

# **Charlemagne in the Andorran Public Space: Cultural Heritage, Commodification and the Maintenance of Social Order**

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Andorra is a landlocked microstate found on the French-Spanish border and has been an independent entity since at least the late thirteenth century, when a series of feudal treaties known as the *Pariatges d'Andorra* established the basis of the country that exists today. However, its claims to statehood long predate this period, and are frequently articulated through invocations of the 'father' of Andorra – Charlemagne. This article will consider how the Charlemagne foundation myth is articulated in twenty-first century Andorra. I will first provide the historical background to the study, by offering an account of Charlemagne's alleged passage through Andorra, and of the different versions of the origin story. The theoretical background to the study is then given, which focuses on how foundation myths were important in the nation-building enterprises of the nineteenth century, and how they have gone on to form part of intangible cultural heritage through their appearance in narratives of collective memory. Data will then be presented, in the form of modern representations of Charlemagne in the Andorran public space. This will raise issues of how recourse to the foundation myth privileges a certain sector of Andorran society – namely, the minority of Andorra's population who have roots in the country – and serves to render the heritage of the majority migrant population invisible. As such, the case of Charlemagne in Andorra will force us to think of how instances of intangible cultural heritage protection have important consequences for human rights and the representation of diversity.

## **Charlemagne in Andorra**

As is inevitable with oral tradition, subtly different interpretations of the Andorran origin story abound. Perhaps the most widely accepted version of the legend is the following. Charlemagne's forces responded to the plight of Christians in the north-eastern Iberian Peninsula (present-day Catalonia), who found themselves victims of increasing attacks from the Muslim powers that ruled most of what is now Spain and Portugal. Seven years after his first offensive south of the Pyrenees had resulted in crushing defeat (by the Basques at the 778 Battle of Roncesvaux Pass), Charlemagne led his troops on a second mission into Iberia with much greater success, liberating

Girona in 785, followed by Cerdanya and Urgell in 789.<sup>1</sup> On this expedition, Charlemagne was supposed to have come up against great resistance in the Pyrenean valley of Querol, near the present-day settlement of Porté-Puymorens in France. Visigothic tribes of the nearby Valira valley (modern Andorra) had long suffered at the hands of Moorish incursions, and so lent their support to Charlemagne's cause in the form of five thousand men, resulting in victory at a battle to have taken place near Puymorens around the year 790. This victory was to prove definitive, since no further Muslim threats were made to Andorran territory after 793.<sup>2</sup> Charlemagne was to proclaim that the locals' bravery would be rewarded, and in 805, his son Louis the Pious, acting on behalf of his father, granted Andorra a statute of independence in return for only a small tribute to the emperor.<sup>3</sup> This legendary ninth century charter was preserved for centuries, offering proof of the longevity of the Andorran claim to statehood; it was recently discovered that the document is in fact a twelfth century forgery.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, this demonstrates that the Charlemagne origin myth has been employed as a powerful political tool for nearly a millennium.

This leads us to the question of how the Charlemagne origin myth was operationalised over the course of a millennium. It is important to remember that for centuries, Andorra witnessed very little demographic change, retaining a tiny population of around four to five thousand inhabitants until the nineteenth century; there is relatively little primary source data available from this long period.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, given its small population and geographic isolation, Andorra was not exposed to the same political and ideological developments as other parts of Europe, resulting in little institutional change between the Middle Ages and the nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> However, in the eighteenth century, two key works of Andorran scholarship provide us with a unique view of the centrality of the Charlemagne myth to the Andorran consciousness up to that point. The *Manual Digest* (written in 1748 by Antoni Fiter i Rossell) is a collection of the history, government, practices and customs of Andorra, commissioned by the government at the time in order to provide a comprehensive account of Andorran sovereignty through the ages. Specific references to the Charlemagne origin story abound, and are found as early as the first chapter of the first book (*On the etymology and meaning of the name 'Andorra'*), which not only highlights that the Andorrans were called on to 'help [Charlemagne's troops] against the Moors' (*socorrerlos y asistirlos contra dels moros*), but goes so far as to state that Charlemagne was instrumental in giving the name 'Andorra' to the

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<sup>1</sup> Hugues Lafontaine, *Andorre, 10.000 ans d'histoire* (Bort-les-Orgues: Association La Méridienne du Monde Rural, 2014), 27.

