The French Journeymen Tradition: Convergence between French Heritage Traditions and UNESCO’s 2003 Convention

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1 Introduction

When France ratified the 2003 UNESCO Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) in 2006, this hardly entailed a new and unfamiliar set of practices. On the contrary, the ICH Convention complements and reinforces a complex set of historical measures concerning the protection and conservation of heritage. The focus on historical monuments, dating from the French Revolution, was complemented in the 1930s by attention to local languages, folk representations and skills. These are the themes that would be identified seventy years later by the ICH Convention. A taste for the *Arts et Traditions Populaires* (folk arts and traditions) has been supported by the state, first through the *Front Populaire* policy (1936-1939), and then by the Vichy government during the Occupation period (1940-1944). During this time, ethnology began to develop as a discipline, breaking in part with the perspectives of folklorists, although ethnology was initially largely based on folklorists’ earlier research (Bromberger 2009).

A look at institutions clarifies the rift between ethnology and folklore further. While folklorists worked well away from academia, research centers and universities (regard Arnold van Gennep, who was never able to obtain the institutional recognition he sought), the young discipline of ethnology began to fill sites of cultural and political power. By the late-1930s, the ethnology of France dealt inten-
sively with heritage and heritage policy. Until the early-1980s, its place of expansion and fulfillment was the Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires created by Georges-Henri Rivière in 1937 (Gorgus 2003: 95–98). From the start, Rivière wanted to realize a “living museum” (similar to the heritage conceptions held by Konrad Hahm in Berlin at the same time). The key concern of the museum was the presentation of objects in context.

From this approach was born, in the 1970s, the notion of patrimoine ethnologique (ethnological heritage), whose importance alongside other types of heritage (historical, artistic, natural) was quickly recognized. In 1980, the Mission du Patrimoine Ethnologique (Ethnological Heritage Service), later to become the Mission Ethnologie, was created within the Ministry of Culture. With a goal of conservation, the Mission was tasked with the identification and study of vernacular languages, systems of representation, and folk beliefs and knowledge related to the environment. Again, one recognizes categories that will be featured within the ICH Convention. Thus, this concern for safeguarding has found in the Mission Ethnologie, a privileged state department of interpretation and implementation of ICH, as well as a national equivalent, the notion of patrimoine ethnologique able to articulate goals at local and global levels.

The specificity of the French interpretation of the convention can be seen particularly well in particular cases. One of them is the compagnonnage, registered on the ICH Representative List in 2010. The following chapter will examine this case because it also affords an opportunity to look at an institution that has been maintained in France over two centuries, not least due to its close ties with the French idea of heritage.

2 Compagnonnage and Heritage in France

The compagnons are divided into several craft communities that train young craftsmen through a temporary tramping system (called the Tour de France). Journeymen and corresponding organizations exist in various states and have attracted a considerable amount of scholarly attention (e.g. Hobsbawm 1965, Bohnenkamp and Möbus 1989, Wadauer 2005) as well as popular interest. Dating from the middle-ages, this institution has followed the transformation of the heritage idea and policy since the early–19th century, following (but adapting it to their own specifications and requirements) the general French trend of heritage conceptions. Three stages can be distinguished, termed “heritage spirits” by Jean-Louis Tornatore (2010): heritage, heritagization and heritagity. I will briefly present the first two stages that constitute the cultural and historical context onto which the last state – which contains the ICH program – is built.
2.1 Heritage

The first stage is that of compagnons as builders of monuments. It fits into the general framework of the Monuments Historiques (Historical Monuments), which is the first step in the constitution of French heritage. Compagnons are conceived as builders of monuments, in particular historical monuments; they are supposed to have been the main builders of cathedrals as well as modern constructions of import, such as the Statue of Liberty or the Eiffel Tower. They also produce their own monuments, which mark their own history at the community and individual level: These monuments are called chefs-d’oeuvre (masterpieces). There are collective and individual masterpieces. The collective chef-d’oeuvre is more common, as one is more inclined to attribute monumental achievements to a group than to an individual. Thus we find chefs-d’œuvres that represent specific compagnon trades, such as carpenters, joiners or stonemasons – crafts that also pursue rivaling rites of initiation. These chefs-d’œuvres were sites of identification; they served as emblems and could also mark events of collective significance, such as the great chef-d’oeuvre of the Charpentiers du Devoir (Carpenters of Duty) built in honor of the lawyer who defended journeymen in Paris in the great strike of 1845 (Illustration 1). One could also find masterpieces to represent a city of compagnonnage. This was the case, for example, for the cities of Angers and Bordeaux. In Angers’ masterpiece, it is the First World War that has deeply marked the memories, including that of the main builder, Auguste Bonvous, who lost his son during this war and honored this sad event with an inscription on the work he crafted.

