

# Ethnological Values and Opportunities for Establishing a Heritage Policy around Tuna-trapping in Andalusia (Spain)

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## ABSTRACT

The subject of this study is tuna fishing with traps (also called pound nets and *seines*) traditionally carried out off the Atlantic coast of Andalusia in the Straits of Gibraltar. The study is divided into two main parts: the first sets out a concept of heritage that stresses its ethnological angle. A range of cultural aspects and facets of fishing that may be applied in classifying tuna-trapping as heritage is offered, with emphasis on the immaterial and intangible. The second part reconstructs the evaluation of tuna-trapping in two distinct ways: one relating to its memory and undeniable fascination for generations of writers and other artists who have focused their attention on fishing; the second offers strategies for classifying certain aspects of present-day tuna-trapping that could be validated as 'heritage', to illustrate real and possible, good and poor management practices.

## Keywords

immaterial heritage, ethnological heritage, heritage management, Andalusia, Straits of Gibraltar, tuna fishing nets, tuna-trapping, tradition, heritagisation.

## 1. Introduction

Bluefin tuna fishing that still continues today along the western coast of Andalusia (in Tarifa, Zahara de los Atunes, Barbate and Conil and other places around the Straits of Gibraltar) (Plate 1. map) is an ancient practice – rooted in the Phoenician/Punic/Roman period (Garcia Vargas: 2001; Garcia Vargas & Florido-Corral: 2011, p.241). It has seen great changes over the years with respect to both the technical systems used and the social, political and economic networks involved (Florido: 2005).

A tuna-trap is a passive form of fishing used primarily for catching bluefin tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*)<sup>1</sup> in huge trap nets. This is done in two phases: during the so-called *almadraba de derecho* (in an inward-bound trap), when the fish swim close to the Andalusian coast in the Straits of Gibraltar during their genetic migration from the Atlantic to their breeding grounds in the warmer waters of the Mediterranean which are ideal for spawning; and on the return journey, the *almadraba de revés* (in an outward-bound trap), as the tuna again pass through the



Straits in search of the food on which they gorge in the Atlantic. Fishing commences at the beginning of April, and the genetic migration trap phase is over by 24th June (midsummer's day); fishing with the outward-bound traps goes on until August. Schools of tuna approach the Atlantic coast of the Straits during specific environmental conditions—when there is an east wind or one from the south or south-east, when the waters are clear, or when the tuna are being chased by killer whales. The fishing cycle repeats itself almost identically each year: it begins in March, with the fishing gear being prepared and deployed, and continues from summer (inward-bound) to early autumn (outward-bound) ending with the fishing gear being taken in and the repair of the vessels and equipment during the winter.

Up to the nineteen-eighties, the tuna economy was based on fish processing and marketing (curing and salting fish and canning in oil [which came in at the beginning of the twentieth century]). However, that this type of fishing continues today can be explained by tuna having become a much sought-after commodity (through deep freezing) on the Japanese market. From the late medieval period, tuna-trapping was a factor in populating the coast, both for the Castilian kings and queens and the more prominent noble families, until families of entrepreneurs took over tuna-trapping in the mid nineteenth century. A large number of these families originated from the Spanish Mediterranean where they practised this method of fishing until the mid-twentieth

century. For seven centuries, Andalusian Atlantic tuna-trapping consisted of two major technical and socio-economic systems: up to the 18th century the so-called *vista* and *tiro trap* (a 'spot and pull' system with moveable nets) was managed by the nobility (the Duchy of Medina-Sidonia), which had been granted a monopoly by the crown to deploy fishing gear. The gear was formed by large moveable beach-*seines* which were operated by people on the shore pulling them tight as the tuna passed through them. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the Spanish crown wanted to free fishing from ducal control and withdrew the monopoly from the Duchy. The system used from then on was a fixed trap, which was more efficient at catching tuna and required fewer people to operate it.

There are two fundamental reasons for this study. Firstly, there is a historical continuity to Andalusian Atlantic coast tuna-trapping that has given rise to social identities which today are under threat. Secondly, the traps have enabled a valuable cultural universe to be constructed, especially as far as its intangible facets are concerned. As a fishing system, it enables us to catch a glimpse of an age-old way of exploiting nature. The means that have been used to exploit tuna fisheries are intelligence, physical strength and highly-developed senses, the three powers that Zeus had to master in order to crown himself as king of the immortal gods.<sup>2</sup> With these three powers the fisherfolk managed to turn an amazing, yet unrelenting, natural phenomenon into a deep-rooted



**Plate 1**  
Map. There are currently four tuna-trapping fisheries still active in the Andalusian South Atlantic (Spain), although during the first third of the 20th century there were as many as eleven all working at the same time. Source: Google Maps.

socio-cultural reality. In his monumental painting, 'Tuna Fishing' (1966/67) (Plate 2), Salvador Dali takes the struggle between the gods of Mount Olympus and the Titans as they are shown on the Great Altar of Pergamon as his model to represent fishing. Fishing is therefore interpreted as a metaphor for the mythical struggle between Man and Nature (Romero de Solís: 1996, p.168).

