORS

A Study of Italian and Spanish cases

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This paper is about European experiences of intangible cultural heritage, proclaimed as “Masterpieces” by UNESCO¹. The comparative study of these cultural traditions questions the value of customary law versus freedom of expression and creation. It reveals the tensions between the “purity” and “impurity” of cultural practices and actors, as well as exclusions related to ethnicity, race, sex or territory. These tensions create new social divisions and remodel the identification with cultural practices. A consideration of gender sheds light on the marginality of women in public space.

The “masterpiecization process”—and in a wider sense the process of cultural “patrimonialization”—raises ethical questions common in the discourse of human rights: what do social actors legitimately ‘own’? How is this ownership recognized and legitimized? When does institutional appropriation (justified by legal and political necessity) take precedence over the actor’s voice and space? Why and when is tourist development the only way to “save” economic and cultural vitality? While multimedia museology is often conceived as the best way to address all these questions, it can easily exclude human and intangible dimensions, the experiences of performance and transmission by living actors. The use of multimedia follows the theory of interpretation (Tilden, 1977), presenting attractive material to simulate more interest. In our cases, its use is either encyclopedic or impressionistic.

In this paper, I will first establish the institutional context of the masterpieces within the framework of reflections on cultural rights. Then, I will very briefly present four European masterpieces in the Mediterranean

1. I am very grateful to Mary Richardson for the translation of this paper.

area. A comparative analysis will follow which will precisely focus on the multiplication of practitioners and on translocality; on the overlapping between institutions and artisans; on the use of intangible cultural heritage as a driver for local development via cultural tourism; and on the multimedia “museification” of the intangible.

Masterpiece context and cultural rights

Since 1999 when the “Proclamation of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity” program was implemented by UNESCO, 90 forms of expression and cultural spaces have received official recognition. There were three phases to the Proclamations (2001, 2003, 2005). In each, the number of proclamations and candidature files increased successively (UNESCO 2006). Special prizes, from 3,000 to 70,000 American dollars, were awarded to certain “masterpieces” in the developing world in order to help safeguard them. In 2008, as agreed among member states, the 90 masterpieces proclaimed have been recorded on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of Humanity, modeled on the World Heritage List. Since then, new elements have been added every year by the Committee evaluating nominations proposed by States Parties to the 2003 Convention. There is also a second List for Cultural Heritage elements in need of urgent safeguard measures to insure their transmission. Various criticisms, but also the intensity of participation in the program, justify the interest in a comparative study on the consequences of the proclamations made thus far.

In an effort to understand the impacts of “materpiecization” in the political, tourist, aesthetic, and social sectors, I will limit my study to the Italian and Spanish cases: the *Opera dei Pupi* (2001, Sicily, Italy), the *Canto a tenore* (2005, Sardinia, Italy), the *Misteri* Play of Elche (2001, Valencia, Spain), and the *Patum* of Berga (2005, Catalonia, Spain). As they are located in Europe, they have not received any special funding from UNESCO. Instead, their management has been integrated into existing regional and municipal political structures. These models of integrated management of intangible heritage are therefore somewhat of a case study.

The cultural rights—we could also speak of customary law—of these Spanish and Italian cases cannot be compared with the now highly publicized cases of more basic human rights violations such as female genital mutilation or the destruction of Buddhist art in Afghanistan. However, their location in the West helps shed light on the striking political dimension of

cultural heritage. This political process heightens debate on local, ethnic or cultural identities and on the political appropriation of the symbols of those identities.

The right to identify with a specific practice is rooted in historical and social experiences that have been passed on over generations and that have been transformed by time. Political strategies tend to weaken the specific identification with a traditional practice and to increase an anonymous and plural access to it. As I have observed in another fieldwork setting (Jerez de la Frontera, Spain), this phenomenon can be said to emphasize a citizenship identity and exoticize a territorialized "us" based on specific practices. This phenomenon produces a new kind of relationship to cultural practices. It creates a sort of duality between the democratization and the recognition of historical culture. Observing that the cultural-based processes are now oriented and managed by institutional and political discourse, the basic idea of UNESCO's intention in proclaiming Masterpieces of oral and intangible cultural heritage (from 2001 to 2005 and since then enlarging the Representative List of ICH), seems diverted from its initial goals.

The first distinguishing aspects involve the myriad of different interests in managing cultural heritage: some political parties see in it a means of furthering a nationalist cause; town councils use it to increase their power in developing regional tourism; some community organizations bolster, recover or acquire artistic authority. In some cases, such as the Spanish ones, the same heritage can serve two apparently opposing causes: a regional nationalism and a centralizing national right wing; a socialist town council and right-wing regional or national parties over which the Catholic Church still holds sway.

Although they are firmly rooted in performance and aesthetics, heritage strategies appeal to notions of power. They place differing interests in confrontation, but they also create a dialogue between entities with divergent perspectives on the same heritage. The selection of heritages, far from being neutral, raises questions on government strategies with respect to cultural rights and on the degree to which artisans are represented, as shown by the Italian cases. Mechanisms of appropriation, by both artisans and authorities, result in a multiplication of actors which fuels claims and debates, in particular concerning the territory associated with the cultural identity being "made heritage."

Although the masterpieces program recognizes "practices", not "identities," the two cannot be separated. Debates over the territorial

representation of practices questions and leads to strategies for excluding or including sociocultural identities. Belonging to an ancestral territory—a sort of controlled geographical designation of the intangible—is perceived by both artisans and other concerned parties as an added value. In several cases, family names also confer legitimacy. Some people clearly express their concern over leaving “their” heritage in the hands of strangers, that is, the descendants of immigrants, something which could also be seen as a social integration success.

This association among territory, identity and heritage, all of which are cultural, helps to protect the meaning, the artisans and the history of a practice. However, as in the case of food (Bérard et Marchenay, 1998), it has both territorial and human limits and exclusions.

The four cases suggest the need for more clearly defining the connections and differences among identity, practice and cultural rights. I will now briefly present the four masterpieces showing the most pertinent data for the comparative analysis.

