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Josep Roca Guerrero

UNIVERSITY OF BARCELONA

A Social and Cultural Anthropology graduate from the University of Barcelona, he has focused his research on heritage and ethnopoetics. He has worked on the sense of contemporary mythology in the Rias Altas area of Galicia, specifically regarding the Maruxaina celebration in the town of San Cibrao. Furthermore, he has a close relationship with the evolution of popular culture in the province of Lleida and has written about different cultural areas in the region, such as the heritage process of the Pyrenean *falles* festivals. He is currently studying the master's degree in Anthropology and Ethnography at the University of Barcelona.

Heritage and participation: a comparative reflection via the recognition of the Pyrenean *falles* festivals as intangible cultural heritage

From 30 November to 4 December 2015, the 10th Session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage was held in Windhoek, the capital of Namibia. There it was decided that *the Pyrenean summer solstice fire festivals* would become part of the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage, along with 22 other proposals (among which we find *Arab coffee, a symbol of generosity*, or *The Epic of Koroghlu,* a set of songs, poems and sayings about the mythical hero Koroghlu, sung in Turkmenistan[1]). Candidates included 63 towns distributed between Spain (in particular the Catalan counties of L'Alta Ribagorça, El Pallars Sobirà and La Val d'Aran, as well as the eastern part of the Aragonese Pyrenees), Andorra and southern France. To the south of the Pyrenees, the most common of these celebrations are known as falles.

1 http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/es/10com

A través d'una comparació del procés que dugué a la recent inclusió de les falles dels Pirineus a la Llista Representativa del Patrimoni Cultural Immaterial de la Humanitat de la UNESCO (2015) amb el Yeraal i el Degal (Mali) i l'art zafimaniry (Madagascar), dos membres africans del PCIH, l'article suggereix que el grau de participació pot ser un factor decisiu per a un impacte positiu sobre la població local. Les pròpies concepcions i normes del PCIH semblen afavorir l'èxit de les candidatures més familiaritzades amb la dinàmica patrimonial de les societats occidentals, en contradicció aparent amb els seus objectius inclusius inicials.

A través de una comparación del proceso que condujo a la reciente inclusión de las fallas del Pirineo en la Lista Representativa del Patrimonio Cultural Inmaterial de la Humanidad de la UNESCO (2015) con el Yeral y el Degal (Mali) y el arte zafimaniry (Madagascar), dos miembros africanos del PCIH, el artículo sugiere que el grado de participación puede ser un factor decisivo para un impacto positivo sobre la población local. Las mismas concepciones y normas del PICH parecen favorecer el éxito de las candidaturas más familiarizadas con la dinámica patrimonial de las sociedades occidentales, en contradicción aparente con sus objetivos inclusivos iniciales.

Through comparison of the process that led to the recent integration of the *falles* from Pyrenees to the UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List (2015) with Yeraal and Degal (Mali) and art Zafimaniry, two other African members of ICH, the article suggests that degree of participation may be a crucial factor for a positive impact on local population. The very ICH notions and rules seem to favour the success of candidatures acquainted with heritage dynamics in Western societies, just against its initial inclusive goals.

This event captures observers' attention, and perhaps even more so if looked at from an ethnological perspective, for several reasons, a couple of which I will point out: the fact that they were given this distinction before their Valencian counterpart, as well as the confirmation of the success of the Catalan candidates or, even, of the Catalan Countries, although, in reality, the aforementioned list seemed to have been created for very different sociocultural contexts. I want to contribute to a more complex understanding of the heritage processes of "intangible" culture, working on the (more or less usual) suspicion that it is important for participants of these events to be involved in explaining them, referring specifically to the Pyrenean falles festivals, and through comparison, a methodological tool that is consubstantial with anthropology.

The falles festivals, legacy of the people of the Pyrenees

As is well known, the Pyrenean falles festivals are summer solstice celebrations held in some villages of L'Alt Pirineu. It consists of the descent of some burning branches from a relatively high place (sometimes a hermitage) called faro (lighthouse), to the place where there is usually a bonfire, the falla major. Broadly speaking, despite its many variants, this is the ritual carried out in all the villages of the western Catalan Pyrenees where falles are celebrated, particularly in L'Alta Ribagorça and El Pallars Sobirà, which could be considered the central area of what I will call "the falles community". In the French Pyrenees, the flaming aspect of the festival is limited to bonfires in the centre of the towns, known as *brandon*, what are called *haro*/*halhes* in La Val d'Aran. In Andorra and in the Aragonese Pyrenees (especially in L'Alta Ribagorça), the falles are run around the bonfire rather than descended from on high. All these celebrations were included in the "community" recognised by UNESCO, along with, although far from the Catalan Pyrenees and with an "opposite" or "symmetrical" chronology (winter solstice, Christmas), Bagà and San Julià de Cerdanyola, where the falles are indeed descended from a high place (*Fia Faia*). This fact suggests some mystery regarding the meaning and origin of the falles, something that I cannot

Paraules clau: Falles, Pirineus, Patrimoni Cultural Immaterial de la Humanitat, festes de foc del solstici estival.

