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Bamako's Woodcarvers as Pariahs of Cultural Heritage: Between Marginalization and State Representation

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In this article, I propose to view the acts of production behind tourist art as indicators of adaptation strategies paramount to innovation and cultural reprocessing. From this perspective, I examine the principle of materiality associated with UNESCO selection criteria, including a spatial-temporal conception that rejects the contemporaneity between objects and their acts of production. The Malian state's "heritage foundation" excludes tourist art carvers on the basis of their economic survival strategies and marks of identity. In an opposite perspective, the principle of corporality includes a social perspective on cultural heritage in which the human body is viewed as a receptacle of the capital of "social relations of work," conveying a social aesthetic in which iconographic innovation is the outcome of economic precariousness and hierarchical relations.

The question is often raised, in the social sciences, of why the content of local cultural productions set up as cultural heritage by sovereign states all follow analogous selection processes and result in similar final products throughout the world, and by whom and on the basis of what criteria that "global hierarchy of values" is set (Schramm 2000; Herzfeld 2004). The debate around the World Heritage List of Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage has pointed up the contradictions inherent in the principle of classing cultures on the basis of the concepts of "outstanding value" and "uniqueness" (Nas 2002). Criticism focuses on the economic and national integration of political stakes as well as on the identity issues (regionalism, indigenosity, revivalism) to which these concepts are subjected in everyday life. This principle is based on a material conception of cultural heritage. After World War II, materiality came to be the main discriminant in heritagization processes. The destruction worked by the war led to the heritagization of *lieux de mémoire* and implied a vision of heritage in terms

of property and collective memory (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004).¹ Applied to what is known as movable cultural property, the materialist conception of heritage aimed at preserving marks of identity (Anico and Peralta 2009) and dealing with rights of ownership, restitution, theft of ethnographic and archaeological objects,² and the architectural and visual character of heritage advocated by ICOMOS and ICOM.³

The objectivation of cultural productions entailed by the material definition of heritage has taken the form of a soteriological approach (Stoczkowski 2009) in UNESCO policies, underlying the reification of human action, including the human body. Conversely, more empiricist stances consider the human body as both endowed with a capital of "social relations of work" (Jackson and Palmer-Jones 1999) and as an ontologically independent entity. Jackson and Palmer-Jones's definition is particularly enlightening, in that it characterizes the human body according to its relational strategies within the framework of production. It connotes the body as a vector and an actor of social change, but taking the individual approach as the point of departure. This approach indicates a rather functionalist vision of heritage, where the principle of conservation underlying the *raison d'être* of the concept of heritage is replaced by a principle of interaction, through a hierarchical shift from conservation to functionality, from preservation to change (Loulansky 2006). From this perspective, we are reminded of Jean-Pierre Warnier's praxeological interpretation, in which the sensory, emotional, and motor dimensions of the body are included to obtain a social and ontological representation of it (Warnier 2001), producing a comprehensive reflection on the relations among subjectivation, politics, and material culture (Bayart and Warnier 2004).

Taking this interrogation further, and in step with the theme of this special issue on the contingency of material and symbolic negotiation in relations between the center and the periphery, I propose to view cultural heritage as the outcome of acts of production by people engaged in physical work and developing strategies for economic survival. My analysis includes the effects of materiality on the process of heritagization, the relations between the latter and the soaring price of objects, and the conflict between carvers and political authorities over the portrayal of the Malian cultural heritage. I aim to show that Bamako's tourist art carvers are relegated to marginality because of the gap between the Malian state's material definition of cultural heritage and a social dimension interwoven with the physical acts of production in the context of an urban economy.⁴ More specifically, I will attempt to show that the conflict between the state's policy reifying the cultural heritage and the interactivity reigning in the day-to-day survival of carvers at the *Maison des Artisans* (see below) reveals the power relationship generated by the monopolistic position of the material definition of cultural heritage with respect to the corporeal definition of productive acts involved. My approach fits into the broader perspective of studies on inequality (Englund 2006; Herzfeld 2004; de Sousa Santos 2007) and on the stakes of access to visibility in the market economy (Ferguson 2006).