The Opera dei pupi

The *Opera dei pupi* is a Sicilian puppet theatre that was declared a “masterpiece” in 2001. The main characters (the knights of Charlemagne) are represented by carved wooden puppets that can be up to one meter high, in the tradition of Catania, and a bit smaller in the tradition of Palermo. Both cities are represented by two main families (Napoli and Cuticchio); a historic rivalry is said to have helped to preserve and develop their respective practices. The scenes and texts that are performed are epic and are inspired by *chanson de geste*, in particular The Song of Roland (representing Norman domination in 12th century Sicily). Although the poems were written down in the 16th century and enjoyed great success in 19th century puppet theatres, the origins of the tradition go back to ancient times.

This form of puppet theatre also has roots in the art of storytelling, which had developed an unusual technique of oral expression: the last syllable of a verse was joined to the first word of the next verse to make the story harder to follow. Today, only one Sicilian puppeteer still uses the technique. Traditionally, the voices for all of the characters in a story are done by a single puppeteer. Today, however, many shows use prerecorded soundtracks. The artist’s virtuosity is no longer judged by the same criteria and requirements.

The arrival of television in the 1950s and 1960s coincided with the decline of puppet theatre. The *Mestieri* (all the material needed to put on a show) can be found at antique dealers and in foreign museums (Vibraek, 2008). The few remaining artisans adapt their shows to the television form, speeding up the action and shortening the storyline. International tourism also influences the staging: the texts are abstracted and simplified, the traditional scenes of heroic battles are lengthened, Sicilian dialect is avoided and gestures are used instead of words, since most visitors speak little or no Italian. In one of the theatres of Palermo, viewers are given a written summary of the story in various languages, and a show that originally lasted for months is reduced to about thirty minutes.

In 1965, Antonio Pasqualino, a Palermitan surgeon founded the association for the preservation of folk traditions in order to save the *Opera dei pupi*. He recorded life histories, preserved a complete *Mestieri* and purchased puppets from other cultural traditions. In 1975, the association became what is now the International puppet museum of Palermo, which received funding from the Sicilian regional assembly. Until recently the museum put on traditional shows both on its grounds and elsewhere. The museum also initiated and prepared the candidature of the *Opera dei pupi* for UNESCO's "Proclamation of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity."

Canto a tenore

In 2005, Sardinian *canto a tenore* was proclaimed a "masterpiece." The candidature file for proclamation as a UNESCO masterpiece was the initiative of the Nuoro town council. Traditionally located in the centre of the island, the *Tenore* tradition originated in the region of Barbagia, an area with a strong pastoral tradition. The name of the region is said to have been given by the Romans around 200 BC because of local resistance to the development of Phoenician trading posts (900 BC).

A wind instrument from the south of the island, the *launeddas*, is made up of three harmonized bamboo tubes. The instrument is associated with the origin of the *canto a tenore* and is said to be from the Nuragic era in the 9th century BC. The singing technique developed in a context where herders were geographically isolated in the mountains and they imitated the three sounds of their immediate environment in polyphony: probably wind (tenor), goats (baritone) and oxen (bass).

The three voices together form the *Tenore*. The *canto a tenore* began

as a collective practice. Each member uses a voice technique called pharyngealization in which the vocal cords are compressed by phonatory blocking. The *Tenore* accompanies a soloist who interprets traditional or contemporary Sardinian poems. Although this musical performance dates back to Antiquity, nowadays it is performed in so-called ethnic music festivals.

Contemporary *Tenores* have about thirty years of training. In January 2006, they formed an association, an initiative of the Nuoro regional administration. Since 2005, when it was proclaimed a “masterpiece,” the number of Sardinian *Tenores* has doubled. The number of new members in the association has raised many questions, because some people from outside of Nuoro province also want to join.

In July 2006, a *Tenore* museum opened its doors in the village of Bitti, where the documentation is mainly audiovisual.

The Mystery Play of Elche

Elche is the second largest town in the Alicante province, in the region of Valencia. Known for its shoe factories, it has high rates of immigration and unemployment and is seeking to position itself as a cultural and natural tourist destination. In 2000, UNESCO recognized its natural heritage: the largest palm grove in Europe. Originally, this proposal included the Mystery Play of Elche, however, UNESCO agents recommended that it be withdrawn and presented separately in the new Masterpieces of the Intangible Cultural Heritage program. Two proclamations in less than two years for the little town of Elche stimulated local pride.

The Mystery Play of Elche has its origins in medieval theatre and the cult of the Virgin Mary. It represents her death, her passage into heaven (Assumption) and her crowning. This religious play is performed on the day of the Assumption, August 14 and 15. It is sung by a male choir and many local volunteers take part. The staging is very complex both vertically and horizontally. Shows of the Mystery play were organized by the lesser nobility that lived around the Basilica of Santa Maria, until 1609 when citizens moved away from the Church. Thereafter, the town council ensured that the play continued to be performed and raised taxes to finance it. Tensions between the town council and the Church grew, leading to an aesthetic deterioration that lasted until the beginning of the 20th century. In 1924, the Spanish government decided to take responsibility for preserving the play and declared it a “national monument” in 1931. The Spanish civil

war (1936-1939) caused the performances to be suspended. In 1948, the Spanish government founded a commission to bring it back, made up of national representatives, the Elche town council and the Church.

Since 2005, the organizing committee for the festival has been part of the region of Valencia and not the government. The entire history of the Elche Mystery Play is marked by an institutional duality that has created constant friction between the Church and the People's Party (historically a right-wing party) on the one hand, and the traditionally socialist town council on the other. Today the town council would like to retrieve the influence it had in the 17th century to democratize this cultural practice and root it more deeply in the local economy. On the other hand, the Church and conservative policies preserve its orthodoxy and sense of ritual as well as their own powers.

In the past several years, tickets have been sold for the dress rehearsal. In addition, after 1950, when the Dogma of the Assumption of the Virgin was proclaimed, commemorative performances were added in October 1954 and 1960, and have continued to be every five years thereafter. Since 1970, they have taken place every two years. The fall is a better time of year for the citizens of Elche to attend, while the month of August is better for tourists.

Since 1929, there have been occasional "concert" versions of the Mystery Play at festivals outside Elche. The actors put on their costumes without, however, performing the Assumption, which is only presented on the official days. The organizers make sure to distinguish between "concert" versions and official performances, both in meaning and practice. The first invitation to a concert outside Elche dates back to 1929, but over the years such invitations have often been declined in order to preserve the original meaning of this religious theatre.