Palabras clave: Fallas, Pirineos, Patrimonio Cultural de la Humanidad, fiestas del fuego del solsticio estival.

Keywords: *Falles*, Pyrenees, intangible cultural heritage, summer solstice fire festivals.

The *faro* of the *falles* festivals in Isil (2015)
ORIOL RIART

explore here, and also explains the choice of a controversial term such as "community" (Bauman, 2003).

If I adopt it, it is not out of respect for UNESCO terminology, standarised by the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention, but because its ambiguity, although it opens up possibilities for manipulation (Adell et al. [Eds.], 2015), it also responds to the dynamics of the real groups that carried out the candidacy of the falles. Other labels, such as neighbourhood or citizenship, would undermine the strength of the notions of tradition and autonomy in the heritage process. We enter the realm of Benedict Anderson's *imagined communities*, social and historical *currencies* in the Clastrian sense. However, neither the adjective "imagined" nor its mystifying connotation, so open to the school of suspicion, are enough to understand the process and to examine its uniqueness or its normality.

For the purpose of this article, the nature and origin of the ritual is not a fundamental concern. Even so, pointing out some of the most common explanations for the ritual can help us later to suggest the connection between past and present, which is inevitable when the notion of tradition is involved.

Several interpretations relate the ritual to the annual solar cycle. The liturgical use of fire would be the symbolic human representation of the essential natural element of the agricultural cycle, the Sun. This function would have been in force until recently and, according to Riart and Jordà (2015), it could have been rooted in another more political function, that of the demarcation of territory. This political dimension would have been derived from the role of the *faros* as a method of surveillance, visually connected like many watchtowers. During each descent of the falles, the observation of the luminous path from the other points of descent (in particular from the other *faros*), and from the towns, delineated an ancient common space, blurred in modern times by the desertification of the Pyrenees and its political marginalisation.

Other, perhaps more psychology-based investigations have provided arguments that the celebration could be related to the individual vital cycles of the people involved, as rites of passage, marked by the rhythm of the changes of nature. The traditional display of *fadrins* (young men) towards the *fadrines* (young women) during the descents would, however, go beyond the purely individual framework. The festivities would not only order the calendar, but also mobilise the local workforce and create bridges between towns, almost like a "marital fair", in the best possible sense of expression.

Nowadays, these functions have lost their effectiveness and their raison d'être insofar as the agrarian cycle no longer occupies a central place in Pyrenean rural life. The process goes way back, particularly in the French Pyrenees; we must think of the prophetic patrimonial vision of Elisée Reclus, back in the NINETEENTH CENTURY. The arrival of hydroelectric production, at the beginning of the TWENTIETH century, intensified by the creation of FECSA in the fifties, promoted a local services sector to supply the new workers, a sector that would be a catalyst in the growth of tourism, to the detriment of traditional farms (Ros, 1997). In recent decades, the tertiarisation of the economy in the Catalan Pyrenees has been consolidated by the central role given to the heritage process of natural and cultural elements (Beltan and Vaccarro, 2007; Frigolé, 2012). Mountain tourism (skiing, hiking, rural houses and adventure sports, among others) has been fundamental in this transfer to a services society. So, the peak in participation in the festivities coincides with the peak of mountain tourism.

In this way, the falles continue to present an ecological and economic component that comes together with symbolic factors. Where it used to be the agricultural cycle that was key to the reasons for the ritual, now it is the tourism cycle. The summer solstice becomes a symbolic axis that helps give a particular meaning to the summer season, by reconnecting natural heritage with the people and their culture, including intangible cultural heritage. Falles are, therefore, no longer celebrated

only on the night of Sant Joan, but have been organised so that the different villages partake in the festivities each on a different weekend at the beginning of the summer. Parallelism with Christmas and the extension of so-called "white holidays" is obvious.[2] The falles add cultural value during the summertime to the "landscape requalification" spoken of by Joan Frigolé (2012). Their integration into the UNESCO List in 2015 consolidates this readjustment.

A comparative view of intangible cultural heritage

Heritage is a selection and filter of the past (Prats, 1997). This implies a double-edged sword: the concealment of versions of the past and the legitimisation of a hegemonic order through a partial past. Bendix and Kuutma (2013) make use of the concept of heritage regimes to name a kind of power network between the different parties that are involved in global heritage processes. The heritage regimes are the arena where transnational institutions, states and local groups come into play. The arrangement largely depends on UNESCO's programmes, as the body responsible for world heritage, which cannot be thought of as a sovereign agent that forces and obliges.