In the first part of the article, I analyze the effects of the visual nature of materiality and of the reification of the past on the concept of “tangible heritage,” as well as in the dynamics of the construction of Mali’s cultural heritage. I show that the latter is part of an economic and cultural negotiation, marked by the conditionality of the criteria determining selection as world heritage as set by the World Heritage Center,⁵ and by the influence of the international art market. I then go on to describe the carvers’ conflicts at various levels of the social scene, such as the workshops, the occupational associations at the *Maison des Artisans*, and the state. My view of the context in which Bamako sculptors produce their work as a “space of emergence” (de Sousa Santos 2002), of creation *in fieri*, aims at showing, finally, that the economic and political marginality of woodcarvers at the *Maison des Artisans* does not prevent them from being innovative. In fact, the structural contradiction stemming from the financial stress under which they work and from the discrepancy between their production and the global hierarchy of value on the international art market forces these people to develop strategies for both economic and iconographic adaptation.

The Art Market and Heritagization

Between 1960 and 1975, ethnographic and archaeological objects, usually called objects of art, were far from being primary representational elements for the Malian state, as indicated by the lack of an efficient inventory system and the many times the National Museum of Mali was moved. UNESCO’s engagement in a global project for inventorying cultural property resulted in the 1970 convention,⁶ marking a turn toward the gradual institutionalization of national cultural policies. The inventory of the National Museum collections, in 1975, the organization of Museum Days in 1976, the UNESCO project for inventorying Mali’s cultural property in 1981, just when a new national museum was being built, galvanized discussion on the issue of cultural property and its circulation on the international market. It was through the fight against clandestine archaeological digs searching for objects known as Djenne terracotta, in particular, that Malian cultural policies came to be institutionalized. While doing archaeological prospecting on the Djenne-Jeno site in 1977, Roderick McIntosh and Susan Keech uncovered traces of informal digs on ancient sites—a fact that had actually been known by scholars since the 1960s (Bedaux et al. 1978; Evrard 1977; McIntosh and Keech-McIntosh 1979, 1980).⁷

Dubbed masterpieces by the art market in the 1980s, the Djenne terracotta objects were awarded a commercial pedigree, partially due to their being dated as ranging from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries, and therefore covering the central period of the Malian empire (Panella 2004, in press). This historical packaging, along with commercial overestimation by the art market, supplied elements of heritagization to be intertwined with the national integration policy subsequent to the 1992 presidential elections

and the “social peace” policy implemented by the creation of a collective memory. This approach was intended to blunt the memory of violence of the March 1991 riots and the Tuareg rebellion, and to build a shared horizon, smoothly shifting from past to present (Rowlands 2005). No other sort of object has been able to replace the representational power conferred on Djenne terracotta by the international market and adopted by the Malian national state as the globalized showcase of its cultural heritage, combining its commercial pedigree and a reified past.

In the case of what are known as ethnographic objects, the art market has once again been in the forefront, catalyzing the construction of a heritage through circulation of Sudanese sculpture. Henry Hubert, Chief Administrator of the Colonies and President of Les Amis des Arts de l’AOF, was one of the first, in the 1920s, to promote the native arts (*arts indigènes*) of French Sudan. Many of the objects exhibited in Dakar in 1923 at the Art at School exhibit, organized by that society, were displayed at the International Decorative Arts Exhibit in Paris, in 1925,⁸ enriched by pieces displayed by collectors Paul Guillaume, Charles Vignier, and Ernest Brummer. The Vincennes Exhibition (1931) and the Dakar-Djibouti Mission (1931–1933) marked the onset of commodification of Sudanese sculpture, which turned them into “African art.” A great many of the objects from French Sudan, Dahomey, and the Ivory Coast exhibited in Vincennes were sold. Art merchant Charles Ratton, part of whose collections were displayed at the Permanent Museum of the Colonies and at the Ethnographic Exhibit of the French Colonies, acted as auctioneer at Trocadero for three of the six auctions held during the Vincennes Exhibit (Panella 2002: 88).