![Image of a chef-d'oeuvre](image_url)

Figure 1: The collective masterpiece of carpenters called “Le Berryer,” offered to their lawyer Pierre-Antoine Berryer during the great strike of 1845 in Paris (Jean-Paul Chapelle 2011. Reproduced courtesy of the Author).
When the concern for training and technical excellence became distinctive elements of the compagnonnage, the individual masterpiece gained in significance. This went hand-in-hand with an increase in the discourse of “bad workers” and “dangerous classes” in the age of mechanization of crafts. Henceforth, it was required for a craftsman to gain access to compagnon status, a rule which remains to this day. New types of masterpieces emerged where the technical process is dominant and reference to the past falls away (it was no longer valued or seen as useful to build a “historical monument” in miniature). New points of reference were technique, skills and secret knowledge.

Although “historical monuments” served as a starting point in the construction of heritage sentiment, they gradually became lost. To understand the shift from the early–19th century where the idea of historical monuments was closely intertwined with compagnonnage, the contemporary individual masterpieces as heritage require a look not at the shape, but rather at its opposite: In the gradual stripping of the actual appearance, the focus shifts to journeyman customs and traditions. From this vantage point, a collectively built historical monument and an individual masterpiece reflect the same logic.

When heritage focused on historical monuments, time ruled the heritage logic. The monument encapsulated a moment in time, solidifying an event or an era: Thus, a series of stones in Brittany represented the time of the last Druids; a church in Roussillon embodied the beginnings of Romanesque art. In 1796, Alexandre Lenoir founded the Musée des Monuments Français (Museum of French Monuments). It was to bring together works of art removed from buildings destroyed during the French Revolution. The museum organized artifacts chronologically, with rooms devoted to individual centuries. Ultimately, this system shelters time from itself. Wanting to show the passage of time through changes in art forms, the change is simultaneously brought to a halt, as each century must be immortalized in a series of monuments. The course of time and the succession of ages must be deciphered in the alternation of styles and not be seen or felt by the impact of a (too visible) degradation. It is a time measured by “art-historical value” an intellectual time, to use Alois Riegl’s typology (1984 [1903]).

Journeymen’s masterpieces also reflect this accounting of time. They encode, date and represent events, and thus represent time. In terms of craftsmanship, also, there is an accounting of how much time was necessary to complete the masterpiece: Two hundred hours for a small model, and 500-800 for a travail de réception that granted access to a journeyman’s status (Illustration 2). The great masterpieces naturally required great amounts of time, such as the Angers chef-d’œuvre clocking in at 3,771 hours of work. Accounting of time spent also is also, of course, owed to the industrializing context within which journeymen worked. However, such accounting – which did not receive any compensation – was also consistent with the essential conjunction of masterpieces celebrating heritage of a time past.

1 For a general view of Riegl’s works, for example, S. Scarrocchia (1995).
Compagnons have an additional means of sheltering aspects of their work from time. While they have no museums, they have shaped spaces or objects where time and its passage are made visible, if only to those in the know. These are the secrets boxes, the boîtes, where the compagnons collect those objects that embody the time that is not spent on the masterpieces. This is the sensitive time, the time that results in “ruins.” It does not get counted but is simply there for its “age-value,” although it is largely invented. Most of the ritual practices and texts, presented as very ancient, were actually developed or written a few years earlier. The boxes contain books and other records, such as correspondence, that contain the history of the journeymen’s community, its legends and its rules. Sometimes all the material was bound in one volume, giving it even more unity to the past.