The idea of recognising intangible cultural heritage came about in the late 1990s under the pressure of developing countries that were under-represented in the UNESCO conception of world heritage. The definitions included in the Convention concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage[3] of 1972 left out a large number of peoples and collectives around the world, those based on oral cultures, regardless of whether they are literate, and those that do not have their own material culture that can be described as monumental (Bendix et al., 2015). In the 1990s, with the end of the Cold War, indigenous movements became visible and reached levels of political influence that had previously been denied to them, especially in Latin America (Bretón, 2001). Likewise, the use, everywhere but particularly in Africa, of new concepts such as "social capital" or "indigenous knowledge" was seen among major international agencies, such as the World Bank and UNESCO itself. It is no coincidence that, on 17 October 2003, at the end of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (1995-2004),[4] UNESCO published the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage where the main beneficiaries of the new agreement are identified:

> "(...) Recognising that communities, *especially the indigenous ones* [my italics], groups and in some cases individuals play an important role in the production, safeguarding, maintenance and recreation of intangible cultural heritage, thereby contributing to enriching cultural diversity and human creativity (...)".[5]

Furthermore, UNESCO itself went on to establish that it should be the states themselves that promote their candidatures. Thus, power is found more in the ability of the stakeholders involved to provoke a reaction, a thought or a point of view in others. The effort required from anthropology consists in: discovering if, in the field of heritage, there is a desire to explain and to perceive culture as adaptive, and recording and explaining the variable impact of this effort, insofar as the different stakeholders involved in heritage do not have the same scope, nor the same ability to produce metacultural discourses (Bendix, 2012; Kuutma, 2012; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2006).

This imbalance between stakeholders is what leads us to talk about top down processes, to the point that authors who work with intangible cultural heritage consider the heritage regimesto be a metanarrative of globocentric cultures, which conceal the maintenance of the old colonial order in line with cultural imperialism behind democratic rhetoric (Edward Said, 1993; Kirshenblatt Gimblett, 2006; Santamarina, 2013).

What does empirical observation tell us? Could there be different types of heritage regimes, distinguishing grassroots strategies as opposed to top down approaches? I suggest a comparative view of two African members of

2
This is how the *paths of fire* came to be, which can be visited throughout the year: https://www.segre.com/pags/hemeroteca.html (consulted on 20 December 2016) and http://www.turismealtaribagorca.cat/camins-de-foc/presentacio (consulted on 26 February 2018).

3
http://whc.unesco.org/archive/convention-es.pdf (consulted on 18 February 2018).

4
https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenous-peoples-es/historia.html (consulted on 18 February 2018). In order to appreciate the synchrony between intangible cultural heritage and indigenous peoples' calendars, we note that, in 2007, four years after the definition of intangible cultural heritage and one year before the publication of the corresponding list, the UN published its Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: https://undocs.org/A/RES/61/295 (consulted on 18 February 2018).

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https://ich.unesco.org/es/convenci%C3%B3n (consulted on 18 February 2018). The very mention of "communities" and the distinction regarding "groups" are very significant and sanction a more intuitive and political approach to the "indigenous" category, as opposed to a legal or scientific one. On this legal uncertainty (and the consequent political informalisation), see the contributions by Sabrina Urbinatt, Lauso Zagato or Cristoph Brumann in Adell et al. (Eds.). (2015).

the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage: the Yeraal and Degal celebrations in Mali and Zafimaniry Art in Madagascar, both of which were proclaimed in the second selection round, in 2003, and ultimately appeared in the first registration of the List in 2008. My genealogical comparison with the Pyrenean falles festivals, which leverages the cultural distance, aims to recontextualise and re-understand the direction of global heritage policies.

The Yeraal and Degal celebrations, Mali

In 2013, 10 years after the proclamation, the anthropologist Anaïs Leblon published the results of her doctoral thesis on "the cultural space of *yaraal* and *degaal*", an analysis of the heritage process of a festive aspect of the Fula (*peul, pullo*) community of Mali, in an influential collective publication. It must be remembered that the Fula people or Fulani form one of the most numerous originally pastoral and transhumance peoples (although today many are sedentary), distributed throughout the semi-arid zones of West Africa, from Senegal to the Atlantic and as far as the Central African Republic. The festivals of Yaraal and Degal take their name from two of the at least 29 points where, twice a year, the shepherds cross the Niger River (*Djoliba*, locally) with their herds (made up of thousands of animals) to go into or return from the Sahel (although the celebration is especially on the return). UNESCO's description explicitly associates the two celebrations to the nomadic way of life.[6] While the crossing of the river by the flocks is already spectacular in itself, the Fula groups make it more so with very eye-catching practices and celebrations: men decorate their cattle and wrap themselves with special clothes, while women prepare and sing songs to praise the event. A variety of competitions are held among the shepherds to present the most beautiful flock and, among women, to sing the most virtuous poems (Leblon, 2013).

These festivals were declared intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO in 2003,[7] a proclamation that was achieved thanks in particular to the intervention of the National Directorate of Cultural Heritage, a Malian state body that aims to regulate and control heritage processes. For Leblon, the petition and justification that authorises the candidature of the Yaraal and Degal celebrations constitute a discourse that magnifies the spectacular aspect of the festival, leaving aside the social and political reality of the Fula people, the relationship with the state or the ecological connection with the surroundings. This is because the intangible cultural heritage standards, imposed by UNESCO, seem to be more interested in that which is rare, showy and exotic, rather than in the people who carry out these traditions, often minorities. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2006: 8) states the sarcastic opinion of US publisher Cullen Murphy on the first Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003, published in *The Atlantic Monthly*: "(…) the overall impression is of program listings for public television at 3.00 A.M.".