The Patum of Berga

Proclaimed a "masterpiece" in 2005, the *Patum* of Berga goes back to the Middle Ages. The *Patum* is a week-long festival celebrating *Corpus Christi*. It is also said to have preserved some pagan elements such as the struggle between Good and Evil. Berga is a town of 15,000 in the north of Catalonia. Similar festivals were celebrated in major Catalan towns and cities in the early modern period, and elements of these have persisted or been revived in Solsona, Manresa, Tarragona, and elsewhere (Noyes, 2006).

The festival includes fireworks, dances of giants, dwarves, and other figures, music and performances. In the explanations of civic fathers, the dances parody the struggle between Good and Evil and commemorate a historic battle against the Arabs' attempt² to enter the city. In that sense, they strengthen contemporary collective and territorial identity.

According to Noyes, it was one of few street festivals tolerated by General Franco. During the twentieth century, it therefore came to symbolize political resistance for Berguedans. Noyes also believes that the *Patum* consolidates a collective emotion and a political stance based on the concept of "community." This strong sense of belonging to a "community" practice is used to defend the authenticity of the festival of Berga in the face of "reinventions" by neighboring towns and villages. Although these festivals are more recent, they may also have their roots in an ancestral practice, which most likely has influenced the festival that currently takes place in Berga. Declared a festival of interest to tourists by the Catalan government in 1983, it is also used to reinforce regional identity.

The application file for the proclamation of the *Patum* was developed by the Catalan government with the support and enthusiastic cooperation of the mayor of Berga. The *Casa de la Patum* was inaugurated in 2007 to give visitors a glimpse of the festivities. Berguedans are also working on a museum of intangible heritage.

Comparative perspectives

I have introduced almost in a schematic way the four masterpieces with the aim of sharing some observations and conclusions from the comparative analysis of those experiences. Several similarities are worth pointing out. The common political dimension appears evident: the UNESCO recognition is aimed at "minority" and regional practices in the Italian cases and "local" practices for the Spanish cases, all of which are meaningful for regional and local identities. These practices are, however, already endowed with a distinct regional political representation. In Spain, as in Italy, and specifically for these four regions, independent regional governments (Valencian and Catalan, Sardinian and Sicilian)

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2. Many towns have annual celebrations of the battle between Christians and Moslems commemorating the repossession of the Iberian Peninsula by the Christians. Historically, they took place all over Spain. However, they have disappeared from most of the territory with the exception of the most easterly parts of the peninsula, which have experienced a renewed interest in this cultural event. Valencian communities are the ones to celebrate the festival most.

defend their economic, political and cultural interests. Moreover, all four practices use their language or regional dialect intensively and in an almost promotional way. Identity and practice are once again closely connected. In Catalonia and Sardinia, a significant portion of the population is in favor of independence for their region, while Valencia and Sicily defend their character as a "distinct" society.

At a mediatic level, there is also a common situation: Before UNESCO's program was put in place, local and regional political authorities already recognized the representative value of these practices; this is less so in the case of Sicily, although Antonio Pasqualino's ethnological initiative had already set the stage for the *Opera dei pupi* to be recognized. Moreover, all four artistic expressions already enjoyed international recognition in their respective artistic circle. For example, the puppeteer, Mimmo Cuticchio, appeared in the film *The Godfather*; the *Tenore* from Bitti recorded with Peter Gabriel; and the choir from the Mystery Play of Elche is invited to international and interregional festivals. The *Patum* giants have remained more "local": they are not part of the International Circle of Friends of Giant Puppets and they rarely perform outside of the *Patum* context.

I now want to extend the analysis reflection by discussing five specific points: first, the increasing number of practitioners and their translocality; second, the overlapping of institutions and artisans; third, the ICH as a driver for local and regional development; fourth, the museum of the "intangible"; and fifth, the mirage of multimedia.

The increase in the number of practitioners and translocality

In the cases of all four masterpieces, the Proclamation has led to an increase in the number of practitioners. However, rather than giving the practice greater depth and understanding, it has merely been popularized.

Some artisans have experienced a strengthening of their sense of belonging to a family or regional practice. The Sardinian singers, for example, have taken up the torch of their forefathers, or in some cases, although they had no family history, they became interested in a form of singing that they had known all their lives. They share a desire to belong to a group of men of similar age connected by family ties or by friendship. They devote their spare time to the practice and it is their passion. In the past, they sang spontaneously in small local bars and it was appreciated. Now, business owners discourage them from doing so, so they practice in more formal contexts such as weddings, Sardinian folk festivals and

international ethnic music festivals. There are also people who, to a greater or lesser extent, learn a practice traditionally associated with another region. Other delocalized persons take up a traditional practice from their region of origin. This phenomenon of translocality contributes to the expansion of the practice and of identity processes in new territories. It contributes also to the relatively recent appropriation by new practitioners, and a large-scale return to “their” practice among heirs or connoisseurs.

Most artistic and cultural practices are currently characterized by deterritorialization and translocality (for the case of Flamenco, see Giguère, 2010). Friedman (2000) points out that terms preceded by “trans” (translocal, transnational, transcultural) all emphasize the crossing of borders, all borders. The “trans” discourse most often consists in a deconstruction of categories that are supposed to be pure or homogeneous, in order to shed light on their character as constructions. In this type of process, there is a logical relationship between “trans” and hybrid or even Creole (194).

Notions of “impurity” and “inauthenticity” are often associated with the practice of the “non-legitimate” (or less legitimate) heirs of intangible cultural heritage. They freely take part in the cultural market and demand that practices traditionally associated with a social or cultural group or a specific territory be democratized. This is the case in Elche, where the municipal administration wants to popularize the Mystery Play, historically associated with the wealthy and with Catholics. By extension, the phenomenon has a tendency to delocalize and “de-essentialize” (and in some cases “de-ethnicize”) practices recognized by UNESCO as intangible cultural heritage, which is no doubt quite the opposite of what the international proclamation intended, and also goes against the warnings of various intellectuals like Kurin (2004).