## 2. Approaches to the concept of ethnological heritage and its application to tuna-trapping

Heritage is a concept that is difficult to pin down. It overflows with connotations, such as 'tradition', 'the past' and 'immutability'. These notions are indeed at its core, as they implicitly acknowledge that the concept carries a legacy of values and cultural assets that have been handed down the generations unchanged, but they are incapable of illustrating two fundamental aspects: (i) that heritage is always the end result of a process of selection from the present, which means that all elements of heritage are part of the present, of contemporaneity, and (ii) that the elements of a culture that are chosen as heritage change with time. This has two consequences: the elements that make up heritage are themselves dynamic and hybrid, the result of influences and changes (and of the continuous cycle of destruction and recreation), as the raw material of culture is constantly re-worked in the same way that the sea re-works the

shore. Secondly, societies change their opinions as to what constitutes heritage and what selection criteria are appropriate for classifying heritage.

Some studies have already clearly established what the fundamental trends in European history are regarding the concept of heritage (Ariño: 2002a). They have plotted a line that goes from the monumental to the popular, from the material to the immaterial, from the elitist to the popular, from the aesthetic-artistic to the indigenous-ethnological, and which can create social identity. Ethnological heritage comes from choosing aspects of culture that have characterised social collectives over time, and which have come to be formidable engines for creating social identity in the morass of globalisation (Ariño: 2002b, p.335). These more-or-less recognisable historical dynamics have to be understood in a social and ideological context as creating their own structural framework in which heritage emerges as a unique category. Firstly, this framework was linked (from the 18th century onwards) to politics, in as much as heritage had to sustain the processes of nationalism that are characteristic of modernism; then, from the second half of the 19th century onwards, the economic angle began to evolve, linked to tourism and the culture industry along with academic and scientific interests. The concomitance between the modern concept of 'ethnological heritage' and the notion of 'anthropological culture' can be stressed in this respect (Carrera: 2009).



**Plate 2**  
Tuna fishing - a reflection by Salvador Dali on the struggle between Man and Nature along the Iberian Mediterranean coast.  
1966-7 (304 x 404 cms) Source: Paul Ricard Foundation, Bundol.

Of all the varieties of heritage, ethnicity is one of the most recent (dating from the second half of the 19th century), as it is linked to aspects that were not regarded as valuable until great strides had been taken in modernism, when categories such as 'people', 'traditions', 'customs', 'folklore' etc., began to acquire some relevance, whether political, economic or academic. The immaterial aspects of culture - belief systems, religions, ideas, productive activities, relationships with eco-systems, landscapes, literary and musical forms - everything that had formed part of the ways of life of the different collectives, began to be perceived as an *ad hoc* category - the ethnological, the indigenous, the characteristics of local societies. This awareness led to singularity, both internally and externally, allowing the very people who were at the centre of these types of culture to become aware of their uniqueness, and for scholars, local and/or national politicians and tourists, summoned by a unique and seductive 'otherness', to value these supposedly irreplaceable and fascinating aspects of other people's lives.

In contemporary societies, a feature of the way heritage is treated has been repeated again and again: a paradoxical relationship in which aspects that seemed 'foreign', 'exotic' and 'peculiar' were plucked from past cultures by the present, and irrevocable links forged with them. This linkage occurred through a dual relationship of 'foreignness' and proximity, of exclusion and inclusion. It seemed to be a fascination for something that was, or at least was perceived to be, going through a process of irreversible change, or even disappearing forever. This so-called *awareness of the foreignness of the past* (Ariño: 2002b, p.230; Lowenthal: 1998, p.28 ff), is a characteristic ideological feature of modern societies (meaning 18th and 19th centuries in European terms), and became a key factor in the creation of the modern notion of heritage, at the same time as it led to the 'museification', emblematisation and objectification of the past, drawing a clear line in the sand with respect to its continuity. For in contemporary societies, when they are no longer functional, traditions are 'discovered', or 'invented' (McKeon: 2004, p.176 ff), and they are turned into 'heritage' (Koeckel: 2007, p.20). In this way, what once was part of the everyday life of collectives becomes totally or partially detached from them; what was implicit, becomes explicit or 'a cult object', the subject of 'musealisation', of

academic reflection, of a political project or a cultural and/or tourist industry. This is the paradox of 'heritagisation' processes in contemporary societies (Ariño: 2002b, p.245), as the action of heritagisation hastens the process of irreversible metamorphosis, even when the intention is to safeguard a tradition.