Bendix also speaks of elements that are"lost in translation" in *heritage regimes*: although the Malian state is interested in recognition of Yaaral and the Degal by UNESCO, either for the possibility of subsidies, for tourism or local development perspectives or merely for international visibility, it will not stop promoting the ploughing of increasingly extensive surfaces dedicated to agricultural monoculture exportation; consequently, it will increasingly restrict the grazing and transhumance areas (Leblon, 2013; Bendix, 2013), undermining, at heart, the way of life of the peoples that were the reason for Mali's appearance on the intangible cultural heritage list.

Inclusion as intangible cultural heritage serves as a screen to hide the promotion of Fula acculturation, the corresponding rural exodus or the multiplication of pauperised suburbs. The process helps to hide the directly or indirectly repressive policies of the state towards the Fula people, on whose behalf the UNESCO application was processed.[8] However, reality reveals the persistence of identity after the numerous traumas of colonisation, the drought of the 1970s or the pressures of the new independent states to establish them. This plasticity suggests that Leblon could be undervaluing the capacity of the Fula people,

6
https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/cultural-space-of-the-yaaral-and-degal-00132

7
http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/es/RL/el-espacio-cultural-del-yaaral-y-del-degal-00132

8
The outbreak of the Tuareg issue in 2014, the emergence of jihadism and French intervention have worsened, in some cases, Fula interaction with the state, as reflected by the media. For example: https://mondafrique.com/conflits-entre-peuls-bambaras-en-sanglantent-centre-mali/ and http://www.jeuneafrique.com/403121/politique/mali-violences-entre-peuls-bambaras-dizaine-de-morts-sud-pays/ (consulted on 25 October 2017).

and their features, to exploit the intangible cultural heritage label and, in general, the global factors, but this would not be relevant to its analysis, which can give pointers for the study of other comparable cases.

The case of Zafimaniry art, Madagascar

The second case is Zafimaniry art, studied by Fabiola Mancinelli in her doctoral thesis *Zafimaniry, l'invention d'une tribu* (Zafimaniry, the invention of a tribe). The Zafimaniry community is a Malagasy ethnic group that is difficult to categorise, but whose identity is based on its relationship with the Highlands forest and, above all, on the people's wood carving skills and the production of decorative or functional wooden objects, but with a clearly aesthetic design. According to the proclamation of UNESCO, one of the three fundamental reasons why Zafimaniry art should be considered intangible cultural heritage is that it would represent, and somehow maintain, the original way of life that is *authentic* to the Malagasy Highlands.[9] This refers to the Merina culture, which is the most influential of the groups on the island that are usually associated with Zafimaniry. In modern Madagascar, Merina culture has often been wrongly confused with Malagasy culture since the NINETEENTH century,

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http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/es/RL/el-trabajo-de-la-madera-de-los-zafimaniry-00080

Zafimaniry art display (2012)
FABIOLA MANCINELLI

when the kingdom of Antananarivo, in full hegemonic expansion, became the "kingdom of Madagascar", and the dominant faction was partially occidentalised and went on to almost monopolise insular scientific production. The current state continues to have a Merina majority. It is not surprising, then, that the declaration of UNESCO assumed the state view of the candidature: Zafimaniry art must be preserved because it will implicitly maintain the tradition of Madagascar (Mancinelli, 2013).

UNESCO's discourse is very controversial, as it deals with everyday practice as an anachronism that needs to be "saved" from the dangers of homogenising modernity, an essentialist and paternalistic perspective of cultural processes, which are much more dynamic than this salvationist tendency suggests. Mancinelli points out that the worldview of the need to rescue is not a Malagasy view but a Western one, rooted in institutions such as UNESCO itself. According to the researcher, the result has been a series of paradoxical situations on a local level that, more than contributing to the maintenance of a way of life, have encouraged a complete top down implementation of a sort of UNESCO, eurocentric and globocentric *modus operandi*. Stoczkowski (2009) called Western ideology that sustains the conservation of local heritage as part of the great legacy of Humanity "secular soteriology", that is, "lay salvationism". Kuutma (2012) also talks about the curative concerns of heritage processes, emphasising the part of the UNESCO narrative that legitimises its action through the need for maintenance, the fear of loss and the salvation of culture (Mancinelli, 2013; Stoczkowski, 2009; Kuutma, 2012).