The so-called “pure” heirs of an ancestral practice, handed down from generation to generation, saw in UNESCO recognition an opportunity to increase their authority and prestige. They have been unpleasantly surprised by the relatively minor impact and feel powerless to act against the increase in the number of practitioners and the simplification of styles. This situation brings to mind the issue of cultural exception, particularly raised by France, which aims to protect a culture or national (or in this case, regional) practices in the face of an undifferentiated “cultural diversity,” perceived as a threat of Americanization (I would say instead, a loss of meaning in favor of commercial interests).

In the case of the *Patum*, the cultural expressions associated with it are only presented in the context of the festival. According to the director of the *Casa de la Patum*, on the rare occasions when the giants and big-headed dwarves have taken part in festivals outside Berga, the festivals were within Catalonia.

In the religious context of the Mystery Play of Elche, Catholic authorities have taken care to protect the orthodoxy of the rite and to preserve its meaning, slowing the opening up to its inevitable use as entertainment. On the one hand, the gradual increase in the number of performances (dress rehearsals with an audience) can be a threat. The Mystery Choir has been asked to perform outside Elche many times since 1929. For masterpieces produced outside of religious contexts, it seems more difficult to protect the orthodoxy and meaning of traditional practices.

On the other hand, the fear of losing cultural symbols—especially in Spain—with the constant increase in immigration and the influence of Islam, is an incentive to protect this “local” practice, and indirectly, its actors. The Elche town council openly discusses its concerns with the limits of integration and the ever-growing number of immigrants. Among the participants is a woman—incidentally, a trained anthropologist—who is responsible for the (highly valuable) costumes. She is from a family that has historically been involved in the cultural performance, and she says, with great concern, “someday, the choir leader may be called Mohammed!” Thus, the two main reasons for institutional protectionism are first, its transformation into a form of entertainment, searching for an increase by means of touristic and commercial benefits for the area’s development, and second, the importance of immigration particularly from Romania and Muslim countries, and the concerns it creates.

In Italy, the Sardinians have formed an association of *Tenores* whose membership has more than doubled since the proclamation (from 40 to 90 members). The new members are from “delocalized” initiatives. They may be suspected of being imposters, but in many cases they are reconnecting with family or regional traditions that had been temporarily abandoned. The same phenomenon of “catching up” can be seen in the towns near Berga where festivals are reinvented based on archival research.

The Sicilian puppeteers experience the same paradox: since their cultural practice was recognized, new artisans from other regions have come out of the woodwork and see their craft as a way to make money or to recover a practice they had abandoned. Confusion seems to be increasing

between those who have inherited a long and well-integrated tradition and the neophytes who have not been trained by a family or a specific school, and instead use connections in the political or economic sectors, that is, patron-client relations. Some people seem to have easier access to public funds for purchasing the basic material for putting on shows. Some puppets, a theatre, a pre-recorded soundtrack and they are all set! In such cases, the “heritage” aspect is questionable because these somewhat improvised companies have not acquired the foundations of the discipline and are focused mainly on entertainment.

The words of an internationally recognized Palermitan puppeteer, who combines innovation and tradition in his creations, are worth quoting, as they shed light on the dilemmas confronting many artisans practicing crafts that have been proclaimed masterpieces. In particular, he refers to two problematic relations: conservatism and innovation on the one hand, and creation and institutions on the other.

Some people buy a *mestiere*, that is, a puppet theatre and some puppets, to become a *pupari*. In their spare time, they put together shows. They don't depend on the puppets to feed their children. They don't need to innovate or to think about tomorrow. This type of folklorism that is growing within folklore is harmful to us.

In my workshop, I have 600 puppets. I was brought up with them. When I see them, to me, they are alive; it's as if I was looking at a family picture. I know them all by name; I know their voices, their character! They're all related. They all have a father and a mother, like I do. Each one was made to play a part in the story. Just like I saw my brother grow up, I saw the child of a puppet being born, becoming a paladin and then an old man. Just like my brother, the puppet's child also grew up. That's what intangible heritage is! You can't buy it! Today, the young puppeteers can't do the voices of their puppets, they don't know them. They play with *play-back*. (Mimmo Cuticchio, personal conversation, 2006).

There are two great family and stylistic traditions in two historically rival towns: Palermo and Catania. Since the UNESCO proclamation, puppeteers have come out of all parts of Sicily, for example, in Agrigento (in the south), claiming legitimacy in the face of the more assertive Palermitan and Catanian families. When the floodlights shine light on a practice, a territory or a family, inevitably a shadow is cast over other practices, other places and other people, at times creating exclusions.

In Sardinia, the lights have been shining on the *canto a tenore*, which was already sought out for ethnic music festivals and other events, while

many other heirs of musical traditions, such as singing duos, abandon their practice because of the difficulty finding team members.

While it may cast shadows, the proclamation program can also kindle a sort of quest for cultural traditions that have been neglected by communities, citizens and entrepreneurs. Such competition, in other case studies like flamenco (Giguère, 2010; 2008a) has proved healthy for long-term preservation. However, that does not stop or limit economic and political confusion and opportunism. All too often it also prompts an over-specialization, putting aside an earlier stylistic diversity.

On the one hand, UNESCO's program refers to historical continuity without, however, defining its boundaries. On the other, the institutions responsible for local and regional legislation express the need for consultations and theoretical support to help them make decisions concerning the cultural rights and specificity, the legitimacy of the heirs of certain traditions and the type of support needed. Individual freedom of expression and identification as well as the democratization of cultural practices raise fundamental ethical questions regarding the regulation of intangible cultural heritage and the recognition of those who carry the traditions forward.

The overlapping of institutions and artisans

The procedures of "patrimonialization" or "making heritage" involve administrative and institutional processes at each level, from the international arena to the local. In addition, UNESCO encourages the creation of local groups to manage, hand down and develop intangible cultural heritage. But the program, which targets those with the knowledge, brings national and regional responsibilities whose functioning depends on a series of institutions, from the national to the local level, thus certifying a tangible structural recognition of intangible cultural heritage. It must, however, be said that the mobilization of all these energies and administrative expenses comes into competition with the needs of the local artisans and into contradiction with the objective of the international program.