<sup>2</sup> Christian Bourret, *Les Pyrénées Centrales du IX<sup>e</sup> au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Aspet: Pyrégraph, 1995), 44.

<sup>3</sup> Details of the legend largely taken from Josep M. Guilera, *Una història d'Andorra* (Tremp: Garsineu, 1993), 37-38. This version was in turn translated from Bernard Newman, *Round About Andorra* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1928).

<sup>4</sup> Joan Peruga, "Història dels Andorrans", *Andorra Aeterna* (Andorra: La Biblioteca Impossible, 2015), 222.

<sup>5</sup> Valentí Gual Vilà and Roser Puig Tàrrech, "La població andorrana a l'època moderna" (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 2005), 153, 176.

<sup>6</sup> Meritxell Mateu and François Luchaire, *La Principauté d'Andorre: hier et aujourd'hui* (Paris: Economica, 1999), 21, 27.

territory.<sup>7</sup> The *Politar Andorrà* (written in 1764 by Antoni Puig) is fundamentally an expanded and adapted version of the *Manual Digest*, and also forms part of the canon of early Andorran cultural output. Again, specific and repeated references are made to the origin myth, with the 805 agreement signed by Louis the Pious given as the moment of ‘the first establishment or state of Andorra’ (*lo primer establiment o estat de Andorra*).<sup>8</sup> It is clear therefore that, throughout a millennium of relative ideological isolation and demographic stagnation, the Charlemagne origin myth was central to the collective consciousness of the territory. It was not something revived along with the more recent overtures to national identity, given later.

There are, of course, different versions of the origin myth. For example, the location of the legendary battle has also been given as the Serra de l’Honor,<sup>9</sup> between present-day Andorra la Vella and the neighbouring town of La Massana (conveniently placing the decisive victory squarely within modern Andorran territory). Moreover, the maintenance of the legend has resulted in certain places acquiring historical significance, namely the house where Charlemagne was to have stayed (Pui d’Olivesa in Sant Julià de Lòria) and the mountain pass of Fontargent where he allegedly tethered his horses. Little can be said with any certainty of Charlemagne’s supposed time in Andorra, other than that he passed through the general region (maybe using Andorra as a route across the Pyrenees, though we have no hard evidence for this), and that the Muslim threat was eliminated as a result of his military intervention. Other than this, the details remain hazy. We cannot be sure of the exact location of the legendary battle that was to have secured Andorra’s autonomy (or even if it took place at all), and the supposed participation of five thousand men is inconsistent with the estimated population of Andorra in the eighth century (indeed, the entire population was only around five thousand in the early twentieth century!). Nevertheless, we cannot deny the power of the origin myth, which has survived over a thousand years of oral tradition and has made Charlemagne into one of the most iconic figures of Andorran history.

### **Foundation Myths, Collective Memory and Cultural Heritage**

The modern European nation is a relatively recent concept, with the period between the French Revolution and World War One bearing witness to rapid and extensive societal changes that affected the ways in which citizens conceptualised the nation(s) to which they belonged.<sup>10</sup> Of course, Andorra’s existence long predates this, but a need to affirm and lay claim to a sense of national distinctiveness emerged around this time,<sup>11</sup> in line with similar prevailing ideological currents elsewhere in Western Europe. In his famous lecture of 1882 *Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?*, Ernest Renan

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<sup>7</sup> Antoni Fiter i Rossell, *Manual Digest* (Andorra: Consell General del Principat d’Andorra, 2000 [1748]), 138, 140.

<sup>8</sup> Antoni Puig, *Politar Andorrà* (Andorra: Consell General del Principat d’Andorra, 2015 [1764]), 480.

<sup>9</sup> Josep Maria Vidal i Guitart, *Història d’Andorra* (Barcelona: Antalbe, 1984), 34.