The synergy between the art market’s criteria and the collection policies of museums led to the increasingly systematic selection of objects by colonial officials. The concept of “art object,” applied to African sculpture, was reinforced in the 1950s through the expression *plastique africaine* ‘African modeling’, already in use in metropolitan France and employed in 1949 in the *Bulletin de l’IFAN* (the bulletin of the *Institut Fondamental d’Afrique Noire*) during an exhibit organized by the IFAN by Pierre Bardon. A second exhibit, Plastic Arts of West Africa, was set up in the Information Hall in Bamako. In 1950, the *Bulletin de l’IFAN* announced that the IFAN had acquired the Bédia collection, composed of 1611 pieces (masks, statuettes, weights for gold, etc.), which was put on exhibit. During the 1950s, the local IFAN centers were increasingly dynamic, and their collections were enlarged. In 1951, the Abidjan IFAN center organized a new exhibit, devoted to the “plastic arts and crafts of the Ivory Coast,” containing new ivory objects and masks. In 1952, the same center acquired 584 more pieces, along with 720 objects collected by Bohumil Théophile Holas in Khorogo. The turn of the 1950s marked the beginning of the art market in Bamako as well, while Sudanese merchants traveled to metropolitan France (Panella 2002: 114–115).

Colonial Heritage, Economic Dependency, and Innovation: The Maison des Artisans Soudanais in Bamako

The colonial administration viewed the development of a method for systematically collecting and classifying objects as a way of analyzing the trends in native craftwork and of assessing the impact of supporting projects for handcrafts. The Maison des Artisans Soudanais, generally known as the Artisanat, was inaugurated in Bamako in 1933.⁹ It first housed the craft fair held during Bamako's fiftieth anniversary celebration.¹⁰ A hub for dispatching objects to local fairs and subsequently to the home country's museums, the Maison des Artisans clearly shows how the European art market influenced colonial officials' taste for African sculpture.

The promotion of crafted products from the colonies in France through selected fairs and the development of tourism (Dulucq 2009) went hand in hand with the determination to "revive and renovate native art," especially sculpture (Letter from the *Ligue Coloniale Française* to the Governor of Upper Senegal-Niger,¹¹ The impression that the craftsmanship of Sudanese sculptors had degenerated was conveyed by Jean Le Gall, former professor at the School of Applied Arts in Paris and commissioned by the Governor of the AOF, Jules Brévié, to create a Sudanese Applied Arts Workshop, in his correspondence.¹² In a first report in 1932, Le Gall claimed that the colony's craftwork production was declining sharply, and that only the old sculptors still made high-quality objects, but even they admitted to have lost the skills they had learned from their fathers. In 1936, an anonymous official wrote that "the native soul is no longer, can no longer be, and will no longer be what it was [crossed out]: so it won't make any primitive Negro art for us nowadays; that's something we have to forget" (Panella 2002:99). The growing regimentation of the international art market from the 1970s came in the wake of the mythicizing of Africa, and therefore of African objects, begun by Marcel Griaule (Ciarcia 2001; Van Beek 2004).