The two Spanish "masterpieces" have each formed a committee of patrons in charge of coordinating preservation and development activities based on rules they have agreed upon. The committee is made up of various actors (local and regional). In the case of Elche, conservative political positions dominate because of the committee's make-up (a representative

of the clergy, another from the centre-right regional political party in power, a representative of the left-leaning town council, and a member of the Mystery Play whose interests align with the right-wing and the clergy). What is more, historic frictions persist between the Church and the town council, between conservatism and modernity... It would appear that it is becoming part of the local heritage. The case of the *Patum* of Berga, involves both religious and political institutions, and the town council plays a central role in it. On the one hand, the committee of patrons is aligned with the town council (which is a member of the Convergence and Union Party of Catalonia—a centre-right electoral alliance known as moderate-nationalist, social-liberal and Christian-democratic party); on the other, the *Casa de la Patum*—which is open to the public and presents visitors with an audiovisual document on the history of the *Patum* and is responsible for preserving the *comparses*³—is managed by the town council and the “municipal” patron’s committee. In both cases, conservative politics participate in the ICH management and organization.

Unlike the Bergedans, the Sicilians have not yet founded a group to protect the *Opera dei pupi*.⁴ The families and artistic companies continue to publicize and develop their practice. As for the Sardinian *Tenores*, they are attempting to create an association that is neither politically independent nor dissociated from certain nationalist and Independent political groups.

Each set of institutions and actors, in their own way, is making a contribution to keeping a tradition alive. Although they do so almost entirely in their leisure time, the artists and artisans also need to have another job, that is, to market themselves. Therefore, they occupy a dual position at the time: the artistic entrepreneur and the living heir of a tradition. The first eventually survives thanks to the quality of the product he has for sale and his ability to market it; and the second will mostly depend on the government to continue his activities.

Many actors are opposed to public funding for new artistic groups, which they consider to be after quick profits to the detriment of an in-depth mastery of artistic techniques. For example, the funding granted to the International puppet museum in Palermo by the Sicilian government had the effect of distancing certain artists. As the heir of a family tradition and a contemporary artist, Mimmo Cuticchio has more Sicilian puppets than the museum and is constantly bringing his art to the public, both in Italy and abroad. He trains apprentices from other countries (his company

3. *Comparses* are the groups of giant characters.

4. Fieldwork data of 2009.

now includes a Japanese puppeteer) while also passing on his knowledge to his own family. Yet he receives very little attention from political representatives. He wants better support for preserving his living heritage; living because he still uses his puppets and creates new ones. Intangible heritage is, after all, a matter of practitioners' "not placing objects behind glass," he says. But institutions like museums seem in a better position than puppeteers to obtain government support.

While the Palermo airport has posters of puppets and souvenir shops sell them in all sizes, the artisans would like greater public recognition: without puppeteers, the puppets are mute. They also consider that their shows abroad help to project a positive image of their region (compared to the legendary mafia), which they feel should be honored.

The process of making heritage thus plays a part in the use of cultural icons for political and tourist advertising on a defined territory: that of the Sicilian puppet, the pastoral costume of the Sardinian singer, the gold petals falling on the audience of the Mystery Play, the fireworks and characters of the *Patum*.

In spite of this international legal recognition, cultural rights do not seem to mean anything for the administrations that are supposed to protect them. The benefits of recognition for the oral and intangible nature of ancestral practices fall more on the institutions and the political sector than on the practitioners. No doubt, that is why the material or visual aspects of the cultural practice end up being used as promotional material. How then can the oral and the intangible truly be supported as they live through the practitioners? Is it the practice (and the image of it) or the underlying knowledge that we want to value? And what does this "value" mean to those who hold the knowledge? In light of the Italian and Spanish experiences, the objective of making heritage of the "intangible" does not seem to have been achieved; indeed it seems to have been instrumentalized within the entirely justifiable objectives of place-based development and regional tourism.

Intangible cultural heritage as a driver for local development

The heritage-culture-tourism trio is officially part of several international projects and programs, notably in Europe. UNESCO considers the tourist industry to be the largest industry in the world, ahead of the automobile and chemical industries. The concept of cultural tourism first appeared in the 1960s in reaction to the dangers of mass tourism, and in

1966, UNESCO declared tourism's contribution to peace-keeping. In 1976, ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) wrote the first International Charter on Cultural Tourism, which was last revised in 1999 by its International Scientific Committee on Cultural Tourism.⁵

The definition of cultural tourism has changed over time, but it has always been considered "good tourism" (Cousin, 2008). Under cover of this ideal concept, the cultural and tourist industries come together to capitalize on a sense of place, objects and cultural production.

The recognition of intangible cultural heritage is part and parcel of this trend. In fact, ICOMOS states that cultural heritage is the foundation of cultural tourism. This legitimized capitalization of culture is justified, for example, by the fact that many "interior" towns (without a shoreline) need to revive their local economy, and cultural tourism is one of their main strategies. To build up this alternative to mass tourism—but also because of its economic success and to develop tourism outside of seaside areas—culture is presented to visitors as an exclusivity of "interior communities." UNESCO's itineraries and theme routes set the tone for it.

In most cases, the phenomenon of cultural practices as entertainment (for tourist, artistic and political purposes) has been in the making for the past forty years, reinforced by the cultural festivals of the 1980s and 1990s. Although UNESCO did not create the phenomenon, its program became part of a process, which is strongly linked to the cultural tourism industry.

The Elche Mystery Play is a case in point: the town council wants to "democratize the masterpiece," which public opinion considers obscure or elitist. As part of a marketing campaign, the town has put "Elche: two world heritages" on all the buses, bus shelters, signposts and tourist brochures. This example of municipal involvement and re-appropriation contrasts with the case of Sicily where the puppeteers are closely associated with the working class and the proclamation has therefore gone completely unnoticed, with the exception of some isolated initiatives. All the other masterpieces were publicly honored by public administrations after the proclamation was made.

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5. "Cultural tourism is that form of tourism whose object is, among other aims, the discovery of monuments and sites. It exerts on these last a very positive effect insofar as it contributes - to satisfy its own ends - to their maintenance and protection. This form of tourism justifies in fact the efforts which said maintenance and protection demand of the human community because of the socio-cultural and economic benefits which they bestow on all the populations concerned" (ICOMOS, 1999).