These two representations of time have different audiences. Time in “ruins” is for internal use, reserved for insiders; the counted and monumental time can be shown to the public and is for outsiders. The collective masterpieces were largely made to fulfill this function as public representations. During trades’ feasts in compagnonnage, a parade, dating from the 17th century and still practiced today by some compagnon trades, such as the carpenters in Toulouse or the bakers in Tours, was planned in which the great chef-d’oeuvre was paraded through the city. The carpenters of Toulouse have retained this practice, engaging with their parade—much as do monuments and museums of the 19th century—in a display of “deposits of values” (Poulot 2001: 30). For the compagnonnage of that era, these were values connected with technical skill, the quality of journeymen’s works and the educational value inherent in the compagnonnage. When the compagnons participated in industrial exhibitions in the second half of the 19th century, especially from 1870–1880, it was explicitly because their masterpieces were “teaching models.”

These exhibitions and participation in parades featuring the unity of the community and its spirit contribute to a new heritage regime, using new tools and fulfilling new functions. While in the heritage stage, the masterpiece, the technique and

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2 According to a carpenter (quoted in Bastard 2008: 74), about an exhibition in Lyon in 1882.
its pedagogy, and the time represented were central; in the new heritagization stage, people (not monuments), identity and its performance, and the self (not time) increased in importance.

2.2 Heritagization

The transition from technical competence to identity, and from monuments to individuals in the fields of culture and heritage occurred in the early–20th century. The World’s Fair in Paris of 1900 announced the shift. Indeed, compagnons of Paris had wanted a pavilion devoted to compagnonnage, built to face the “chefs-d’œuvre of [their] ancestors” (Bastard 2007: 51). It was neither a single trade, nor a simple technique, but a compagnon identity on which they focused. The project did not succeed.

This failure is significant. At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, compagnonnage was in a very bad condition: Trade unions and the rise of associations had made the institution irrelevant, and out of step with the times. A historian wrote in 1901 that compagnonnage was taking its last breaths (Martin Saint-Leon 1977). There were indeed only a few dozen journeymen left in the early years of the 20th century. The sense of being the last was probably never stronger, lending urgency to the reflection of the specificities of compagnonnage: Thus the wish for a compagnon pavilion in the World’s Fair; thus, ten years earlier in 1889, the establishment of a compagnon organization which brought together various compagnon trades. This meant that the ritual-symbolic peculiarities of each trade were abandoned; instead, there was the Union Compagnonnique des Devoirs Unis (Journeymen’s Union of all Crafts).

Reflecting about one’s endangered self took many forms. Among the compagnons, it began with a reflection of journeymen history, legends and symbols. Interest in the legends was never as powerful as during those times of institutional crisis. There were reports about the (desired or dreamt of) past and the wealth of resources that were no longer present. History and fiction were mixed in novels and plays. A taste for the esoteric grew. One looked for the relationships between the origins of compagnonnage and the building of Solomon’s Temple, between compagnons and Templars, and so on. Some compagnons undertook research into these topics, and the results were published in the compagnon papers of that time as well as in their contributions to esoteric papers such as Le Voile d’Isis (The Veil of Isis). The low number of actual compagnons made the community more accepting of some “intellectual” people3 in order to thicken the meaning of compagnonnage, drawing from traditions such as traditional Catholicism, mysticism, esotericism, masonry, and so forth. Compagnons contributed to the crafting of their identity in plays

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3 “Intellectuals” were mostly artists or writers who were curious about journeymen’s customs, which they often knew because one of their family members had been in the compagnonnage. Such is the case of Jean Bernard, a painter who became a stonecutter compagnon and founded the Association Ouvrière in 1941.
and novels (Adell 2011: 46–7), and through this work of re-presentation and self-reflection, the interest in a “past self” contributes to the heritagization of the self. Journeymen took the opportunity to present themselves as heritage to others and endeavored to become – as people and as a community – heritage at the state level. From the 1930s, compagnonnage was the subject of specific heritage attention, profiting also from a public interest in craftsmen folklore. In May 1939, an exhibition called Les compagnons du Tour de France was organized in Paris. It emphasized a common past embodied in the old ways of the craft and the sociability involved in the work. Journeymen represented a quasi “exotic” otherness through practices such as customs, festivals and initiation rites, as well as their vocabulary. Like other groups (peasants, mountain dwellers), they became a topic of ethnography. However, unlike other “candidates” for ethnography, journeymen early on guided the ethnographic knowledge production about themselves and the reflection of cultural institutions, such as museums, where they might be represented. The journeymen practiced a kind of “auto-ethnography” in their narratives, their autobiographies or their compagnon newspaper articles, that influenced scholarly studies. Moreover, as a society with secrets (more so than a secret society) and scenery (e.g. for the initiation rites, the distinction between the sacred and the profane), the compagnonnage was led to reflect on what could be said or not, shown or hidden. Compagnon museums especially elaborated on this aspect.