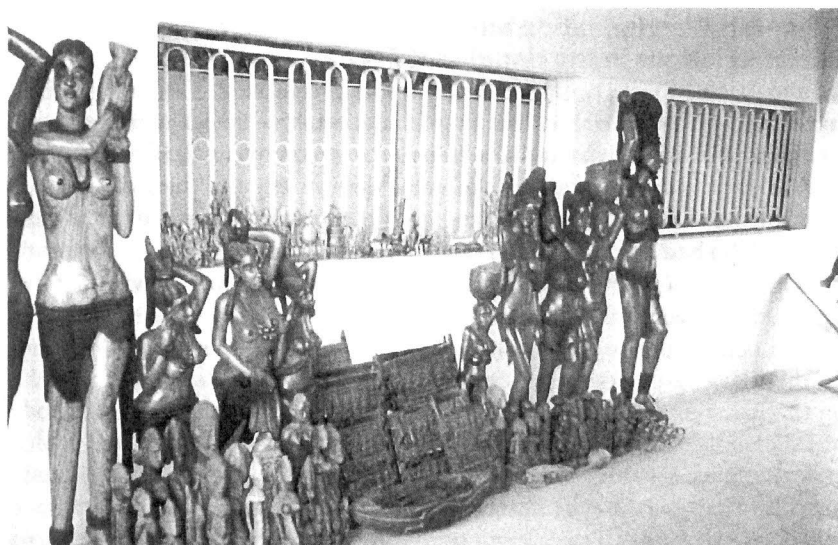
The woodcarvers at the Maison des Artisans seem to be a peripheral element, then, in the representation first of "Sudanese art" and later of Mali's cultural heritage. The marginalization generated by the tendency to exalt the exotic, inherited from colonialism, is compounded by economic marginalization, owing to the difficulty of their access to high-quality raw materials. The role of economic necessity in so-called arts and crafts (*artisanat d'art*) has received little attention by scholars interested in iconographic innovation, who mostly focus on the dynamics of cultural brokerage (Graburn 1976; Jules-Rosette 1984; Steiner 1994; Wa Kabwe-Segatti 2009), yet liquid assets are an unavoidable discriminant factor determining access to visibility (participation in international fairs, selling abroad, etc.), through purchasing first-choice wood, and therefore achieving high-quality production. Economic hardship has played a major role in the social organization of the trade. The case of carved ebony objects is a good example of the financial constraints tied to the production and sale of tourist art. The costliness of items in ebony stems from the time required to carve such hard wood.



The “remodeling” of a Bamana motherhood (Bobolibugu market, Bamako, 1996)

Ebony Tyi-Wara headpieces, for instance, are always small because prices for them (in 1997) started at 15,000 CFA francs (FCFA) for a 50-centimeter-high headpiece, the size most appreciated by tourists.¹³ Carvers making Tyi-Wara usually use kapok wood, or *bumu* (*Bombax costatum*), an inexpensive wood, also used for household items and toys.¹⁴ The cost of transportation is the ultimate barrier for carvers with low earnings. For example, the transportation of stylized figures known as skeletons is delicate and not very profitable. It took 550,000 FCFA, in 1997, to ship 300 kilograms of wares, plus an additional 15 to 20 percent for customs.

Financial handicaps have repercussions on the iconography of sculptures, as well as on the channels for selling them. To manage supply problems (little access to first-class wood) and deal with the shrinking market for finished objects, craftspeople rework and transform their unsold pieces. In 1996, a carver on the Bobolibugu market who was unable to purchase enough wood to make new pieces reworked his Bamana motherhood statuettes to turn them into Dogon motherhood statuettes. This shortcut



A view of the wealthy master carver Kabiné Doumbia's atelier (*Maison des Artisans*, Bamako, 1997)

enabled him to save time, so he could work on other orders and economize on the price of wood. Carvers at the Bobolibugu market constitute a telling example of "small-scale commercial production" with no accumulation of capital (Amselle and Le Bris 1980). In this type of production, we find the lowest strata of craftspeople, composed of apprentices and first-level carvers who were paid day rates ranging, in 1997, from 500 to 1000 FCFA. Often people in these occupational categories have no regular income, and their daily earnings go to household expenses and to finance their activity (Panella 2002). In addition to economic necessity, the hierarchical structure of woodcarving workshops sets up barriers, leaving individuals little leeway (Herzfeld 2004; Viti 2005). Since they can hardly accumulate any money, most carvers at the *Maison des Artisans* are obliged to spend most of their time on chain-line production for tourists, such as small masks known as *maraka* (*sogow*) 'marriage portraits' (man and woman standing side by side), *colons*, Dogon and Bamana-style masks and statuettes, and ebony *penseurs* 'thinkers' and *squelettes* 'skeletons'. This bread-and-butter production remains marginal with respect to both the so-called traditional sculpture fashioned by international auctions, and contemporary work, and integrated in the globalized art circuits at various levels, such as local and international fairs and international contemporary art exhibits (Enwezor and Okeke-Agulu, 2009).