As we can see, UNESCO's proclamations can easily become an instrument of municipal promotion. In general, outside of the specific context of "masterpiecization," medium-sized Spanish towns that used to be identified as industrial (Elche for shoe manufacturing, Jerez for wine-making, Bilbao for shipping and mining) have opted for an economic transition from an industrial model to a service economy by "emblemizing" the symbol of their past industrial success for tourism purposes, but without actually reviving the industry. As industrial activity declines, they are "going cultural," the better to return to economic growth via cultural tourism. These shifts are motivated by commercial strategies that revive and appeal to processes of identity-making. But they would not have as great an effect if they were not connected to a local industry that is fighting for survival and to political projects that encourage the development of cultural tourism. There are, however, some cases of industrial symbols that have made the definitive transition to the state of cultural symbol (such as the bulls of Osborne⁶).

Unlike seaside tourism, towns and regions without any coastal landscape invest heavily in cultural tourism. The context of the Sardinian masterpiece is an excellent example: Sardinia is known for its luxury tourism and its emerald beaches, but the province of Nuoro in particular wants to attract visitors to the mountainous interior of the island and introduce them to its many cultural traditions and products. Elche, which is located very near the coast, does not have direct access to the beaches and actively promotes its two world heritages. Berga, which is far from the coast, promotes both cultural and nature tourism. For Sicilians, the situation is somewhat different because seaside and cultural tourism go hand in hand with culture, however, being focused on monuments. The *Opera dei pupi*, a relatively urban practice, both depends on and creates large gatherings.

Although tourism is unstable, it does generate benefits from secondary activities. The challenge is to offer enough activities to keep tourists for more than one day and thus benefit the local economy. What is needed is diversification, local products, marketable cultural symbols that can generate by-products, emblematic sites, monuments and museums. The shift from orality to materiality seems inevitable in such a context.

6. In 1959, huge black bulls, effigies of the Osborne company (specifically the *Brandy Veterano*) based in Andalusia, were copied and posted on the sides of Spanish highways. In 1997, after much political, environmental, commercial and social debate, the imposing, symbolic Osborne bulls were proclaimed to be monuments of Andalusia's artistic heritage. There was an original symbiosis between Andalusian identity and landscape and Osborne's commercial strategy.

To date, the Proclamations of masterpieces do not seem to have had much impact on tourist numbers. In most cases, the proclamations are part of a longer-term program of regional tourist development that is worth following.

Museums of the “intangible”

This provides the context for public investments in founding museums. Museums have symbolic value and they also play a role as symbols by granting public recognition to a practice or culture. They also add another activity to the program of cultural tourists.

But how does one “museify” the intangible without harming it? This has long been a challenge for museums of culture and society. For many of them, objects are simply a way to access more intangible dimensions: practices, knowledge and cultural beliefs. But in the four cases presented here, museums are limited to the masterpieces, which are part of an entire cultural fabric.

In the case of these four masterpieces, museums have been designed or renewed. In Elche, the municipal museum of the *Festa* has chosen a multimedia approach. An impressive 180° projection shows the main highlights of the ritual and reveals the mechanisms of the scenography. The Medieval theatre at the origin of the play is not mentioned. The narration adopts a homogeneous “us” emphasizing citizenship and ignoring diversity. In a second room, the museum displays some objects of no real interest while a second museum devoted to the cult of the Virgin Mary—which belongs to the Church and was opened very recently—displays highly valuable costumes, paintings and historic ornaments.

Once again, tensions between Elche’s municipality and the Church are evident. The town council acknowledges the weakness of its museum content as well as the administrative, technical, and economic difficulties of such multimedia exhibits. The ways places are used is also cause for debate: until the 17th century, the religious icon of Elche was kept at the San Sebastian hermitage. The choir rehearsals were held at the chapel until the town council decided to use it for its multimedia projection, relegating the choir to a room in the basement of the *Casa de la Festa*. The choirmasters and members took a back seat, so to speak, despite the fact that they alone can preserve the living heritage. “The chorists have needs that we should look after, for example, by giving them a room where they can practice musical theory and do their music and school homework before or after their rehearsals” (singing coach, Elche).

The choir members of the Mystery experience an intangible aspect of the heritage on a daily basis as they rehearse all year and learn all of the voices. From the youngest to the oldest, they all have different motivations. Some parents send their children for religious reasons. But beyond the religious aspects and the international recognition for the historic and cultural character of the show, these young people are motivated by the spirit of an intergenerational (mainly male) community based on an internalized musical practice: voice. This explains why many former participants continue to meet at the *Casa de la Festa* even though they no longer sing. Participation in the Mystery "changed the life" of a child, who discovered his musical vocation, one to which he is still dedicated.

The masterpieces witness to a cultural identity that is both complex and historical. But they are part of everyday life for many people; they also find expression in performances, which are by definition contemporary and can be meaningful only when executed. The committee of patrons for the Elche Mystery Play is adamant about this; still, the energy invested in regulation sometimes seems to counteract the human and relational dimension which is of utmost importance for the children's choir, because that is what can make them *aficionados* who will participate for the rest of their lives.

With its multimedia show, the *Museu de la Festa* hopes to give visitors a taste of the Mystery so that they will come back on the official dates. The danger in this kind of essentially multimedia museum project is that it is limited to the masterpiece, to its expression as a show. It is removed from its social context and its engagement with a participating audience, precisely what makes it so important in identity making. This makes it all the more relevant to reflect more broadly on the museum's mission, which has had its own trajectory: from collecting to educating, to the commercial, artistic and educational dimensions (Tilden, 1957).

In Spain, all those behind projects for museums of intangible heritage refer to the outstanding example of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao. This reveals their desire for a museum-monument, or a "museum-event" which, merely through its architecture, would become a new icon of the town and a major tourist attraction. This is an easily observable trend which participates in the development of an urban aesthetic. It is hoped that investments in monuments will result in economic benefits for the tourist sector. Indeed, that is what ICOMOS implies when it refers first and foremost to "monuments and sites" in its definition of cultural tourism. But is it really the monuments that so-called cultural tourists come to see?