In the case of Andalusian Atlantic tuna-trapping, it should be stressed that, from the time that they began to be used at the end of the Middle Ages, traps were for many years linked to the most distinguished nobility, especially the House of Medina Sidonia. Fishing was thus uniquely privileged throughout this period, a prestigious position fostered even more by the substantial revenue that the Duchy received, particularly during the 16th century. Throughout this golden period the Dukes used to relocate their households to the beach and spend the trapping season there, inviting royal and noble personages to come and admire the spectacle of Man's struggle against Nature in order to obtain sustenance, while making a (financial) killing in the process. In the 16th century, the whole coastline stretching from Conil to Tarifa, with Zahara de los Atunes at its centre point, was known as the 'Xaveguer Republic', as if it were a frontier state bordering on the Berber enemy who inhabited the southern shore of the Mediterranean. Thus a literary, chorographic and essayist tradition was born between the 15th and the 19th centuries which regarded the phenomenon as *mirabilia*, such was the admiration it attracted from locals and outsiders alike. Its linkage to the Duchy of Medina Sidonia, one of the most powerful noble families in the Castilian aristocracy under the *Ancien Régime* (from the end of the 13th century to the mid 19th century), was a factor in the prestige that tuna-trapping enjoyed in the past (Florida: 2005, p.23 ff). It could even be said that the texts, drawings, maps and plans created a legacy which articulates the heritage of the *Ancien Régime* - a heritage linked to elites, of major economic significance and separate from the general population. Tuna-trapping has always been unique. As Sáñez Reguart, a naval War Commissioner, a member of the Societies of Friends of the Country, and author of the *Historical Dictionary of National Fishery Art*, published in five volumes (1791-1795), recognised at the end of the 18th century *...this is a most ingenious and interesting type of fishing, without equal to this day, able to demonstrate the point which the fishing industry has reached in an observing practice* (1791, I: p.11). By

presenting the tuna fishers as almost naked men and women, their leathery skins hardened by the sun, air and salt through spending their lives on the beach, a stereotyped image was formed that gave these fisherfolk and their families their place within the confines of the civilised world. So, in the 16th century, the Duke and Duchess of Medina Sidonia organised evangelising missions for their spiritual redemption (Antón Solé: 1965; Herrera Puga: 1981). The Duchy also carried out the military recruitment of personnel, which meant that beggars and those found guilty by the courts could end up being forced to work on the Duke's tuna-traps in a land that bordered on Barbary. The literary and map-making tradition that was shaped around tuna-trapping recreated its savage and exotic side, despite tuna fishing being a recurrent and commonplace sight on Andalusian beaches during the spring and summer months. In the 20th century, man's wonder at the great tuna-traps still reverberated in literary and pictorial works and in various documentaries about the industry (Frías and Moya: 2005).<sup>3</sup>

But from the final third of the 19th century, and during the whole of the 20th, the social perception of fishing took on other meanings too. During the decades when production was buoyant, the ingenuity of this method of fishing, despite its imposing track-record in history, was linked to the onward march of industrial capitalism through the technological innovations in canning and distribution by road and rail. However, in the last third of the 20th century, when production started to decline sharply, the dominant perception of tuna-trapping has been one of artisanal, ecological and socially sustainable fishing, based on the know-how of the vessels' skippers and deckhands. This is when a notion of heritage appears that approximates more to the modern concept of 'cultural heritage', and this is what enables the classification of tuna-trapping as 'ethnological' heritage in as much as its practices, its technological artefacts and know-how, and its landscapes are linked to *ways of life, culture, activities and means of production that are part of the Andalusian community* (Article 61 of Law 14/2007, concerning the Historical Heritage of Andalusia).

In the same way, the concept of 'intangible cultural heritage', as defined by UNESCO in its *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (UNESCO, 2003),<sup>4</sup> is perfectly applicable to the subject of this study. As the cultural devices historically devised by

sea-faring fishing societies have been conceived and fashioned to interact with the natural and socio-cultural environment, it can be deduced from this that they generate a hugely effective collective perception of historical continuity and group identity of which the administration's agencies must be mindful.

In other words, in the final analysis, tuna-trapping is considered to be an expression by the local people of a way of acquiring a resource, establishing characteristic social and territorial structures and producing knowledge systems that are apposite for these methods. At the same time, tuna-trapping is also interesting as it can no longer be identified with the Duchy, or with a specific area, but with the Mediterranean, or with Andalusia, as a social, territorial and cultural entity at one and the same time. The paradoxical relationship characteristic of modern societies can also be seen in the way that tuna-trapping is treated in heritage terms, as its 'heritagisation' begins to connect with an awareness of its critical situation and the threat of it disappearing all together.

My hypothesis is, therefore, that social identity depends primarily on three radical cultural systems which are linked to form a complex whole: cultural systems associated with production processes (work cultures); those which arise out of the distinction between genders (sex/gender cultures), and those that result from belonging to socio-ethnic realities (ethnic cultures, which are diverse in the case of tuna-trapping, coming from both within and beyond the Iberian peninsula). Other variables of social structure should be mentioned, such as age and local place of origin, which continue to be important in tuna-trapping. One of the most powerful heritage values is that tuna-trapping has forged heavily segmented and heterogeneous territories and social systems, both under the stratified class system (up to the 18th/19th centuries) and under the capitalist system. Individuals were ranked according to their job within the industry, their local and socio-ethnic origin, their level of technical expertise and their gender. And since very early times, the demographic, social and cultural history of this fishery has been characterised by hybridisation: Berber slaves, Portuguese, Italians, Valencians and others from the western and eastern extremes of Andalusia skippered and manned the vessels. Catalanian, Galician, Valencian and Italian entrepreneurs and traders from throughout the modern Christian world - they are the Atlanteans of this historical experience.