In 1968, the Musée du Compagnonnage was established in the city of Tours. It did not satisfy all compagnons. In the late-1970s and in the 1980s, compagnon museums (sometimes just a room in compagnons’ houses takes this title) appeared. The museum had become so essential that heritage and compagnonnage seemed to go “naturally” hand-in-hand. Compagnons were living heritage. Sometimes this happened literally: Historical monuments, such as the Maison des musiciens italiens at Versailles where the castrati invited by the court were housed in the early–18th century, became compagnons’ houses.

3 The New Age of Compagnonnage Heritage: Toward a Dossier for UNESCO

Space and place grew in importance to perform compagnons’ relationship to the past. The other dimensions (time, identity) did not disappear, but they were increasingly subjected to the rules of place and submitted to a new type of materialization.

In this regard, the “compagnon thought” met the UNESCO ideology in the implementation of the 2003 Convention. Indeed, making visible intangible heritage required materialization by pointing out the major objects, the spaces in which it takes place, and people and actions that embody it. The museums of compagnonnage also worked toward an account for journeymen’s “invisible culture.” How could one show the production of attachment that occurs within a secret initiation rite? How could one highlight the importance of the idea of transmitting knowledge in
the group? How, in short, could one communicate the compagnons’ esprit de corps? These questions and the solutions proposed reflect a new age of heritage which I call heritagity; it is a phase that overlaps and fuses with the new interpretation of heritage that UNESCO proposed in the ICH Convention.

3.1 Heritagity, or “living well”

This “spatial turn” in heritage politics, with its effort to materialize the immaterial, indicates the beginning of the heritagity regime. The two previous regimes (heritage, heritagization) were marked by a concern for dissociation between the heritage subject and heritage itself. Heritagity rather advocates the idea of a re-subjectivation concerned with the who of heritage, not just with the what. Among compagnons, this deleting of the gap is marked by living in historical monuments. Heritage, that is; and there is the belief that “living well” in the Aristotelian sense is living with heritagity, that is to say, a life whose relationship to the past is intimate, emotional, and not just, as in previous regimes, intellectual, calculated, and at a distance. This emotional approach favors “place” because this allows for the establishment of a real proximity to the diversity of past expressions. Among compagnons, this takes on various forms.

One of them is the project born of a Centre de la Mémoire (Center of Memory). This institution, based in Angers and opened in December 2009, combines several histories and several memories: It is an exhibition of journeymen objects, a resource centre on the history of compagnonnage, and also the place where all the archives of the Association Ouvrière, a compagnon group, are kept. All of this refers to the past and gives substance to this serious joke by the historian Henry Rousso (2003: 375) who imagined the creation of a “Ministry of the Past” or of a “State Secretary for Lost Time” after he had assessed the outbreak of new heritage and heritage policies.

The Centre de la Mémoire was conceived in honor of a former baker compagnon, René Edeline (1914–2005), who had assembled a collection of over 1,000 objects, which forms the basis of the new institution. Heritage value thus goes through a few exceptional men who relay and implement it; “heroes” who represent something better than rules, the duty to transmit and to embody “living well” in compagnonnage. To give to this heritage the space it claimed, it had to get out of the small private collection and “break with the show still reserved for the happy few, in 187 Grenelle Street, Paris.” These were the words of Michel Guisembert, president of the Association Ouvrière, in his inauguration speech, and these words echo the idea of a “heritage for all” which fuels so many UNESCO’s speeches.

Indeed, in compagnon speech, future generations are the first recipients of these materializations and this new places of heritage. “Fair heritage” is a key notion and solidarity in heritage is, first of all, intergenerational solidarity. This requirement for a new relationship between the generations explains the “madness of conservation.” We must keep everything. Previous heritage regimes, focusing on time and
identity, were built on “distance” (to the masterpieces, on the one hand, and between ancient and present journeymen, on the other hand) and this distance helped to choose them. Now that the gap between past and present is closing, there is an end to selecting from the past. If heritage and life converge, how can one select something to be heritage?