International recognition as prestigious as that of UNESCO gives local actors visions of grandeur, which may well fade when the costs are calculated. In the case of Berga, Dorothy Noyes mentions the “Guggenheim-style” museum that is still in the planning stage. In the meantime, the municipality has set aside a room in the *Casa de la Patum* for an audiovisual projection.

Jerez de la Frontera had a very similar experience: this town applied to the Andalusian Region for flamenco to be proclaimed as a masterpiece of oral and intangible heritage (Giguère, 2006; 2008a, 2010), unsuccessfully in its first attempt in 2005 but finally inscribed on the Representative List of ICH since 2010. On October 5, 2007, in the local paper, local and regional politicians described a future flamenco museum (planned for 2013) as the “Guggenheim of Jerez,” a sign of the interest in the cultural economy.

The mirage of multimedia

Most museums of intangible culture make almost exclusive use of multimedia in communicating living heritage. Without going into a theoretical reflection on the role of new information technologies in museum collections, I would simply make the observation that in museums dedicated to intangible culture, multimedia should not replace humans. In the case of this category of “intangible” goods, the museum formula should be revisited to bring it closer to a workshop model, for example.

In Elche, spectators of the audiovisual production are given the impression of being surrounded by religious characters. The impressive acoustics of the hermitage reinforce the audiovisual experience. But most of the people involved in the project feel it has failed. They point out that the Mystery of Elche took place on August 14 and can really be experienced only on that date. In Sardinia, there is also a multimedia museum of *Tenores* located in the village of Bitti, in the province of Nuoro. It was recently inaugurated; it shows only audiovisual material and promotes research.

The use of multimedia in museums has been influenced by Freeman Tilden’s contributions to theories of interpretation. Information is revealed by stimulating a sensory and emotional experience among visitors. In this approach, museums move away from an encyclopedic model of classical museology and focus on interpretation, a “museology of ideas.” Although they may capture new audiences, they may also be moving away from their mission to inform (Annette Viel, not dated). According to Poulot (2001: 174), in museology as in national parks, the goal of the interpretative

approach is not to teach, but to spark. Still, it may help to achieve a clear and politicized objective of raising awareness, be it to protect the environment or cultural practices.

Interpretation through multimedia brings together two communication strategies that mainly use emotion and subjectivity as a vehicle—strategies that attempt to create closeness with the viewer. The viewer's gaze, as well as his or her cognitive and experiential process is guided by sensory overstimulation.

While the arrival of television made it more difficult to organize cultural events, their inclusion in museums seems to be inspired by the same techniques: a sense of closeness, a focus on emotion, an illusion of experience, and providing subjective information. Often, such exhibits can only be seen once, because the stimulating effects decrease with use. Thus, multimedia does not necessarily give people a better understanding of the cultural expression; but it does give people the impression that they know it and have experienced it, a mistaken impression considering the need to "be there" and the value of the present moment, which is especially important in the case of performances. Such museums give the impression of learning, of information, which remains highly subjective.

Moreover, multimedia is costly and quickly becomes obsolete. It takes specialists for the technical design and updating. The content, often the last priority, is left in the hands of authorities, who sometimes lack socio-historical perspective and are rarely free of ideological biases. The medium is therefore vulnerable to propaganda, be it corporate, localist, nationalist or other. Although it is highly innovative, multimedia as used in museology has a hard time adapting to changes in society and in ideology, and to new knowledge. On the other hand, the more conservative object-based approach to museology lends itself more easily to changes in content, in environment or in meaning, depending on the display.

Far be it from me to argue for a conservative museology, especially in the case of intangible heritage. I merely aim to deconstruct the automatic, almost magical, connection between multimedia and living heritage. Multimedia is not the only way to integrate living heritage into museology. In order to become acquainted with other cultures and their practices, integrating them as persons invested with an experience is another approach to cultural interpretation.⁷

7. For example, in 1999, the cultural event *Le Printemps du Québec à Paris* took this approach by inviting large numbers of Quebecers to be at the exhibitions and

In that sense, the plays performed at the International Puppet Museum in Palermo and the direct cooperation of the artisans is an interesting step. Although some may criticize the fact that what was traditionally a traveling theatre is now held in one place—and a museum at that—sedentary theatres have been being built since the 1950s. Theatre performances in museums and educational approaches to puppets made good bedfellows for about 30 years until some artists “museified” themselves, thus crystallizing their self-image. Nowadays, some people consider that the museum institution and the artisan-creators have two quite different missions, although they sometimes compete with each other for government funding. Recognition for artists is not getting any better, and governments seem to prefer investments between institutions to provide support for creation and for handing down knowledge orally.⁸ It is true that the way the artists express themselves is less strategic and more emotional, making it less compatible with the language and functioning of governments. But investments in training or in workshops on performance and design (sets, puppets, costumes, giants, etc.) would be a first step towards recognizing and protecting this intangible cultural heritage.

Lastly, museums of intangible heritage aim to show performance without really doing so. They tend to exclude the artisans in favor of the audiovisual, which remains within the bounds of the oral but moves away from the intangible. The all too often exclusive use of multimedia in this context constitutes a simulacrum of humanity, a strategy for accessing the intangible without human contact, indeed by excluding it.

Reestablishing human contact, this direct relationship with living heritage needs to become a bigger part of such museum projects, without which the artisans may rise up against this diversion of international intentions to recognize and support living heritage in favor of institutions that are often tied to political interests.

Discussion

Practices proclaimed to be masterpieces are often institutionalized through management committees and museums. UNESCO's suggestion that associations of artisans be formed to safeguard practices proposes a new level, a sort of intermediate authority that could more fairly represent cultural

events that were organized.

8. For example, the training for singers of the Mystery of Elche is based not on musical scores but on oral tradition, which, according to the coaches, is more reliable than attempts at musical transcription. Training is harder and develops the ear better.

actors and practitioners. The recent development of such entities—which for the time being are very close to political powers and do not have much independence—is worth following.

This analysis leads us to the process of institutionalization of culture. UNESCO's project encourages the creation of cultural institutions on various scales (national, regional, local, cultural, sub-cultural, etc.) with the aim of a dynamization and a "culturalization" of the conservation and safeguarding process for intangible cultural heritage instead of its "nationalization," all cultural practices being considered as a universal heritage that testify of human complexity and richness.