In short, tuna-trapping is a cultural activity, i.e., it has numerous facets - economic, ideological, religious, political, social, employment and so on. As B. Malinowski explained when referring to the Trobrian Island canoe, behind every cultural element is concealed a set of practices, mental representations, socially-established values and socially-organised institutions that must be approached from a holistic point of view. It will be the expert, either with a theoretical vocation, or with museographic intentions, who will have to reconstruct the ethnological reality of this set of artefacts, relationships and systems from a contextual perspective. The epistemological position that is therefore championed here is that which reveals the various dimensions that cultural elements enjoy (See appendix), transcending the old and much less fruitful debate between the materiality and non-materiality of culture. So, the ethnological dimensions of cultural goods that have to be taken into account are diverse. They include the territorial traces and landmarks of the fishing activities (archaeological remains, buildings and industrial infrastructures); artefacts and technical or economic institutions for the exploitation of the environment (boats, nets, and fishing gear) to intangibles like vernacular knowledge, values and ideological representations linked to the industry; social relationships involved in production and trade systems; management and political institutions and practices and the documented evidence of this tradition; evidence of social activity beyond the boats and working environment (economic and social household strategies, socialisation patterns, the perception and organisation of time, the gendering of social practices); gastronomic traditions; ritual practices and festivals; or specific linguistic expressions and vocabulary. Furthermore, the tuna-trap has generated a documentary, literary, pictorial and audio-visual legacy which shows that tuna-trapping has been appreciated over time as an exceptional activity.

This list will hopefully open up the concept of ethnological heritage to institutions and processes that are not commonly included, without leaving out the more traditional processes. It was intended to highlight aspects which, in an appropriate context and under a specific cultural policy, could be classed as 'heritage' because they comply with all the characteristic features of ethnological heritage.

### **3. What should be the basic principles informing a heritage policy for tuna-trapping, and what 'heritagisation' strategies would be appropriate?**

A heritage policy for tuna-trapping should comply with the following principles:

(i) Maintaining a balance between the whole range of objectives that all heritage resource management should comply with - research, conservation and activation. If the research involves ethnographical scientific knowledge and is embodied in the cataloguing of cultural assets with ethnological value, conservation involves restoration and preservation, while activation requires actions for exhibiting, disseminating and valorising with the aim of preserving memories, etc. These actions should be undertaken by various agencies: public bodies, civil society organisations and financial bodies. Heritage is interpreted by creating links for feedback between society and the cultural elements that have been selected to be enshrined as 'heritage' (Martín: 2006, p.205). Consequently, the evaluation of heritage should be neither an affair restricted to the sphere of science, nor should it be undertaken for the benefit of some specific elite, and neither should it be exclusively commercial - supporting advertising to attract tourists, for example.

(ii) Any heritage policy must support tuna-trapping as a productive activity and this is an objective that logically falls outside the remit of organisations devoted to cultural policy. This is a case where a sectoral perspective is not enough; a comprehensive focus is required as part of a regional development policy with specific political strategies for safeguarding the socio-economic and ecological process of bluefin tuna fishing through the use of tuna-traps. This requires a shift in the political perspective from fishing and its artefacts to the fisherfolk themselves. In other words, first the sustainability of the activity has to be guaranteed, and then its classification as 'heritage' has to be fostered. This implies moving beyond a focus on safeguarding fishing artefacts *ex situ* to eventually activating different political channels to encourage the *in situ* protection of the fisherfolk and their relationship with their environmental and socio-economic framework.

(iii) Local societies should take a lead role either through the institutions that represent them (local councils and higher authorities, fishermen's guilds and



other bodies that represent the fisherfolk), through those businesses heavily involved in the fishery, or through the work of heritage and cultural associations and people interested in the subject. The local perspective is consistent with the local angle. The political battle for cultural recognition is also one for the recognition of the place in the world of all the collectives that comprise the world system: championing one position in an increasingly enmeshed and globalised economy (Leff: 2004, p.85).

With these premises established, I set out a proposal for selecting aspects that can be activated as heritage on the basis of possible strategies that combine conservation, research and dissemination.

### 3.1. Conservation strategies and activation: capital goods and documents

Proposing a conservation policy for an activity characterised by its sustainability throughout history is very much a paradox; however, there are two areas of action that fit well within this type of strategy - capital goods and documentary and bibliographical repositories. 'Capital goods' here refers to the imposing infrastructure along the southern Atlantic coast that is a permanent reminder of the fishery. This includes the *chancas*, buildings where the tuna were processed and where administrative duties were carried out, and the *reales*, camps used as storehouses for fishing gear and for keeping sailors and workers safe, with their dwellings, and the *torres vigía*, or look-out towers, dotted along the whole of the Andalusian coastline which were used for spotting the 'tuna armies' as they neared the Straits.