For Mancinelli, recognition as intangible cultural heritage does not mean more hope for the future of Zafimaniry; in fact, it suggests a series of factors that can be counterproductive in local development. One of the most important factors is the creation of a collective brand, following the processes studied in the already famous work of Comaroff, *Ethnicity, Inc.* (2011). Mancinelli points out that these local development processes in Africa often involve the invention of presumably community entities that formally and legally respond to a sense of organisation and representation that are totally Western. Zafimaniry art is thereby transformed into a denomination of origin with certain characteristics that are typical of the Zafimaniry people, establishing a canon. But, can the intentions of the Zafimaniry people really be articulated with the logic of a brand and intellectual property rights? Is aesthetic normalisation, with 21 reasons in this case, a feature of Zafimaniry crafts? Mancinelli tells us how she talked to artisans who told her that they had learned Zafimaniry art at UNESCO schools where they were taught exactly what kind of designs they should carry out. In several passages, she points out how, in the same way as in Mali, the heritage process has been directed from the capital, Antananarivo, through a pyramidal structure that subordinates the Zafimaniry people, with an executive body that does not include a single one of them (Mancinelli, 2013; Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009).

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Independent studies such as those by Mancinelli and Leblon suggest that, within the framework of intangible cultural heritage, states have reappropriated local initiatives and legacy in an attempt to expropriate and nationalise it. Heritagisation would not be a mere international recognition of resilient traditions, it would be a top down process. Expropriation instead of empowerment, in flagrant contradiction with the declarations of UNESCO on the beneficiaries of intangible cultural heritage: The reason for this perversion lies in the very organisation of the international system, where states and not the people claim sovereignty. Not all states are the same however. Both cases studied are African, where state structures are weak. It is significant that, at the beginning of 2018, a review of UNESCO's Representative List shows that Europe has had as many recognitions as Africa, America and Oceania, and not much less than Asia, despite the enormous difference in population sizes. This balance seems to be far from the objectives that led to the creation of intangible cultural heritage in the first place.

Leaving aside any hypothetical corruption in the selection system (which we do not have information about), this imbalance could be due to the Eurocentrism of international-type states, as well as the state-based bias of international heritagisation. In Western states, the ways of regulating citizen participation and action required by intangible cultural heritage could be more consistent with their societies than in postcolonial states. To clarify this, I propose the comparison of the cases mentioned with the candidacy of the Pyrenean falles festivals, paying particular attention to citizen participation.

Participation and appropriation in the heritage process of the Pyrenean falles festivals

The recognition of Pyrenean falles festivals as heritage has greatly popularised the celebration, not only in the eyes of foreigners, but amongst the very people of the Pyrenees. As a result, some towns have brought the festival back, while others have began celebrating it for the first time on record, as is the case in Espot and La Guingueta d'Àneu. This expansion not only precedes recognition as intangible cultural heritage, but seems to respond to endogenous dynamics that are as decisive, if not more so, than external factors, such as governmental cultural policies.

The recovery of traditions (whether more or less conservative, disruptive or even inventive) is inseparable from the heritage process that has culminated, for the moment, with inclusion as intangible cultural heritage. The first milestone to mark this connection occurred in 1991, well before the creation of the concept of intangible cultural heritage, with the declaration of the Isil falles festival as a "traditional holiday of national interest". This recognition was automatically extended to the rest of Catalan falles communities, and the label consolidated the use of what was called popular culture as a social expression of democratisation in the western Catalan Pyrenees (beyond Isil), a phenomenon that was very noticeable throughout Catalonia during the 1980s. In this first heritage phase, falles festivals were recovered in populations such as Alins, Andorra, Barruera, Erill La Vall or El Pont de Suert.

Thus, there is a confluence between the local initiatives of neighbourhoods and city councils, the cultural policy promoted by the government and the mechanisms of the state to recognise and value heritage, including university research. One can argue that, although the institutional impulse is undeniable (autonomic and state), it can only crystallise through local initiative. Indeed, the path that led to recognition by UNESCO, and which can be considered as a second wave in the heritage process, reinforces the hypothesis of the importance of the local factor.

In 2007, the intention to present an application to see the falles festivals recognised by UNESCO was expressed for the first time. It does not seem coincidental that, as of this moment, the towns that celebrate such festivals have multiplied, whether recovering it as an abandoned tradition or adopting it for the first time: Alós d'Isil, Cassòs, Espot, Gotarta, La Guingueta d'Àneu, to name a few. Andorra la Vella is a good example of the "contagious falles festival" phenomenon and the inseparable link between society and institutions. By 1987, the Collective Activities of the Commonwealth of Andorra la Vella had recovered the tradition. Then in 2010, the Government of Andorra included the falles festival within the Principality's intangible heritage catalogue. This government recognition promoted local interest until the Falles Association of Andorra la Vella appeared in 2013, which has since been responsible for encouraging the celebration through local participation programmes, focusing especially on children so that the little ones can enjoy the festival and identify it once again as something of their own (see the contribution of A. Samarra in Societat Andorrana de Ciències 2016: 86-87).