Jasanoff (2005), talking about biotechnological institutions, or Velasco *et al.* (2006) about institutions and its access points (neonatalogical services, air companies, etc.) and all their strategies deployed to link them, in more or less depth, with citizens and users, plural in their identities, exposes the subject's agency, their large variability of degrees of confidence and cooperation/suspicion regarding institutions, even when they play a decisive role in them. Therefore, there is an ambiguous and ambivalent relationship between subjects and institutions that are supposed to represent them or provide them public or private services. The institutionalization process basically remains a vertical operation, unanchored, that has developed few to few a large scale of strategies (with images, slogans, etc.) to get closer or give an impression of being closer so as to create feelings of confidence, faith or cooperation in user, client or citizen experiences. Can the cultural institutions work the same way without destroying the intimate relation between cultural identity and practices? Does their total anchorage, for example, in the case of Sardinian tenore and their association presented earlier, facilitate or inhibit members' confidence, as constitutives and users? Intangible cultural heritage directly implies communities. Is the regional administration's involvement, until now very present in the process of valorization, necessary? Its representative nature of the whole, plural and mixed collectivity is not, in my opinion, the right place to work in favor of communities' strategies of their cultural dynamic conservation. We are now exposed to a composite anchored in the globalization movement in which an international organization is stimulated and inspired by local or dislocal cultural actions and dynamics. Still, regional and national administrations have a filtration role in this mutual and complex global-local-dislocal influence process, for example, through subsidies (*cf.* Sicilian case) or by a decision making process (*cf.* Valencian case). It appears there exists an empty space where a direct relation between international

programs and translocal communities or cultures could interact without the intervention of public administrations, for they are limited to fully introducing a *Gemeinschaft* orientation type that is particularist. Hence, an institution like this should be constituted mainly by cultural sources, and by juridical, academic (linked with international organizations and networks) and museological (interstitial institutions with means for investigation, divulgation and conservation of cultural practices and identities, normally related to some administrative instances and international networks). The intellectual independency, apoliticized sources and the search for the harmonization between a collective wealth and the improvement of cultural local and dislocal communities should consolidate teamwork on the complexity of cultural rights, their recognition and agency in modern instruments; it also would work on the importance of documentation and understanding the diversity of those kinds of knowledge, conceptions and practices, facilitating cultural transmission in a proper and specific way that corresponds to translocal communities intentions, protecting a space of liberty for new models and forms.

Looking back at our demonstration, all the artists and artisans are stimulated by the official and public recognition of the uniqueness of their practice and by the attention paid by an institution as prestigious as UNESCO. But so far, this recognition has not had a major impact on the conditions in which they practice. Those who made a living from their art still do; those who practiced it on a volunteer basis or as a sideline still do as well.

In Spain as in Italy, rivalries between individuals, families and places are seen to be a source of creativity, stylistic diversity and healthy competition. They have made a strong contribution to the preservation and ongoing renewal of traditional practices. Associations should help to maintain this dynamic. This relative order is destabilized by the emergence of new initiatives that are less rooted in tradition and often criticized for their lack of proficiency. At issue is the value of customary law versus freedom of expression and creation on the basis of historical cultural traditions.

Although territorial and political character is one of the main issues in making heritage, practitioners remain artists, creators, craftspeople whose work is based on freedom of expression, identification and creation. The local experience of cultural expressions places value on *in situ* participation, that is performance, with all its risks, imperfections, and relationships, and which in itself is an event. It is not efficient or commercially profitable, but is free to adapt to such prerogatives.

The fact that there are on-going debates about notions of purity and impurity to justify access to knowledge and practice in many cultural milieus shows that, thankfully, identity processes are alive and well and therefore remain valuable. It also shows that there is a semiological division concerning specific forms of practice, a division in which outside actors play a part, but whose interests go beyond the perpetuation of knowledge and practices from one generation to the next. As they emphasize the territorial specificity of these four masterpieces, public administrations speak little of the diverse cultural influences that have shaped them over time, changing them both structurally and semiologically.

Recognition for specific practices excludes other practices or actors (immigrants, for example). It can also be reappropriated by institutional interests with nationalist or culturalist leanings. The strong institutional involvement in the nomination process reveals ideological leanings, which in Spain particularly echo public concerns over increasing immigration, particularly significant on the east coast in Valencia and Catalonia.

Recognition by an international authority like UNESCO and response on the part of national administrations seem to reinforce local identities, which support regional distinction. On the one hand, these processes are affected by the commercialization of cultural practices and the tourist industry. On the other hand, they harden when faced with the integration of newcomers and/or their representations in the national government. This gelling of identities, however, will likely become more flexible as actors become more mobile, identities more delocalized and individual rights and liberties reasserted.

Although my analysis does not focus on gender, it is hard not to notice that public performers tend to be men. Some women work on the sidelines, often preparing sets and costumes, but their participation in performances is marginal. No doubt, this is a heritage of the old days. While some forms or styles have changed and modernized over time, women have remained minor participants. Why is this? It would be worth analyzing the process of "patrimonializing" oral traditions in terms of gender relations based on a wider sample of "masterpieces." Exclusions also are passed on from one generation to the next. On the other hand, single-gender groups also make up specific cultural spaces.

It therefore appears of utmost importance that public administrations set the tone and put an end to this dualistic conflict, making a clearer distinction between cultural identity on the one hand, and the right to

practice and to access knowledge, on the other. When identity is conflated and reduced to practice, our thinking is impoverished, as is the continuity of practices. In several cases of intangible cultural heritage, “impurity”—or better, exogenous practices—strengthens both the subject and the practice. That may be a starting point for new thinking about culture.

Debates on practice should be structured around art forms and their identity-making content. In this, museification strategies must consider incorporating human, living oral traditions so that these rights to identify and express are not only recognized but made public, respecting “the meaning and the manhood.” To give an example of this, priority should be given to deepening the vocal and discursive work of the Sicilian puppeteers as they deal with the burgeoning of theatres and puppets over all of Sicily and Italy. That is a right that is both aesthetic and patrimonial.

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