This new heritage awareness is also the seed-bed for a new and strange idea: One might call it a covert heritage, an ignored heritage just waiting for the appropriate circumstances to be revealed. All manifestations from the past are kept, as one does not know what the heritage of future people will be. Michel Guisembert told me that one has to develop “good habits” of conservation: On the one hand, one should not assume that what is heritage in the present will be the heritage of future generations; on the other hand, one has to live in the awareness that “every day that passes is a historic day.” What better way is there to describe the idea of a living heritage?

3.2 Toward UNESCO

France ratified the 2003 ICH Convention in 2006. This provided the context for this covert heritage – the idea that journeymen’s lives are heritage – to come to fruition. To many journeymen, the concept of Intangible Cultural Heritage provided an opportunity to openly show this life-heritage. In 2007, the numerically largest compagnon group (over 10,000 individuals), the Association Ouvrière des Compagnons du Devoir du Tour de France (AOCDTF), proposed itself spontaneously as eligible for ICH. The demand, addressed to the Ministry of Culture and UNESCO, did not receive a response. Without knowing the precise contents of the first dossier submitted, it is difficult to explain the failure of the first meeting between compagnonnage and the Ministry of Culture. In France, compagnonnage was among the first to offer an open application for the Representative List of ICH. While it was largely in line with the spirit of the Convention, it disregarded the way the French State had seized on it. France was implementing a top-down logic in line with its established, national logic of heritage, with a policy drawn up by a group of experts and representatives of the State (curators, inspectors, and so on) responsible for selecting heritage and safeguarding it by including elements on national lists.4

The initiative thus had to come from the top. The publication of my own book on the anthropology of compagnonnage (Adell 2008) opened the door for such an initiative. It was partly funded by the Ministry of Culture within the collection “Ethnologie de la France.” To my own surprise, the work hit a nerve almost from its publication in April 2008, and the compagnons as well as the Ministry took possession of it, each in their own way. The compagnons found in it the scholarly language to express their “sense of identity and continuity,” which is a fundamental

4 For a detailed and recent description of these processes of heritage implementation in France, see Heinich (2009); cf. also Bortolotto, Fournier and Tornatore, all in this volume.
criterion of the 2003 Convention for any ICH element. The compagnons suspected that their unsolicited, spontaneous application had been ignored because they had not mastered the scholarly language. In this book, they recognized their much needed interpreter. For the Ministry of Culture, the book became a “measure for safeguarding,” offering scientific essays relating such measures according to the 2003 ICH Convention.

This double interpretation of the book by the “top” and the “bottom” resulted in very concrete initiatives that allowed for the preparation of an application dossier for the compagnonnage application for the ICH Representative List. A few weeks after the book’s publication, I was contacted by Christian Hottin, head of the Ministry service in charge of ICH for France at the Mission Ethnologie, informing me of the Ministry’s intent to support a compagnonnage application for the ICH lists. To do this, one needed not only someone who knew the world of compagnonnage, but someone who was simultaneously able to make the link between the Mission Ethnologie, the administrative requirements of a dossier for UNESCO and the “field.” I seemed to be the best person. So the task fell to me to get in contact with representatives of different compagnon communities to suggest the idea of such an application. At the time, I did not know that the journeymen’s association had attempted such an application the previous year. A few days after this administrative contact, some compagnons joined me after the publication of my Hommes de Devoir, expecting me to attend a conference they had organized in Paris on the issue of learning and skills’ transmission. At this conference, I was informed of the open application that had been made the previous year. I was thus contacted separately by “both sides.”