Highlighting these architectural and urban landmarks gives recognition to how tuna-trapping marked a territory and its peoples. What is important is that the tuna fisheries were a primary factor in populating a number of places along the Andalusian coast. Knowledge of these capital assets sheds light on some very different historical and social processes; some, the result of policies to settle the 'frontier' (Conil, 14th-17th centuries); others to industrialise the tuna fisheries as a way of re-launching the 'national project' towards North Africa (Barbate, from the last third of the 19th century); others linked to experiments in state capitalism, creating segregated 'islands' within the population, as were done by the National Tuna Trapping Consortium at Sancti-Petri and Nueva Umbría.<sup>5</sup>

The Conil *chanca* was classified as a 'Place of Ethnological Interest' in 2000, according to the Law of Historical Heritage of Andalusia. Within this category are considered *areas, constructions or installations linked to ways of life, culture, and forms of production belonging to the Andalusian people that are worth preserving for their significant ethnological value* (Law 14/2007, article 26.6). I consider this an example of how heritagisation actions do not always pursue heritage objectives. Today it is home to a museum project and social services that have been strongly contested by the local *La Laja* Association.<sup>6</sup> The restoration was begun in 2008, not without certain avatars that brought to light the conflict between heritage criteria and real-estate policies (Santos: 2003). This has also been the case with Barbate's old fresh fish market. This was built in 1940 in the so-called 'ancient port' area, where the original economic centre of the town had been since the end of the 19th century. However, after 1958 the fishing moved to the new port on the west side of the town. The fresh fish market building was finally restored between 2009 and 2010, but the surrounding area was left untouched. This was not done with any view to heritage, but to provide the town with a multi-purpose building which has little, if any, link to local society.

Another case is the *chanca*-palace (castle) at Zahara (Barbate), accredited as a 'National Monument' in 1949. Because of its state of decay, in 2003 it was declared a 'Place of Ethnological Interest' by the Andalusian Regional Government after a demonstration by local people. Today it stands opposite the beach, virtually in ruins, only the salt store and the old tuna-trap are left, as it has been converted into a church. This too is the case with the Nueva Umbría tuna-trappers' installations and buildings, the so-called *real* (Ruiz, J. and J.A. López: 2002). In these latter cases, what is evident is a total neglect of architectural remains that could clearly be classified according to one or other of the existing types of legal protection found in regulations on historical heritage, the above-mentioned 'Places of Ethnological Interest'. However, the most astonishing urban complex, both for its size and the administration's total disregard for its guardianship, can be found at Sancti-Petri, near Chiclana de la Frontera, in the province of Cadiz (García Argüez: 2003).

These are all structures which, with proper restoration, could have been turned into performance



areas and museums about the fisheries and their historical avatars from an integrated and contextual perspective, which would have brought the fishery and its territorial and socio-cultural framework to the attention of the public (Martí: 2003, p.103). In 2012 a project entitled *Monument to the Tuna* drew to its close. This was a landmark sculpture which was put up at the historical sites that are most representative of tuna-trapping in Cadiz province. The success of initiatives of this type depends to a great extent on how well they are promoted.

As for documentary heritage, some private institutions have already taken measures to preserve documents linked to the history of tuna-trapping. As the proprietors of the fishery from the 13th to the 19th centuries, the Duchy of Medina Sidonia has accrued a magnificent archive of documents containing news sheets, reports, descriptions and financial accounts (the 'Statements') which are today a major resource for historical research (Bohórquez Jiménez: 1999; Araceli Guillaume-Alonso: 2008). The Duchy Foundation<sup>7</sup> has also digitised some of the records thus providing better access to this information.

If all the existing bibliographic and documentary material was collected together and put on display this would enable us to reconstruct the sequence of images that tuna-trapping has generated, from works by men of letters to pictures by painters and artists, from records

by monks and friars to, in more recent times, those of scholars concerned for the political economy.

### 3.2. Research policy and the dissemination of technical, socio-economic and cognitive information

Gaining a deeper knowledge of, and subsequently disseminating information about, all the elements that underpin tuna-trapping would provide another great opportunity for a heritage policy. This range of technical devices can best be understood as a tangible aspect of fisheries' culture which can be displayed and interpreted through demonstrations. Similarly, the vessels used to set up and take down the traps, and each *levantá* ('hauling up')<sup>8</sup> involved an array of technical instruments which did not change radically over time, could be displayed in the same way. The *Ancien Régime* fishing systems (*vista* and *tiro* - 'spot and pull') can be shown and explained using a whole range of maps and texts and other documentary material, as can the ancient traps (Plate 3). There are also archaeological remains and evidence in the shape of inscriptions, texts and coins with which it would be possible to create a complete history of tuna-trapping.

However, from an ethnological standpoint, the thing that most merits scientific and heritage evaluation is the continuity of knowledge about the two main methods of tuna-trapping. This is applied knowledge, locally-based



Plate 3

'Spot and Pull' Tuna Trap of Conil (Cádiz), 1765. Hand-drawn map where the stages of this kind of fishery are explained. The actions and tasks involved are represented in a two part sequence (the first operations are drawn at the top, the following ones at the bottom). The look-out towers (*torres vigía*) are shown. Source: Archive of the Duchy of Medina Sidonia (Sanlúcar de Barrameda, Cádiz. Spain).

and founded on the transfer and continuity of experience through several generations of experts. This is what gives tuna-trapping its traditional and irreplaceable character. By way of example, putting down the *cuadro*, the actual 'box' where the tuna are caught in funnel traps, is a key part of the process and is done solely by the skipper, who uses all his experience, records and local knowledge. In other words, the job is underpinned by intellectual faculties such as memory – collective and socially-constructed – but relying on the senses. Today, of course, there are also technological tools like GPS. One thing that does stand out is how little knowledge based on age-old forms of dialogue between Man and (to all intents and purposes) indomitable natural phenomena is valued.