Economic Discrimination and Access to Visibility: Power Relations in the Handicraft Arena

In the mid-1990s, the rehabilitation of Bamako's Maison des Artisans facilities generated a real fight for the stands, between merchants and carvers, and master carvers and apprentices. Whereas the intention of the Management Committee of the Maison des Artisans was to assign the stands to master carvers who had demonstrated their skills, most stands ultimately went to wealthy merchants.¹⁵ The criteria for awarding stands were viewed by carvers unable to accumulate capital¹⁶ as an attempt to exclude the least affluent for the benefit of the well-to-do, usually merchants.¹⁷ The high taxes and rental prices for workshops excluded carvers. These outcasts, or weak links on the Bamako handicraft scene, relegated to the peripheral neighborhoods of Djikoroni-Para and Banconi, often make copies or imitation aged copies of ancient pieces, which feed the traders with stands at the *artisanat*. Consequently, many of Bamako's carvers and small vendors set up their workplace in their home, and sell their work to the standkeepers at the *artisanat*, or to master carvers with connections to the city's antique dealers.

Relations between neighborhood carvers and merchants or master carvers are often paralyzed by the prerogatives of power and the management of the *artisanat* stands. According to Lamine Diallo, in 1997 the number of woodcarving stands rose from four to twelve, but that is still insufficient; designed for six artisans, some stands are used by ten to fifteen carvers.¹⁸ Shopkeepers who receive stands leave no room for carvers, who consider themselves more legitimate than the former and resent the unfair treatment. Carvers from Banconi and Djikoroni Para are convinced that if they stopped working, there would be nothing to sell at the *artisanat*—indicating that there are more salespeople than carvers, whereas the intention of the Management Committee was to reserve the stands for craftspeople, not merchants.

The repeated tension during stand assignment is evidenced in the relations between carvers and the administration. The former complain that they are underrepresented at the Ministry of Crafts and Tourism, in comparison with categories such as shoemakers, popular at local and metropolitan fairs since colonial times, and jewelers, backed by the National Office of Geology and Mines.¹⁹ Shoemakers and jewelers undeniably receive more attention from the administration. In 1997, jewelry and leather goods were chosen, along with textiles, to represent Mali's craftwork abroad.²⁰ Faced with economic hardship, carvers therefore give priority to immediate, low earnings over long-term investment through a structured cooperative network. Among the thirty-three artisans' associations in Bamako District, the carvers' association had only thirty members, and all were from the Bamako Maison des Artisans.²¹ Furthermore, the training courses given by the National Committee for the Promotion of Crafts Work (CNPA) were disdained by carvers, who usually preferred to relinquish them, rather than lose a few days' earnings, the outcome being that young apprentices learned next to nothing, and production was poorly finished.²²

In the mid-1990s, the Ministry of Crafts promised to extend loans to woodcarvers; however, only 52 percent of loans were reimbursed, so that carvers had trouble taking out bank loans thereafter. The ministry then made an attempt to find a more collaborative solution, organizing a meeting on self-management including three representatives of the administration and three artisans. The outcome was financing for the creation of a credit fund, backed by the associations. According to a Ministry of Crafts report dating back to 1995, 45 percent of the loans were not repaid. A second attempt was the funding of neighborhood credit fund: 15 million FCFA loaned, 2.5 million reimbursed. The ministry then suspended the loans, triggering immediate reactions from carvers. The priority was, and still is, to ensure high-quality work (well finished, good price/quality ratio) and to enable self-management.²³

To regulate businesses, the Malian government set up an Office of Business Formalities, charged with inspecting and filtering import–export activities. Only then did registration of the professional groups begin—which incidentally enabled many of the city’s antique dealers to register as brokers for import–export companies, making it easier for them to travel abroad. Artisans, and woodcarvers in particular, who had no professional group, felt marginalized by this arrangement; howsoever innovative, the new regulations were difficult to apply, especially with respect to carvers’ participation in international fairs. Artisans were often prevented from traveling by bureaucratic hindrances. Sometimes funds were handed out only late in the day, whereas they had planned to leave for the fair in the morning; also, the carvers were not always informed in time and therefore could not plan to participate in the fair.²⁴ Some carvers suspected the authorities of refusing to deliver visas out of fear that they would take advantage of their stay in Europe or the United States to establish themselves there.