4 From Writing to Registration: The Story of a French Dossier for ICH

4.1 Polyphony

Aside from a lack of mastery of the appropriate language, the failure of the first dossier submission was also attributed to the lack of dialogue between the different compagnon communities. Alongside the AOCDTF, there are several other groups of compagnons. The two main ones are the Fédération Compagnonnique des Métiers du Bâtiment (FCMB, nearly 5,000 members) and the Union Compagnonnique des Devoirs Unis (UCDDU, 2,000 members). Occupying most of the French compagnon landscape both in terms of geographical location and institutions (such as agreements with the state to provide training, award degrees, and so on), it was necessary for these communities to be involved in the application project. In addition, one of the compagnonnage features is the fact that “being companion” is subject to multiple interpretations. That creates tensions which repeatedly lead some compagnons to part from a group and join another or, more often, form a new one. Thus, in 2000, the
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stonecutters of the AOCDTF decided to form a separate group, called the Alternative. In 2007, saddlers, tapestry makers, fine-leather-workers, shoemakers, and cobblers seceded to form an independent community. Finally, in 2011, bakers and pastry cooks of the AOCDTF undertook to separate from the other trades and take the title of Fédération des compagnons boulanger et pâtissiers restés fidèles au Devoir. The ICH dossier had to be able to manifest the unity of the community while preserving the diversity of the compagnonnage.

It was important that the dossier would not become an instrument that would allow any subgroup to claim more “true” compagnonnage than another. Rather, the dossier had to highlight the diversity of involvement in its creation. The required paragraph “identification and definition of the element” opened as follows: “The compagnonnage movement, mainly represented by the three communities, the AOCDTF, FCMB and UCDDU, constitutes a unique way of transmitting trade knowledge and know-how, which is both rich in traditions and open to technical developments, and has its roots in the crafts brotherhoods of 13th-century Europe” (emphasis added). This allowed for the inclusion of different compagnonnage spirits and was sufficiently discreet for none of the three groups to see a downside. A number of smaller and greater concerns among the groups demonstrate that the act of registration on the ICH Representative List was not trivial to them; one group expressed to me the concern that they might have to claim the UNESCO label on their own. Being on the list was to them, at the cultural level, the “place-to-be” in the early–21st century.

After discussing the group boundaries for the registration process, the central issue of the dossier had yet to be identified. The first meetings in the fall of 2008 mainly concentrated on this point. Which practice(s), value(s), use(s), and custom(s) should the dossier focus on so that most of the compagnons’ distinctive characteristics would appear? A first meeting specifically devoted to this issue was held between representatives of the Mission Ethnologie and myself. We had concluded that the Tour de France, the distinctive tradition to learn crafts and customs, could serve as a means to “crystallize” compagnon traditions; it also showed the materialization of the immaterial. I decided to present this approach at the first “ICH Meeting” about compagnonnage without members of the Mission Ethnologie where I met for the first time all the representatives of the different compagnon groups. As a sign of their interest in the matter, they had traveled to Toulouse, where I teach anthropology. We met in the lodge of the FCMB. The moment this November 2008 meeting began, I realized that the representatives present were not just there to understand the requirements of the application dossier, but to evaluate me as the person designated to carry the responsibility of the dossier. To my surprise, the first part of the meeting was thus devoted to a debate about passages from my study Hommes de Devoir, about which the compagnons showed reservations, as they felt themselves to be incorrectly described. I had to provide explanations, clarify my intentions, and to open myself to their point of view. Writing an ICH application is thus clearly not a job like any other. On the one hand, it is not paid (alt-
hough this was suggested to me by some compagnons). On the other hand, aside from the skills it requires, one needs to establish a relationship of both trust and “fair distance” as one becomes simultaneously a public writer, historian, ethnologist, and representative of the research community and of all cultural institutions involved in the process (not only the Ministry, but also UNESCO, because the guidelines for the completion of the dossier were transmitted only by my voice).

