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Review of the book of Santana, Germán (dir). *Patrimonio cultural africano atlántico y de la afrodescendencia*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 339 pages

Reseña del libro de Santana, Germán. *Patrimonio cultural africano atlántico y de la afrodescendencia*. París: L'Harmattan, 339 páginas

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Abstract: This review will summarise the main aspects of the book, on African heritage and the forgiveness it has been subjected to in history. Several authors bring different perspectives and points of view, along with different places, to this multidisciplinary study that gives us an overview of how heritage management is working in different places on the Atlantic African continent.

Keywords: Heritage, African, Atlantic, Culture.

Resumen: Esta reseña pretende sintetizar los aspectos principales del libro acerca del patrimonio africano y el olvido al que ha sido sometido en la historia. Varios autores aportan diversas perspectivas y puntos de vista, así como diferentes lugares, a este estudio multidisciplinar que nos proporciona un marco general de cómo se gestiona el patrimonio en diferentes lugares del continente africano atlántico.

Palabras clave: Patrimonio, Africano, Atlántico, Cultural.

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In recent years, different currents have emerged that seek to revalue African heritage, to give it a voice of its own and allow it to tell its own story, to use that heritage as an identity. Until recently, colonialism has been predominant in the creation of this identity of continental and insular Africa, which has led to an undervaluing of heritage by everyone, from the locals to the world at large, including UNESCO, as the book's editor, Germán Santana, points out in the introduction itself.

African heritage is not only found in Africa. With the different forced exports of people to other parts of the world, we find the presence of this heritage in different areas of the planet, evolving in different ways, and influencing the creation of its own culture, or even in symbiosis with pre-existing cultures, something that will be shown in both tangible and intangible heritage, and which both Germán Santana and all the authors who collaborate in the work intend to show from different approaches, places and populations of the world.

Thus, in general terms, thanks to this work, we can appreciate the importance of the multidisciplinary approach to this type of study, which has a historical, but also anthropological and even archaeological basis regarding local identity, as Leila Maziane emphasises in the second chapter, *'Le patrimoine atlantique marocain: essai d'évaluation et perspectives de recherche'*. It is crucial to integrate new technological tools and embrace the digitization of the humanities. These advancements not only facilitate study and research but also enable the dissemination of cultural heritage through fresh perspectives that move beyond colonial narratives. By creating culturally inclusive spaces, local communities are empowered to share their voices, construct their own histories, and promote their heritage. As Diego Buffa emphasizes in chapter four, *'Historia y patrimonio de una Córdoba Afro, Grupo Córdoba Ruta del Esclavo | UNESCO. Dinámicas e iniciativas'*, this approach fosters a more equitable and representative understanding of the past.

One of the fundamental themes in the different chapters of the book is tourism. In recent years, tourism has had a cultural trend that makes heritage conservation an urgent and necessary problem, not only to reinforce the roots and identity of the populations, but also to avoid its loss or definitive deterioration because of mass tourism. We must accept that tourism is a reality, but that it must be controlled and educated, as well as involving the local population in this heritage, because when the locals know the heritage value and are part of it, they get involved, take care of it and defend it. This is what Lucía Martínez and Tamara Lucía Febles highlight in the third chapter, *'Turismo Patrimonial en el Atlántico Medio: puesta en valor del territorio de Cidade Velha'*.

This heritage education is indispensable to raise awareness among the population and to avoid any malpractice related to, above all, tangible heritage. However, if tourism continues with this massive trend, all this will not be enough either, as mass tourism leads to gentrification in which the locals do not benefit, but their living conditions decrease, impoverishing the local populations and displacing them from their usual centres to the outskirts; this makes heritage education and involvement more difficult, as this is something that is related to the degree of poverty and the proximity to these usual heritage centres.

This is precisely what the authors highlight in different cities or islands, which are sponsored as tourist or cultural destinations, and whose populations are impoverished and displaced, thus generating a negative impact on local societies. If this is the way forward, tourism must be regulated and sponsored consciously so that its impact is positive and enriches the local population of the destination, without giving in to business pressures to preserve cultural values: sustainable and responsible tourism, with more heritage education, better management by the authorities and, above all, local involvement in heritage.

The authors repeatedly mention the importance of education and heritage dissemination for the joint and heterogeneous construction of a local identity that accommodates all minority parts. This is important since, for example, the presence of African people in all parts of the world (and in many areas, this presence was very numerous), has not meant that their history is reflected in the general discourse: their history has been erased from the historical record, both for the positive parts of cultural contribution and for the negative part by colonialism. There is thus a whitewashing of colonialism with respect to slavery. All of this results in parts of society, which are in a minority in relation to the general discourse, being silenced and their history ignored, and having to adapt to this discourse, even though they do not belong to it or feel connected to it in any way. This is very common on the American continent, as María José Becerra points out in her chapter *'Historias Negras en el extremo sur de América, desde los márgenes al centro de la literatura académica'*, where native peoples and Afro-descendants, always invisibilised, re-emerge in the discourse in a slow and long process.