Materiality, Corporeity, and Cultural Heritage: Epistemologies of Social Inequality

The factors behind the social and economic invisibility of woodcarvers from Bamako’s *Maison des Artisans* and the subsequent hierarchic relations are realities shared by craftworkers in widely varying contexts within the framework of the globalization of markets (Argenti 2002; Scrase 2003; Herzfeld 2004; Elyachar 2005; Solinas 2007). Michael Herzfeld, in his analysis of the relations between corporeity as everyday acts, objects, and representation in the making of cultural heritage by the Greek state, portrays the artisans of Rethymnon, Crete, as troublesome heirs of the national heritage. The Western collective imaginary and the Greek state’s cultural politics have turned industrial copies of Attic-era vases into a national cultural heritage, because they tend to be extremely evocative. Conversely, the handmade iron gates decorating houses in Rethymnon are viewed as anonymous, antitechnological handiwork. In other words, the state-operated selection is

based on the cultural clichés prevailing in European countries nostalgic for the rigidified, exportable values of *πόλις*, as opposed to the impolitic bodies of artisans, those living remains of ordinary physical masculinity (Herzfeld 2004). Whereas the monumentalization process is grounded in a superposition of object and objectivization, the live body of *homo faber* and its productive acts are not viewed as part of the material culture, and are therefore ostracized from heritagization spheres. The human body is considered an active subject only when it is decorporealized and reduced to the human right to save man's bodily existence—when he/she is physically threatened with disappearance, or has actually disappeared. This produces a “heritage,” when he loses his corporeal form, viewed as an obstacle to the reification of his productive acts, thus following the same reification process as for objects.

The dynamics presiding over the selection and exclusion of artisans, as described by Herzfeld, reflect the paradox facing Malian carvers, faced with the pressure of cultural heritage anchored in the collective imagination through the magic tricks of the art market and considered as a cultural gradient. Like the artisans of Rethymnon, today's Malian carvers may be seen as marginalized actors within systems for constructing a national cultural heritage, as well as in urbanization processes. The resulting economic and symbolic impoverishment is particularly evident in comparisons with categories (goldsmiths, weavers, shoemakers) that have always been more visible for the social and economic power networks (ministries, banks, associations) ever since the colonial period.²⁵

As values grow increasingly homogeneous, Bamako's woodcarvers are becoming the antiheroes of the national cultural heritage, because they are foreign both to the criteria of “outstanding value” and of “monumentalization of the past” (Herzfeld 2004) and to the ethno-chic conveyed by world music and ethnic cuisine. These people do not exist as creators/actors of cultural heritage, since their production is not considered of the sort that gives access, at the standardized international level, to the heritage category, be it what is known as African art or tribal art. Their production is neither a monumentalization of the past, as represented by traditional woodcarving, ancient terracotta statuettes, or Islamic architecture,²⁶ nor does it carry the globalized messages of contemporary Malian art as exemplified by the Mali Kow exhibit.²⁷ Not only does their production lack visibility, but their status lacks the charisma of sculptors/blacksmiths.²⁸ Being disconnected from the dynamics of transmission of the local skills connected with their status, which is to say the forge and command of the occult, gold, and ritual sculpture, these heritage-producing workers cannot be recycled into the UNESCO category of “living human treasures” either.²⁹

Like the Rethymnon artisans, the tourist art carvers of Bamako meet none of the criteria for eligibility to the globalized hierarchy of values: uniqueness, exceptionality, and international exportability. The reification process is hindered by the visibility of the actual work in the finished product. These carvers therefore remain marginalized actors, both for the systems that construct the national cultural heritage and for the urban

economy's wealth accumulation networks. Lack of consideration for their work as material culture excludes these workers from modernity's systems of representation.³⁰

The processes producing social inequality, entwined in the conflict between Mali's administration and the Maison des Artisans woodcarvers coalesce, then, around the split over management of the temporal dimension and its exploitation to obtain access to visibility. On the one hand, there is the representation of time involved in the reification process (monumentalization of the past, of objects, of people), and on the other hand the measurement of time through its breakdown into phases of production (social organization of the trade, family economy, innovation). These acceptations and uses of time are reflected in the types of objects with which they are connected. Monumentalization of the past requires the set iconology of the *found object*, whereas serial production and its potential for innovation take place in real time, in a cause-and-effect relationship between acts and production.