My answers seemed to be satisfactory, likely also due to the multiple positions that were attributed to me (writer, representative of cultural national and international institutions, and so on). Thus, after having tested me well beyond what is reasonably my sphere of competence, the compagnons charged me with writing the file, but without entering into a discussion with me on the approach to take. The Tour de France perspective was heard, evaluated and rejected. While I had succeeded in introducing myself as competent and trustworthy, the dossier strategy planned with the Mission Ethnologie failed, at least partially. By focussing on the Tour de France, we had relied on an interpretation of the ICH Convention that would then also allow one to select elements for registration – as we had understood there to be a need to present objects easy to define, localizable and describable by some narratives. I was puzzled at the journeymen’s rejection of this approach: Why would they first recognize my skills, including realms I was not competent in, but then not follow recommendations regarding the interpretation of the Convention? Recommendations which officials of the Mission Ethnologie (whose voice I also represented) were certainly competent to express, whereas most compagnons were not, at least from the Mission’s point of view. The journeymen acknowledged that their self-started application in the previous year had failed because they had not fully read the ICH Convention. Nevertheless, they had grasped the most important concern: The success of the dossier was primarily based on a deep and broad commitment of the community membership. The dossier had to reflect a desire for representation, which an application focused on Tour de France did not satisfy. Instead, the compagnons wanted the whole institution of compagnonnage to be at the application’s core. The Tour de France is an important part of the organization, but not the only one. There is a compagnon life after and emerging from the Tour de France: The making of a compagnon identity and its maintenance through life – this is what the compagnons wanted to highlight. The project was beautiful and aroused the enthusiasm of compagnons. However, it was also complex, and made the task of the newly appointed writer difficult, not least because the formulations of the compagnons’ themselves was quite far from the guidelines provided by UNESCO for applications to the Representative List.

The perspective chosen to guide the writing of the dossier focused now on the notion of transmission that crossed all compagnon practices from the Tour de France to initiation rites. The compagnons also put this notion at the core of most of their legends, autobiographies, and songs. The title of the dossier submitted reflects this dimension: “Compagnonnage, network for on-the-job transmission of knowledge and identities.” To strengthen the dossier, research was commissioned to formulate the
role of the act of transmission into the heritage concept (Adell and Pourcher 2011). Two meetings were held in 2009 with the Mission Ethnologie at the Ministry of Culture to discuss the first version of the dossier that had been submitted in February 2009. In the process, I discovered that the contents of the dossier were at my discretion: Very little had been changed of my original wording. The main part of these meetings focused on how the “community consent” could be expressed beyond the participation of some representatives at the meetings. Thus, in addition to the representatives’ speeches presented in writing and through videos, questionnaires were sent to all community members asking for their views on ICH and on the current dossier. Several hundred responses were collected, indicating a significant mobilization that the Mission Ethnologie and I thought would be crucial to the success of the application.

4.2 Being Registered on the Representative List

In November 2010, at the fifth meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of ICH held in Nairobi, the “Compagnonnage, network for on-the-job transmission of knowledge and identities,” file 0441, was registered on the ICH Representative List. The representatives of the Ministry informed me immediately since I was officially the “contact person” for the case. As soon as they were told, the compagnons broadcasted the information widely within their groups and their professional network.

Among the key elements for this success, the contribution of the general context, including the national framework, and the specific elements in the dossier of compagnonnage need to be distinguished. The very strong and systematic attention that has been paid to folk knowledge and skills in France since the early-1980s assisted in the constitution of the patrimoine ethnologique. Compagnonnage fits perfectly into the logic established by the Ministry of Culture. Moreover, the strength of the idea of community, supported by a special, shared idiom, local roots and specific customs, increases a group’s visibility and self-awareness in fields such as trades, as well as village life. This facilitates fulfilling UNESCO’s requirement for “community consent.”

Similarly, the interest for heritage place developed by the ICH Convention and the crystallization effect it provides to make gestures, values and ideas visible, could, in France, be based on heritage-making drafts that focused on the concept of place. Thus, the project of Lieux de mémoire (Places of memory), a three-volume book initiated in early-1980 by the historian Pierre Nora (1997a), resulted in the 1990s in the return of historical memory, and reduced place improperly to its topographic dimension, which has strengthened, according to P. Nora (1997b), the concern with celebration.

The experience of *Lieux de mémoire* has also contributed to the reading and implementation of the 2003 Convention. It allowed for the development of the idea of *moving places*, of non-rooted places; authenticity has ceased to be the fundamental criterion for the heritage value of these places; rather, it is the *sincerity* of those who recognize themselves in such places that permit the intense appreciation of heritage. This sincerity is expressed in actions, claims and feelings of belonging. It is these very emotional manifestations that individuals, groups or communities are encouraged to demonstrate according to the ICH Convention.