In 2009, one year after the creation of the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage, the first falles festival gathering was held in Isil, an event that would carry on and contribute to generating the critical mass and the necessary contacts to go ahead with the

candidacy. The second gathering also took place in Isil, in 2010, taking advantage of the prestige of the celebration in the town. Over the following two years, the headquarters were located in El Pont de Suert, where a memorandum on the heritage project for the falles festivals is kept. In 2013, it took place in Alins, while the sixth gathering was organised in Les, La Val d'Aran. In 2015, almost premonitory, the gathering returned to Isil. The project was defined as transnational in 2012, since UNESCO seemed to positively value proposals that exceeded state boundaries. Since the space of the candidature was delimited, the celebrations were celebrated at an autonomic and national level. In France, as in Aragon, recognition arrived at the beginning of 2014, and later that same year it was also achieved in La Val d'Aran (Riart and Jordà, 2015). In March 2014, Andorra went ahead to lead the plurinational candidacy. It is reasonable to view this option as a strategic success. The candidatures must always be put forward by a state, and Andorra, a small country, did not have any world cultural heritage, which seems to have worked in the proposal's favour. On 1 December 2015, the summer solstice fire festivals in the Pyrenees (the falles festivals) were declared intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO.[10]

Who do the falles festivals belong to? Tradition and heritage

One way of addressing the dilemma surrounding heritage processes' driving social factors is to switch the research focus from "what these heritage elements are", often described by UNESCO as "traditions"[11], to "whose they are". And whose they are before, during and after the process. The notion of heritagisation, as it is studied, implies an institutional recognition through positive law, as opposed to customary law. Therefore, the concept of heritage derived from it is different from local conceptions prior to the process, and that they could use the same word or, more often, another vernacular expression that is more or less equivalent. Analysis of the cases in Mali and Madagascar reveals that the new meaning is controlled, if not monopolised, by the state and removed from the society to which the traditions belong, which end up being understood as Malian or Malagasy rather than Fula or Zafimaniry. A very common interpretive tendency has adopted a kind of "expropriating vision"; that is to say, it has tended to understand more or less institutionalised heritage processes as processes of loss or distortion of the values, knowledge and practices that are intended to be conserved, with the institutions (states) and corporations (companies) depriving their former holders not only of their exclusivity, but of ownership, in the sense that communities (whoever they are) lose control of transmission (Carvalho, 2002, regarding musical culture).

However, the example of the falles festivals implies a shared situation, where even local groups could sustain the initiative, which coincides with jobs that demand the ability of these collectives to use forces and global politics in an "appropriating vision" (Sanchez Fuarros, 2005, also regarding musical culture). The first scenario gives us a horizon of acculturation, which seems unlikely in view of the resilience shown by African societies over the last centuries, or a situation of pluralism, which is already apparent, where two or more conceptions and heritage practices are juxtaposed, compete, work together or make each other invisible, depending on the evolution of the circumstances. The second, on the contrary, seems to lead to a new avatar of tradition-heritage built and discussed in time by local society and the state.

I propose that the key to addressing these divergences is to analyse the participation of the stakeholders involved, in particular in the falles festivals, acknowledging that local populations have been largely excluded from decision-making in the African cases used as a comparison. We must be aware that, as I have indicated, the current celebration of the Pyrenean falles festivals has little to do with the original conditions, which triggered its generational transmission and tradition. The solar cycle cannot have the same meaning in an agrarian society as in a tertiary one, like the falles region today. And, perhaps even more importantly, one can assume that the function of festive rituals, in spite of present elements of continuity, will be reappropriated

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https://ich.unesco.org/es/RL/fiestas-del-fuego-del-solsticio-de-verano-en-los-pirineos-01073 (consulted on 14 February 2017). This was echoed between December 1 and 3 in various media (local and national, in Catalan and Spanish) and institutional websites (especially local ones).

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These concepts (tradition, heritage) have been written about extensively and I do not want, nor can I attempt, to propose the state of the question and of the literature here. I do, however, want to clarify my use of the concepts. Unless otherwise indicated, I limit myself to using the term "tradition" in the contexts in which it is used by those who self-proclaim themselves holders or heirs of traditions, that is to say, what we could call the "*falles* community". In general, this use evokes a rather vague sense of customs inherited from our ancestors, and therefore undoubtedly patrimonial. I understand, though, along with so many authors, that despite the discourse of resistance to change, the knowledge, behaviour or standard patterns called traditional not only incorporate changes determined by historical evolution and the combination of social forces, but they can also enable this change in a conspicuous, or even dominant manner. This process can be seen, for example, in some fairly common forms of passive resistance (often criticised by the left) and above all in overcoming Francoism in Catalonia (Arnabat and Duch, 2014, in particular, contributions by P. Solà and E. Prat). In any case, for the expression of the concept of tradition and heritage, I refer to the line started by Handler and Linnekin (1984), who understand the former as a symbolic construct, while trying to overcome the limits of the deconstructionism of Hobsbawn and Ranger (1983).

Girl carrying a *falla* in Alins (2017)
ORIOL RIART

differently in a democratic society than in a heritage society, to use Weberian terminology.