Valorising this will require research into skippers' tales and their ethnological identities, their social relationships and the way that they hand down their knowledge, and how they have come from far and wide in Andalusia and the rest of Spain to the Straits of Gibraltar. Again and again, sources refer to the presence of Italian, Portuguese and Spanish east-coast experts – especially from Benidorm during the *Ancien Régime* (Llorca Baus: 1994, p.100 ff). Throughout the whole of the 20th century the majority of the experts working in Andalusian tuna-trapping were from the Spanish east coast, and it has only been in recent decades that 'west-coasters' have come on the scene. These are people from Huelva province who, over time, have become specialised in the most technical tasks. Only in the last two decades have some savvy local sailors, experienced in the art of *almadraba*, been employed as skippers.

Another intangible element that can be seen as a social tradition worth remembering is fish pilfering. The stealing of large tuna, and the ingenious devices used by crafty fishermen to avoid getting caught, were described by Persio Bertiso (1654) and even reached the ears of Cervantes. The measures taken by the Duchy to keep a watch on catches are set out in documents and show that workers stole tuna to try and sell them on their own account (Álvarez de Toledo: 2007: p.34 ff.). Ethnography has enabled us to document the practice of pilfering the *pescao chico* (which means the 'lesser fish catch' – incidental catches of other fish and other types of tuna<sup>1</sup> during the 20th century. To a certain extent this was overseen and permitted by the skippers as an incentive for the sailors, and can be seen as a logical form of negative reciprocity (Moreno Feliú: 2011, p.243 ff).

The hierarchical relationships within a strong system of patronage also help to set this practice in context, along with other economic practices such as the sharing out of surplus catches. The masters (the people who had been granted the right to fish for tuna) traditionally used to share out tuna offal and flesh when there was a surplus, but this practice died out with the arrival of the Consortium. However, the fisher families were loath to have these perks and benefits that made up their wages taken away from them; instead the fish they were given was mostly for domestic use, not for sale.

In short, this is a set of institutions, practices and ways of life that deserve to be authenticated through research, dissemination and displays, which safeguard the inter-relationships between the industry, the local people and the towns and villages in which they live.

### 3.3. Research into culinary practices and rituals and their preservation

Enticing tuna dishes are served in restaurants in the coastal towns where tuna-trapping was, or is, practised. There are a number of recipes and a long list of ways of processing and serving tuna and lesser tuna species (salted, in oil, cured, smoked, etc.) all of which are still practised. There was keen specialisation in by-products on the Spanish west coast, especially guts, cured and smoked products, etc., which was brought to the southern coast by migrants who came to tuna-trapping areas. Apart from the use (and abuse) of references to tuna made by the local hostelrys, these procedures show how tuna-trapping has enriched the cuisine of the societies where it took place (Llorca Baus: 1988), not only with respect to the end results, but in the way that the tuna was prepared, including the way it was cut and boned, which was a special skill based on a sound knowledge of the creature's physiology and the use of a sharp knife (Plate 4). These practices are in no need of a special heritage policy for tuna cuisine as the dishes are still made both for consumption at home and served to tourists in restaurants.

Nonetheless, regulated commercial differentiation should be the tool used to limit the abuse of trapped bluefin tuna and the traditional tuna dishes served in restaurants.<sup>9</sup> Since 2009 there have been initiatives in Conil and Barbate known as the 'tuna routes', when bars and companies offer traditional and modern recipes

based around tuna. At the same time, there is a 'Tuna Festival' which is held at the end of May in Barbate. For local society this is becoming a kind of Spring Festival of the type that is so characteristic of Andalusia. It takes place at the same time as the 'tuna routes' initiative, but has outgrown it, as it has been set up as a fair for the local people, not for tourists (Florido: 2011).

However, what would be more important for creating a social and occupational identity for the tuna-trapping families, and would therefore be more of a heritage policy, would be to encourage people to create other recipes, using other preserving and cooking methods handed down in families, and to develop dishes that are not currently available to tourists in restaurants. These could range from recipes for preparing tuna and their offal (heart, roe, stomach, ears, skin) to ways of curing and salting species like the longfin tuna and the Atlantic bonito. This production could be for home consumption or could be circulated in limited social sectors and restricted commercial circuits. This knowledge is the domain of men and women alike. In short, recipes are a cultural reference that normally shape and produce a sense of 'collectiveness' and of 'belonging', implicitly, without the need for display. For tourists, learning how to prepare the food, experiencing the smells and the tastes that fill the houses of tuna-trapping families, creates a

kind of non-intellectualised memory that demonstrates the identity of a particular social and occupational collective.

