

The Promotion of Andalusian Heritage through Tourism in the Medina of Marrakech

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Abstract : The Hispano-Moorish art was born in 786 when Abd ar-Rahman built the first mosque in Cordoba. It is a still-living art in the trades of the big Moroccan cities. Everyone agrees that the different artistic forms of Arab-Muslim art find their full development in traditional Moroccan architecture, and this heritage allows artists and artisans to create magnificent masterpieces. Marrakech, by way of example, constitutes a symbolic city, which represents the reflection of a rich history of this art carried by a long artisanal tradition that is still living nowadays. Despite its ratification by UNESCO as intangible cultural heritage, and beyond official speeches, several of those craft trades are endangered, and with them the whole history of millennial savoir-faire. From the empirical study of the old historic center, 'the medina' of Marrakech, we explore in this article the opportunity offered by the tourism industry in order to protect these craft trades. We question artisans on the evolution of the sector and the challenges of the transmission of this heritage. We evoke the case of Spanish cities like Granada in a comparative reflection on the strategies and perceptions of the public administrations of a part, and, on the other hand, on the shared experience of artisans and tourists. In an interdisciplinary approach mixing anthropology, history, sociology, and even geography, we question the capacity of heritage processes to mobilize and involve a set of actors and activate a trajectory for the safeguarding of Andalusian arts and techniques. The basic assumption of this research is that the promotion of traditional craft trades through tourism and based on good scientific knowledge can present an original offer to cope with globalization and guarantee the transmission of that savoir-faire to new generations. Research in the field of Islamic arts does not constitute a retreat into the nationalist identity or a fixation on the past but an opening towards cultural diversity, free from any standardization.

Keywords : heritage, art andalusí, handcraft, tourism

Conference Title : ICMAMA 2021 : International Conference on Andalusí Architecture and Mudejar Art

Conference Location : Tokyo, Japan

Conference Dates : July 22-23, 2021