The success of *compagnonnage* as heritage in France can be linked to its ability to produce a *sincere place* by the practice of the *Tour de France*, the experience of mobility, and the need to do and undo steps according to job opportunities. *Compagnon* places, which may be displaced, abandoned and invented, cannot abide in the luxury of authenticity, and must find other ways to indicate the *compagnon* identity.

There are also the peculiarities of the *compagnon* organization that have made the dossier particularly attractive. *Compagnonnage* has been a priority of French cultural policy for ICH. Indeed, when *Mission Ethnologie* had to reduce, on UNESCO’s request, the number of dossiers to be submitted to the Representative List, the application of the *compagnonnage* was not even discussed. From the Ministry’s point of view, this dossier embodied well the new category of intangible heritage while ensuring continuity with the old categories of French heritage: From the age of historical monuments to the age of *patrimoine ethnologique*, *compagnonnage* was involved at all levels. The application emphasizes this aspect, reserving a paragraph in item 2 “Contribution to ensuring visibility and awareness, and to encouraging dialogue” to show that *compagnonnage* is a “structure representative of ICH.” Moreover, in an assessment made by the Ministry about the first French applications on the ICH lists, the *compagnonnage* dossier is among those quoted in full as an example (Hottin and Grenet 2011: 292–214).

The success did not happen without moments of tension, which had sometimes appeared more clearly at three levels: 1) within *compagnonnage* itself; 2) between the national logic (*compagnonnage* and Ministry together) and the UNESCO logic; and 3) between *compagnonnage* and the State. Firstly, within *compagnonnage*, the *compagnon* communities, the differences among whom had been smoothed over in the context of the application, immediately reactivated these differences at the time of registration. The temptation to find one’s own group more closely associated with the UNESCO label than the others was great. Thus, suspicions about any appropriation of the dossier arose, and a climate of reciprocal mistrust has developed between the communities, though there does not seem to be any bitterness.

UNESCO was concerned that the diverse ways of living and performing *compagnonnage* were, nonetheless, adhering to national law. During the pre-application review by the Secretariat of the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible

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6 The couple authenticity–sincerity, though diverted here, refers to the essential works of L. Trilling (1972).
Cultural Heritage, the Secretariat wished to draw the attention of the dossier’s writers to:

the definition of intangible cultural heritage in the Convention which states that only the intangible cultural heritage will be taken into consideration which is in accordance with the international system relating to human rights. In this sense, I [Cecile Duvelle, in charge of the Secretariat; N.A.] invite you to make clear that compagnonnage is in accordance with the various legal measures that prohibit discrimination in employment and training, including the Convention concerning Discrimination in respect of Employment and Occupation, adopted by the General Conference of the International Labour Organisation in 1958 (Convention 111). From my understanding, among the three networks of compagnonnage, there is only one that welcomes girls and this since 2000. Therefore, it seems to me important to demonstrate that compagnonnage is in accordance with the measures and the principles relating to human rights. (Letter of November 30, 2009)

The Ministry of Culture, the anthropologist and the compagnons themselves were surprised that the traditional elements, having an historical depth, should be in line with current legal issues. Such limits would be extremely problematic for several western and even more non-western traditions. It turned out that even though only AOCDTF admitted girls in the compagnonnage course, the other groups had begun for several years a discussion of this use which was apparently sufficient to the Secretariat to see “human rights” as respected.

After the official registration on the Representative List, a final focus of tensions surfaced between compagnonnage and the State. While compagnons were expecting a national celebration to mark their “promotion” to the list, nothing happened. “The gastronomic meal of the French” (registered on the ICH List at the same time”) enjoyed the limelight and state representatives spoke amply about it; only the local or craft-specialized papers relayed the compagnonnage registration. Some journeymen now struggle with regard to how the ICH registration may be used for advertising, on the one hand, and on the legal field, on the other. How may one use the UNESCO and ICH Convention logos? Will it be possible to use the UNESCO registration and dossier as means to confine the name compagnons to those who meet the dossier’s definition of compagnonnage? The ICH Convention can be read on many levels, but it would appear that the interpretation and appropriation of the ICH title by the communities concerned is the most important. It shows the actual reception on the part of groups or individuals who project onto the UNESCO listing their intentions and desires, that is to say, the affective part of a culture which is generally so difficult to grasp.

7 Cf. The contribution by Tornatore in this volume.
5 References