Finally, I refer to recent ritual processes in which tuna-trapping collectives have participated. Although it was traditional for tuna-trappers to celebrate the festival of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in July, the general festival for seafaring folk, they have also enjoyed a more specific ritual, the festival of the *quemada de Juan y Juana*, on St John's Day, as the summer solstice marks the end of the inbound trapping season. This ritual highlights the Huelva west coast and Portuguese festivities which workers brought during their annual work migrations to those towns and villages, like Barbate, that still work tuna-traps. This is a festival that is organised solely by those workers and their families who are still working and came originally from tuna-trapping towns in Huelva province. The ritual is therefore the result of a way of life, of the aspirations and identification processes of the protagonists. It is flourishing and is not an invention for the tourist market (Plate 5). In this case, the strategy would be to guarantee the continuity of the festival, as the social actors themselves already cherish and ensure the continuity of their ritual on the basis of their own expectations and values.



**Plate 4**  
An Asian worker cutting and filleting tuna in Barbate: the so-called *ronqueo*, which is the basis for the species use as food. Photo: Juan Ruiz, 2007.



**Plate 5**  
*Quema* [burning] *de Juan y Juana* festival (St John's Day) has traditionally marked the end of the inbound fishing season. It is still celebrated today by the group of workers from Huelva province employed at the Zahara de los Atunes fishery, in the town of Barbate in Cadiz province. Photo: author, 2010.

#### 4. Final reflections

Heritage policy must be able to combine conservation, research and dissemination strategies, and set out a way of protecting the fishery by guaranteeing the cultural transmission of a set of immaterial traditions, especially knowledge, expertise, working methods and expression. The choice of some of the elements examined has been based on the premise that the cultural content of tuna-trapping is enriching, both for gauging the history of the south of the Iberian peninsula, and for learning more about other lifestyles with which it has historical links according to the paradoxical relationship that modern societies have with the past. This relationship continues to create social identity in its day-to-day form, but this can and must be activated in our shared memory. This is only possible if the tuna-trapping heritage is interpreted in its entirety, showing its context, bringing out all its ethnological values, especially those that academic discourse is wont to describe as 'immaterial' or 'intangible'.

This calls for an approach to fisheries' culture that avoids the narrow prisms of objectification and mere mercantilism, shows its value, and contributes to shaping a collective conscience for Andalusian fishing families and, consequently, for Andalusian society in general. The current situation is especially delicate, nonetheless, economic processes are still being developed in coastal areas through the influx of tourists and the value of real estate, giving new meanings to maritime eco-systems and cultural systems linked to the sea and to fishing activity in Europe as a whole. But, in particular, the new, more intensive and more active strategies for preserving the activity of fishing for bluefin tuna place ever greater pressures on the Herculean journey of the tuna that underpins the Titanic episodes of traditional tuna fishing.

What knowledge of tuna-trapping reveals is that cultural diversity feeds into biological diversity, which is not something to be scorned in this so-called 'risk society'. In this more global sense, which also serves to make one reflect on mankind's relationship with the environment as a whole, tuna-trapping has had an impact on the memory and the senses since time immemorial, and it continues to do so today. Therefore the re-formulation of heritage policy is advocated to strengthen the process (Moreno: 2002, p.85) and the activation of the 'lived' collective memory. Recognition of fishing culture and the specific qualities of tuna-

trapping should prevent 'impeded memory' and 'manipulated memory' practices of the sort that Ricoeur (2003: pp.568, & 571) talks about. Without evaluating the past and the present of the current fisheries' culture, we would be looking at a new way of 'exoticising' the fisherfolk - perhaps the unkindest cut of all. In other words, we would pluck them out of their history, our history, and prevent their development in the future, our shared future. 🇪🇺



## APPENDIX:

Aspects of Andalusian tuna trapping that can be designated as heritage from an ethnological standpoint.

Field of social action	Results of tuna-trapping activity
Fishing activity and the physical evidence of it in the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coastal towns/villages created for fishers (settlements).</li> <li>• Landscapes, ports/harbours, manufacturing areas linked to fish processing/storage, 'industrial villages'.</li> <li>• Archaeological remains: industrial and storage areas, look-out towers ('spot-and-pull' system).</li> <li>• Patterns of habitation characteristic of tuna-trapping collectives: demography, migrations, characteristic types of houses.</li> </ul>
Technical/economic institutions and artefacts for tuna fishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal (sensory and intellectual) and external (fishing gear and vessels) technological systems, including 'know-how' applied to a-biotic and biotic marine environments and to techniques and instruments developed for fishing ('intellectual means of production' for the cognitive appropriation of the maritime environment and the application of technology).</li> <li>• Ancillary trades and activities: wooden boat building and the manufacture and repair of tools, nets, etc.</li> <li>• Values, ideas and representations linked to working at sea.</li> </ul>
Social production and distribution relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work relations and social stratification in the work environment, in factories and in local society.</li> <li>• Ways of distributing fish: share system, share outs and perks obtained by workers, pilfering.</li> <li>• Characteristics of marketing.</li> </ul>
Political and territorial organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communal and local fisheries and social service systems developed in the past as forms of spatial management.</li> <li>• Fishers' associations. Documentary evidence for this form of political action.</li> </ul>
Social organisation, socialising and how these are expressed in space and time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisation of the family economy. Ways of saving characteristic of fishing families. The role of women in the family economy: their involvement in the local economy in the past through work in canning factories etc.</li> <li>• Heritage through the family: ways of handing down material assets and knowledge; marriages, etc.</li> <li>• Socialisation of children. Gender division of tasks.</li> <li>• Gendered forms of sociability and their spatial expression: sea/land and home/tavern.</li> <li>• Perception of living area derived from work at sea: the body as a unit of measurement and reference for the immediate area, cognitive representations of maritime space, etc.</li> <li>• Organisation of the working day (on land and at sea) in terms of time: working periods and waiting and/or leisure times.</li> <li>• Adjusting the division of social time to the productive organisation of the fishery.</li> </ul>
Recipes and traditional ways of preparing food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dishes prepared on the basis of fish available locally using traditional local recipes. Distribution of knowledge about food preparation between men and women.</li> <li>• Ways of processing oily fish (bluefish): salting, canning, for trade and own consumption.</li> <li>• Local ways of using tuna by-products (offal, stomach, roe, etc.) for commercial use and own consumption. <i>Ronqueo</i> (local method of gutting, boning and cutting up tuna).</li> <li>• Industrial processing of fish in factories: women's work.</li> </ul>