Discourse regarding the heritage process since the 1980s, gathered by Riart and Jordà (2015), points to a strong local role, through town councils and falles associations. It is necessary to understand that the municipalities of the area are small and the face-to-face interaction among locals takes place daily.[12] The high tourist occupation masks weak demographics, with a lower census in the central falles area (L'Alta Ribagorça and El Pallars Sobirà), and the whole of the Pyrenees, than in 1960, despite the relative recovery driven by tourism.[13] This has two important implications for participation.

The first is that it is methodologically plausible to assume that the adhesions of small Catalan

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The exceptions would be Andorra la Vella (23,000 inhabitants) or Vielha (around 6,000), peripheral to the *falles* world. However, even in these towns, direct personal relationships are of great political importance.

municipalities implies the majority support of their populations, which add between ten and a few hundred neighbours. Therefore, we can suppose a high level of local participation. The situation is quite different not only in large European cities, but also in the "rural communes" of past African colonies. These, noticeably larger than the Pyrenean municipalities thanks to French administrative rationalism, are an inheritance of the colony, whose administrative structure and legal system respond to forms of sociability that can contrast greatly with the prevailing daily life of the populations, marked by kinship, religion, initiation, hierarchy. In the Pyrenees, however, the people have been living and appropriating these administrative structures for centuries. It is only necessary to think that the "communes" of the Pyrenees include the land and municipal resources (with many variations in local participation), while customary African counterparts rarely have any recognition of positive law.

The second refers to identity. Downward migration statistics support the impression that heritage candidacies (presented to the ministry, the Government of Catalonia or UNESCO) have been driven mainly by indigenous people (personal communication by Oriol Riart). However, this occurs under very different conditions, from residents to "children of the people", without forgetting individuals of external neorural origin or other external stakeholders (visitors, professionals, etc.). However, this autochthony, reasonably understood as an imagined community, could have a very different significance to that which separates local agents from state agents in the two African cases. While the Peul or Zafimaniry societies, who can be perfectly accepted as Malian or Malagasy, maintain a very clear autonomy in their worldview, in their logics of access to resources or in their technologies (which are directed as much towards nature as towards society), the acculturation and homogenisation of the Pyrenean societies are evident with respect to their French, Catalan, European or global origin.

However, the current Pyrenean falles festival territory makes them a sign of a differentiable collective, an imagined community that, like others, nourishes Catalan identity from the margins, from the idealised memory of those mountains that disappeared first with the arrival of electricity and then tourism (Ros, 1997). Continuity of the form, rather than the meaning, of the ritual in just a few neighbourhoods (Isil, Vall de Boí, Vilaller and Senet de Varravés, among others) explains the resistance to relocation of falles festivals in the face of other material cultural heritage in the same region, as is the case of Romanesque heritage. This has been subjected to discursive hegemonies (Del Mármol, 2010) quite different from the falles festivals, most likely and in part due to its separation from the present, as well as the omnipresence of Romanesque heritage in many central places in the history of Europe. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Catalan and Catalanist imagination, both urbanite and Europeanist, is identified much more with the Romanesque remains than with mountain fire festivities, which have often been seen as an atavistic reminiscence, a vestige of cultural innocence under the protection of geographical isolation. Tertiarisation consecrated this internal exoticism built by folklorism (Prats, 1988). This relative cultural marginalisation leaves room for relatively counter-hegemonic spaces however.

Some open reflections

Comparisons of a calibre such as those proposed here (Europe, Africa) show the persistence of the asymmetry that intangible cultural heritage should correct, and which is inevitably associated with the grouping of heritage strategies on the horizon of development. The Pyrenees is a peripheral region in France and Catalonia, which is likely to be a factor of exoticism that would play in their favour in the inclusion on the list. The heading of the candidature by Andorra, a small country absent from the list until 2015, could be a "pretext" meant to continue increasing the weight of intangible cultural heritage acquired by Europe, in open contradiction with the original balancing goals of the Convention of 2003.

In reality, the relative marginality of the Pyrenees in European society has not been in

13
http://territori.gencat.cat/web/.content/home/06_territori_i_urbanisme/IDAPA/30_documentacio/indicadors/informes/01_crisi_afecta_demografia_pirinenca.pdf (consulted on 20 December 2017). The geopolitical economy of Andorra, you might say, explains that these figures do not apply, also affecting L'Alt Urgell (outside the *falles* areas), where a part of the Andorran labour force lives and where the population has been maintained.