Conclusion

The case of Bamako's Maison des Artisans woodcarvers may be seen as an example of how acts of production are devalued by the reification process affecting human actions and relations (Kopytoff 1986; Pels, Heterington, and Vandenberghe 2002). In this article, I have attempted to show that the gap between the carvers' actual physical acts of production and the material conception of heritage is due to the creation of an exportable national Malian heritage through the processes of reification and fetishization, fashioned by the trade in ethnographic and archaeological objects from sub-Saharan Africa. Although Jean-Louis Luxen, former Secretary General of ICOMOS, alleges the distinction between "tangible heritage" and "intangible heritage" to be "specious" (Luxen 2003), the label of cultural property is still awarded on the basis of criteria clearly separating the material and ontological spheres. Thus, in spite of the trend, in the social sciences, to "deterritorialize" cultures (Appadurai 2001; Inda and Rosaldo 2002) and ascribe a social valence to objects (Mahon 2000; Geismar and Horst 2004; Glass 2004), the definition of a heritage still conveys the paradox by which societies are viewed through the classification, simultaneously with the decorporealization, of their productive acts.

In Mali, and in all African countries where the international art market has created an African art,³¹ the cultural gradient revealing the Western social imaginary is directly proportional to the commercial value of African objects and the evocative power of their pedigree. The social representation of Bamako's Maison des Artisans woodcarvers has been affected by the tremendous representational power of the mercantile aesthetic criteria governing the circulation of African art. These criteria are bolstered by a conception of space/time in which acts of production, relegated to the antimodern

physical acts of carvers, are denied any contemporaneity with the products/works themselves, inscribed in the sphere of representation. The processes by which Malian sculptors are selected or excluded thus reflect the paradox of artisans faced with the weight of a cultural heritage rooted in the collective imagination through the art market, whose evaluatory criteria are elevated to the rank of cultural values. Conversely, when productive acts performed within strategies for adjustment to change are viewed as a cultural heritage, there is no longer any need to define a scale of values through a material and immaterial dimension of societal productions. The survival strategies developed by these carvers do not exclude the esthetic dimension of cultural production; however, these strategies do refer to a social esthetic that derives its changing, innovative iconographic elements from the economic necessities transforming reproductive strategies into implements for iconographic innovation and social change.

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NOTES

1. The same categories are presently used by ICOMOS, an international organization inspired by the 1964 Venice Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (<http://www.international.icomos.org>).
2. The Hague Convention (1954), UNESCO Convention (1970), and Unidroit Convention (1995).
3. ICOM (International Council of Museums) is a nongovernmental organization connected with UNESCO.
4. The data discussed in this article were collected during one of my PhD fieldwork trips (December 1996–October 1997) (Panella 2002). Two preliminary versions of the present article were delivered at the colloquium “Prospettive di studi africanistici in Italia: Convegno in memoria di Bernardo Bernardi” (University of Rome I, La Sapienza, 6–8 March 2009) and at the third international AEGIS conference (Leipzig, 4–7 July 2009). I am grateful to Danielle de Lame for her remarks on the Leipzig communication. I published a partial version of this article in Italian. See C. Panella 2011.
5. The World Heritage Center is an international organization connected with UNESCO.
6. A convention on the measures to be taken to prohibit and prevent the illegal import, export, and transferral of ownership of cultural property.
7. The circulation of anthropomorphic terracotta figures among colonial government officials has been documented since the early 1940s (Panella 2004).
8. Archives Nationales du Mali (A.N.M) Numérique I, 1-Q-276. *Courrier de l'Administrateur en Chef*, A.G. n° 308, dated 20 June 1924.