With respect to these positive parts of cultural contribution, African influences can be studied from those mixed cultures that were created through syncretism between African and European customs, giving rise for example to new musical genres, such as the bomba and its evolution on the American continent, which has its origins in the 16th century and which Nayra Pérez Hernández discusses in her *'El género musical de la bomba, espacio para el contrapunteo cultural en Latinoamérica y el Caribe'*. However, we find that these cultures have been set aside from the official discourse and that, on the islands, they generate different populations from those found on the continent, as José Silva Ébora points out in the chapter *'Reminiscências Afro-negras no Património Cultural de Cabo Verde: Algumas Reflexões'*.

For example, in the Canary Islands, slavery is studied from other places such as America, but this enslavement of people is not taken as its own, as Claire Laguian highlights in her chapter *'Représentations de l'esclavage dans les musées canariens: invisibilisation de l'africanité et impensé colonial espagnol'*, thus spreading in the discourse and leading to a dehumanisation of the process and the people of this place who suffered it, as well as making their stories invisible. In these islands, moreover, slavery has always been closely linked to the sugar mills, thanks to which we can find today bone remains that join other types of heritage, both prior to the conquest (such as toponymy) and later (tangible African continental heritage, although we also find toponyms such as Guinea in a village on El Hierro), as Germán Santana highlights in the first chapter, *'El patrimonio canario público relacionado con África después de la Conquista'*.

In the Canary Islands, in addition to tangible heritage belonging to the African continent, such as sculptures or paintings, we find European structures from the period of conquest, material remains belonging to the defensive heritage of these places (which we also see on the Atlantic Coast of the African continent) and which Juan Manuel Santana discusses in his chapter *'Patrimonio defensivo en las islas africanas atlánticas'*. In addition, we can also find traces of intangible heritage, such as African rituals that date back to the early days of the Inquisition, in the first half of the 16th century, and which have been studied by Claudia Stella Valeria Geremia in her chapter *'Rastros de rituales africanos en las fuentes inquisitoriales canarias: fragmentos de patrimonio inmaterial del pasado (siglos XVI-XVIII)'*, or the religious syncretism of Annobón, in Equatorial Guinea, where we also find African rituals that are related to witchcraft, as analysed by Valérie de Wulf in her chapter *'Un patrimonio cultural y religioso asombroso: el culto tradicional annobonés (isla de Annobón, Guinea Ecuatorial)'*.

Undoubtedly, one of the most interesting cases of Intangible Cultural Heritage on the African continent is the Kurukan Fuga or the Charter of the Manden, a series of laws generated in medieval Mali: a proto 'constitution', one of the many formulas for maintaining harmony and peace, which has been a World Heritage Site since 2009 and which Dagauh Komenan tells us about in his chapter '*El Kurukan Fuga: La Declaración Universal de Derechos Humanos Africana (1236)*'. However, Africa is not a whole. The circumstances of each area are different, and its cultures are diverse, even if there is a tendency to generalise the continent as if it were homogenous.

A revision of the discourse is necessary, since even slavery is racialised, as we find that the discourses focus on the aboriginal slaves (specifically, Guanches) from outside the islands, not from within, and furthermore, their colour and attributes (white, with light eyes and hair) were highlighted as a differentiation from the other enslaved people. People with more African features are not recorded but disappear from the discourse. However, we find various ways in which heritage, especially intangible heritage, reveals the African cultural heritage, as for example in African oral literature, studied by Jacint Creus and analysed in his '*La voz del colonizado, la voz de su amo, la voz propia: el patrimonio literario oral como sinfonía de tonos*', or the carnival of Salvador-Bahía, in Brazil, where Africans and people of African descent saw the carnival as a way to fight racism in the 19th century, as Flavio Gonçalves dos Santos makes clear in his chapter '*Da <<Embaxaida Africana>> ao <<Olodum>> no carnaval da Bahia, séculos XIX e XX*'.

In any case, there is a general tendency in all the localities studied in the work to avoid discourses of slavery, thus seeking a whitening of the colonial societies that carried out these practices in these places, prolonged for so long. The approach, when it is given, is through non-violent discourses, avoiding the reality: that the lives of these people were based, fundamentally, on violence, so that this cannot be deliberately extracted from the discourse, as it is sweetened and the most important part of the real life of these individuals is lost. The enslaved are not integrated into societies, but assimilated, because they must violently lose everything they have, everything that was their life, and therefore they need to fill the gaps left by all those things they have lost with what society allows them.