The main bonfire, or *falla major*, lit on the public square in Alins (2017)
ORIOL RIART

line with indicators of the global definition of marginalisation and poverty within the Spanish or French states for decades, not to mention the Andorran figures.[14] The Pyrenees are peripheral politically and socio-geographically, but it is no longer a poor region that is "underdeveloped". And, with tertiarisation, it has become much less culturally different: one could say that it has become acculturated. The people of the Pyrenees live as far away, if not more so, than those in Paris (UNESCO headquarters) from the situations of extreme poverty prevalent in Mali or Madagascar, as well as the cultural pluralism that is perceived there. The success of the Pyrenean initiative is contextualised in what we could call "Catalan-speaking bias" or "Levantino" in Spanish applications for the recognition of intangible cultural heritage. More than half are located in the famous and debated Catalan Countries, which means in the most economically dynamic part of the Spanish Mediterranean (although some of the initiatives are well inland), a strongly cosmopolitan area with a high degree of external investment. In the global hegemonic framework, it is in this prosperous and perfectly encultured context, aware of the language and international institutional resources and with a high potential for self-financing candidatures, where heritage strategies not only succeed, they take on the most popular arrangements and, therefore, that which is most convenient for the population. The associationism driving the falles heritage process is the same as that which the ensemble of Catalan society has been attributed to.[15] The paradox is that these "practice communities" (in the sense in which Bendix or Bortolotto adopt the concept of Jean Lave and Étienne Wenger in Adell et al. [Eds.], 2015) are more operative the more imagined, or even the more "imaginary", they are; in other words, the more the ritual is separated from technology and is restricted to discourse, a blatant difference with African cases. The paradox is comparable to that posed by the use of the notion of "social capital" in contexts of international development, in the sense put forth by Putnam (1993): a historic product of European countries wanting to be projected on the whole world to enhance cultural diversity. It is not unusual for the results to be disparaging and disappointing in many southern countries.[16]

The people that carry out the falles have normalised and to a large extent shared UNESCO's heritage preservation criteria, much more than the Fula or Zafimaniry collectives. This internalisation dates back to at least nineteenth-century folklore and became widespread with the "cultural urbanisation" of rural areas during the twentieth century. Indeed, a differential aspect with respect to African cases is the presence of native ethnographers (in a restricted, local sense), such as Riart and Jordà, that connect with this folklorism through illustrious precedents such as Ramon Violant and Simorra. C. Bortolotto's suspicion regarding the difficult discrimination between European anthropologists' seemingly opposing "researcher" and "facilitator" roles is confirmed (see her contribution in Adell et al., 2015: 266-267). For the inhabitants of the Pyrenees, although appropriating heritage, even intellectually, does not override the top down dynamics that cross the tertiarisation of the territory, it can open up opportunities to build a "grassrootsterritorial policy" and to unite the social group, beyond business opportunities. The need to attract tourists and the continuity with the contiguous sociocultural fabric curb possible excluding dynamics towards "foreigners" and mitigate the democratic fears of the flowering of autochthonous communities (Ellen Heertz in Adell et al., 2015, regarding Switzerland).

However, the factors determining the falles grassrootsstrategy are not transferable to the communities originally intended to be the beneficiaries of the intangible cultural heritage. The comparison suggests that the possibilities of them benefiting, which should not be ruled out given the resilience of local societies studied by anthropology, have less to do with the approach to the regulations established by states and international agencies, which are often contradictory to the local mechanisms of participation, and more to do with their ability to subvert them; subversion in the sense of instrumentalisation towards goals other than those officially set forth,

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The *falles* counties show a tendency of increase throughout the first heritage period, from the 80s, reaching the highest family income in Catalonia by the end of the 90s: http://economia.gencat.cat/web/.content/70_economia_catalana/arxius/publicacions_periodiques/nota_d_economia/ne_66/6-la-rendafamiliardisponiblealesco-marquescatalanes.pdf. Although Idescat shows a decrease in these figures after the recession (often with contradictory information), the level of income continues to be high: https://www.idescat.cat/pub/?id=rfdbc&n=8224&lang=es (consulted on 30 November 2017), but http://www.elpuntavui.cat/article/4-economia/18-economia/419135-la-vall-daran-te-la-renda-per-capita-mes-alta-de-cata-lunya.html (both consulted on 30 November 2017).

15
http://associacionisme.mhcat.cat/ (consulted on 16 February 2018).

16
The concept of "social capital" spread thanks to a push by World Bank (Bebbington et al., 2007). The problem is that the types of relationships that are considered "capitalisable", generators of trust and cohesion, are diametrically opposed to Western societies and to others, particularly African ones; see a devastating criticism in Ben Fine (2002). On the other hand, the nationalist component of this capacity to mobilise civil society (such as in Belgium, for example) could be a factor to consider as influential on the state, but it does not seem decisive given the strong differences in this sense between Catalonia and Valencia, for example.

within the framework of cultural pluralism involuntarily established first by colonisation and then by cultural imperialism. In other words, putting local knowledge above internationally recognised expert knowledge.

The dilemma of the role of diversity in development, in current progress, is a classic in anthropology, from well before M. G. Smith. However, research to solve the dilemma is not so common, not even in the seemingly ideal framework of intangible cultural heritage studies. The excellent collection by Adell et al., (2015) is good proof of this, since it does not practically address the issue of logics and different social values in play, conceptions and practices that are not necessarily consistent with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but legitimate locally, at least for the members of the "real" community, who react and adapt to the candidacy of an "imagined community", presented by the relevant state. The close and comparative view of ethnography is indispensable in detecting, understanding and perhaps even integrating these mechanisms of deviation into heritage processes. ■

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