Rituals and local festivals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tuna-trapping festivals: St John's Day, Our Lady of Mount Carmel.</li> <li>• Rituals: beginning of fishing, baptism of the gear, etc.</li> </ul>
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific vocabulary used in tuna-trapping (lexical diversity, result of diversity of social traditions)</li> </ul>
Documentaries, collections and archives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Archives and collections: documents of accounts, reports and maps. The following stand out for tuna-trapping records, inter alia: the Archive of the Duchy of Medina Sidonia and the 'Álvaro de Bazán' General Naval Archive.</li> </ul>
Literary, pictorial, graphic and visual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific literature about tuna-trapping.</li> <li>• Illustrations for various purposes: mapping, planimetrics, drawings, for administration, aesthetic, etc.</li> <li>• Photographs (singly or in collections) and documentaries (C20th).</li> </ul>

Source: prepared by author.

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## NOTES

1. However, a wide range of lesser tuna species are also caught, including the bullet tuna (*Auxis rochei*), the Atlantin bonito (*Sarda sarda*), skipjack tuna (*Katsuwonus pelamis*), and other high calibre species, such as the sword fish (*Xithias gladius*) and the meagre *Argyrosomus regius*.
2. After his victories over the *Hekatonheires* – from whom he took his brute strength, and over the Cyclops – from whom he took his keen eyesight, and over Metis – from whom he acquired his intelligence.
3. There is an interesting documentary available on YouTube called *Costas del Sur* (1956) about tuna-trapping at Conil. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZWB9HBGXYv8> [accessed 7.9.2012]. *El cerco*, by Ricardo Iscar and Nacho Martín (2006) is more aesthetic film than documentary, and was chosen as the best European short film at the 2006 Berlin International Film Festival and at the 2007 Mostra de Venecia. It can be seen at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZWB9HBGXYv8> [accessed 3.9.2012].
4. Article 2.1 of the 2003 *ICH Convention*. The next point lists the specific aspects that should be considered. Sections d) and e) are, respectively, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe, and traditional craftsmanship.
5. The National Tuna Trapping Consortium (1928-1971) was a monopoly, a company jointly owned by the state and leading entrepreneurs, and with headquarters at Sancti-Petri, Barbate and Nueva Umbria.
6. See <http://www.lalaja.org/chanca.pdf> [accessed 15.9.2012].
7. See <http://www.fcmedinasidonia.com/fundacion.html> [accessed 8.9.2012].
8. In other words, hauling the net up and pulling the tuna out of the trap. *Sacada* and *testa, testilla, barco de fuera* and *barco de tierra* are the names given to the main vessels that draw the *copo* – the funnel-shaped trap-net – closed during the *levanta* (hauling up). The *sacada* is the vessel from which the tuna-trappers' skipper directs the whole process. This vessel is used to haul up the nets and to close the trap with the tuna inside. The rest of the vessels are stationed around the *cuadro* or trap-box. At first, they simply take the strain of the cables, keeping them taut, but later they are used to haul up the nets until

all the tuna are caught in the *copo*. The *testa* plays an especially important role in this operation and is therefore stationed at the head of the *cuadro*, opposite the *sacada*. The *testa* and the other boats which are holding up the cables take the tuna on board. All these vessels remain anchored around the trap throughout the season, ready to assume their allotted positions when the time comes. Other vessels used for ancillary tasks are the *lancha del capitan*, *lancha del segundo* and *lancha del tercero* (skipper's, first mate's and second mate's boats) and the *botes del atajo*, also referred to as *faluchos*. These are the only motor vessels used and they drop and haul in the anchors and carry the *gente* (people) out to the other vessels on fishing days.

9. A policy that has been developed by the Andalusian regional government (*Junta de Andalucía*) that uses distinctive seals to certify quality, eg. 'Tuna-trapped Bluefin Tuna' and 'Southern Dried Tuna', and specific denominations like 'Andalusian Bullet Tuna'.

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