9. The creation of a *Maison des Artisans Soudanais* was notified by a local decree on 21 September 1932, modified by the 1934 decree and completed by decision 1942 on 21 September 1934, as well as by decree 2184 on 25 September 1934.
10. A.N.M. Numérique. I, 1-G-124 (dossier '*Enseignement – Maison des Artisans*').
11. A.N.M., Numérique. I, 1-Q-278 (dossier '*Expositions diverses—Correspondances, 1907–1914*').
12. A.N.M., Numérique. 1-D-61 (dossier '*Artisanat, 1937*').
13. Lamine Konaté. Interview by author, 13 May 1997. Bamako, Mali.
14. In 1997, a medium-sized pair of Tyi-Wara (50–80 cm) cost from 12,000 to 15,000 FCFA; a 2-meter-high male-and-female couple cost 50,000 FCFA; a 3-meter-high couple went for 75,000 FCFA. The latter two kinds, from 2 to 3 meters high, are usually placed in hotel lobbies.
15. A master carver at the *Maison des Artisans*. Interview by the author, 2 July 1997. Bamako, Mali.
16. In 1996–1997, the daily income of an experienced apprentice did not exceed 1,000 FCFA.
17. Lamine Diallo and Mamadou Traoré. Interview by the author, January 1997. Diallo and Konaté were workshop supervisors in Dantomé I (a sector of Djikoroni Para). In 1997, they supervised thirty carvers, mostly apprentices, who worked on various orders, mostly from the city's antique dealers. The interview with these informants included a visit to four woodcarving workshops. Lamine Diallo had the largest shop in size (with twenty-five workers), the second largest had five workers, the third ten, and the fourth seven. They mostly carved ebony.
18. During the winter months, the scarcity of customers brings earnings down to 500,000–600,000 FCFA, minus expenses.
19. Lamine Diallo. Interview by the author, 29 May 1997. Bamako, Mali.
20. Mrs. Songoba (CNPA). Interview by the author, 2 September 1997. Bamako, Mali.
21. "First overall inventory by the National Federation of Malian Artisans (FNAM), October–December 1996" (brochure).
22. According to Kabiné Doumbia, an apprentice for seventeen years, there aren't any real carvers at the *Artisanat* nowadays: there are only apprentices—which is why he prefers to pay professionals. Karfala Diallo adds that carvers at the *Artisanat* all make the same objects; he claims they don't know one kind of wood from another.
23. This information comes from two CNPA employees (Bamako, September 2, 1997) and from a civil servant from the Ministry of Crafts (Bamako, August 11, 1997).
24. Mody Sissoko. Interview by the author, August 1997. Bamako, Mali.
25. For an analysis of the "ethnography of neoliberalism" in the social arena, and of competition as its main element, see Colloredo-Mansfeld 2002.
26. The term *African art*, as used here, refers to the so-called "traditional" sculpture that circulates in the international commodification networks (art galleries, museums, universities).
27. Mali Kow ('Things from Mali'), Pavillon Delouvrier, Parc de la Villette, Paris (from 7 November 2001 to 24 February 2002). Works by painter and plastic artist Abdoulaye Konaté, painter David Coulibaly, sculptor Amahiguere Dolo, and marionettist Yaya Coulibaly were exhibited at the time.
28. On African metallurgy and sculpture and their symbolism, see the authoritative writings of Eugenia Herbert (1993) and Patrick McNaughton (1988).
29. According to the UNESCO definition, "persons who possess to a very high degree the knowledge and skills required for performing or re-creating specific elements of the intangible cultural heritage" ("Guidelines for the Establishment of National 'Living Human Treasure,'" <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/doc/src/00031-EN.pdf>).

30. For an overview of the themes connected with the anthropology of modernity, see Kahn 2001; Englund and Leach 2000.
31. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Congo-Brazzaville, Angola, Gabon, Cameroon, the Ivory Coast and Nigeria, in particular.

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