<sup>10</sup> See Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

<sup>11</sup> For example, the early twentieth century saw the adoption of the Andorran national anthem (in 1921, making it the fourth oldest in the world). This will be discussed further in the upcoming analysis.

highlights the importance of selective historical memory in the creation of modern nations. Indeed, such collective memories do not even need to be truthful,<sup>12</sup> so long as they form part of a cohesive national narrative, constructed to aid the ‘imagining’ of a community (to borrow the concept from Benedict Anderson):<sup>13</sup>

L’oubli, et je dirai même l’erreur historique, sont un facteur essentiel de la création d’une nation... L’essence d’une nation est que tous les individus aient beaucoup de choses en commun, et aussi que tous aient oublié bien des choses.

[Forgetting, and even historical error, are essential factors in the creation of a nation... The essence of a nation is that all (its) individuals have a great many things in common, and also that they have all forgotten things.]<sup>14</sup>

Origin stories are thus integral to the nation-building enterprise, and myths are a prime means for ‘collectivities [to] establish and determine the foundations of their own being, their own systems of morality and values.’<sup>15</sup> National foundation myths can take myriad forms, variously drawing on narratives of territoriality, redemption and suffering, kinship and shared descent, historicity, and other discursive themes.<sup>16</sup> In Schöpflin’s taxonomy of foundation myths, the Charlemagne legend constitutes a ‘myth of military valour’, since the great leader was to have allegedly accorded the Andorrans their freedom as a reward for their bravery in battle. Such narratives serve the purpose of enhancing the credentials of the group at the expense of individual figures. In the tale, the Andorrans were awarded their independence due to the behaviour of the entire nation (the figure of 5,000 men, while improbable, can at least be interpreted as the whole male population at the time). Although this is indeed a legend about an individual figure – Charlemagne – he is not claimed *as* Andorran, and the honourable trait of bravery is attributed to the Andorran people as a whole. The Charlemagne foundation myth thus singles out the Andorran people as a collective, deserving of their own recognition and autonomy, and distinct from their neighbours for over 1200 years.

The persistence of the Charlemagne origin myth is contingent on processes of collective memory. While the veracity of the myth is contestable, this is of course unimportant since:

it is never the past itself that acts upon a present society, but *representations of past events* that are created, circulated and received within a specific cultural frame and

<sup>12</sup> See Arash Abizadeh “Historical Truth, National Myths and Liberal Democracy” “On the Coherence of Liberal Nationalism”, *Journal of Political Philosophy* 12/3 (2004): 291-313 for more on the infelicitous consequences of judging nationalist foundation myths on positivist, truth-based criteria.

<sup>13</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London / New York: Verso, 1991).

<sup>14</sup> From Ernest Renan, *Qu’est-ce qu’une nation* (lecture originally delivered to the Sorbonne, 11 March 1882). Resource produced by the Université de Québec à Chicoutimi, and accessible online at [http://classiques.ugac.ca/classiques/renan\\_ernest/qu\\_est\\_ce\\_une\\_nation/renan\\_quest\\_ce\\_une\\_nation.pdf](http://classiques.ugac.ca/classiques/renan_ernest/qu_est_ce_une_nation/renan_quest_ce_une_nation.pdf). Last consulted 22 November 2017. Translation author’s own.

<sup>15</sup> George Schöpflin, “The functions of myth and a taxonomy of myths”, *Myths and Nationhood*, eds. Geoffrey Hosking and George Schöpflin (New York: Routledge, 1997), 19.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 28ff.

political constellation... Collective memories are produced through mediated representations of the past that involve selecting, rearranging, re-describing and simplifying, as well as the deliberate, but also perhaps unintentional, inclusion and exclusion of information.<sup>17</sup>

Processes of collective memory are engaged in the creation of a sense of national and/or group identities, since ‘the past has been increasingly seen as a [...] resource for collective and competitive identity formation.’<sup>18</sup> Inextricably linked to the creation of collective memories is the notion of cultural heritage, which can be tangible or intangible in nature:

Heritage is a concept to which most people would assign a positive value. The preservation of material culture – objects of art and daily use, architecture, landscape form – and intangible culture – performances of dance, music, theatre, and ritual, as well as language and human memory – are generally regarded as a shared common good by which everyone benefits.<sup>19</sup>

All forms of heritage (be they tangible or intangible) are contingent on collective memory, since any socially indexical, semiotic meaning they may convey is derived from the viewer’s past experience and is only interpretable within an inherited cultural context. Yet manifestations of collective memory can also constitute a subgenre of intangible cultural heritage (supported by the Silverman and Fairchild Ruggles extract above). We shall see that myths and legends fall squarely within the category of instances of intangible cultural heritage, and as such, are able to benefit from the support of cultural heritage protection schemes, at both international and local levels. UNESCO, founded in 1945, is the primary specialised international agency responsible for safeguarding cultural heritage and allocates financial and symbolic resources to research and conservation efforts. Its 1972 *World Heritage Convention* represents an important advance in the protection of cultural heritage, by ‘linking together in a single document the concepts of nature conservation and the preservation of cultural properties.’<sup>20</sup> The 2003 *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* explicitly extended protection to ‘oral traditions... used to pass on knowledge, cultural and social values and collective memory’, citing myths and legends as examples of such practices.<sup>21</sup> On an Andorran level, the 2003 *Law of Andorran Cultural Heritage (Llei del patrimoni cultural d’Andorra)*,<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Aleida Assmann and Linda Shortt, eds. *Memory and Political Change* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 3-4.

<sup>18</sup> Aleida Assmann and Sebastian Conrad, eds. *Memory in a Global Age* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 4.

<sup>19</sup> Helaine Silverman and D. Fairchild Ruggles, eds. *Cultural Heritage and Human Rights* (New York: Springer, 2007), 3.

<sup>20</sup> UNESCO, *World Heritage Convention (1972)*, accessible online at <http://whc.unesco.org/en/convention/>. Last consulted 24 November 2017.

<sup>21</sup> UNESCO, *Intangible Cultural Heritage Domains*, 4. Accessible online at <https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/01857-EN.pdf>. Last consulted 24 November 2017.

<sup>22</sup> This legislature can be downloaded (in Catalan) from the *Butlletí Oficial del Principat d’Andorra* at <https://www.bopa.ad/bopa/015055/Pagines/2F8D6.aspx>. Last consulted 24 November 2017.

modified in 2014, adopts a broad-ranging approach to heritage, outlines how items are to be protected, and details the sanctions to be incurred as a result of infractions. In the 2003 Andorran Law, a two-tier system of support was created. Firstly, ‘items of cultural interest’ (*béns d’interès cultural*) are identified as the most crucial components of Andorran cultural heritage and are protected by individual governmental decrees. Secondly, ‘registered items’ (*béns inventariats*) are not protected by individual decrees, and can be tangible or intangible in nature.<sup>23</sup> State protection of intangible cultural heritage in Andorra (which covers fifteen *béns inventariats*), in accordance with the country’s ratification of the 2003 UNESCO Convention, consists of public education and promotion efforts, and the drawing up of regular reports charting the welfare of the instances in question.<sup>24</sup> It should be noted that the Charlemagne foundation myth is not, at the time of writing, recognised as an item of intangible cultural heritage by either UNESCO or the Andorran government. Nevertheless, as a prominent legend that greatly contributes to the Andorran sense of nationhood and collective memory, it fulfils the criteria put forth by scholars and heritage preservation agencies and can safely be considered an example of the intangible cultural heritage of Andorra.<sup>25</sup> Notions of cultural heritage, and how they intersect with human rights, will prove central to the upcoming discussion.

### Modern Representations of Charlemagne in Andorra

The Charlemagne origin myth persists in the Andorran national consciousness to this day and can be witnessed in a number of (relatively) contemporary manifestations. Firstly, the national anthem of Andorra is entitled ‘*El Gran Carlemany*’ (‘Great Charlemagne’), and its first stanza draws on the two legendary founding figures of the country, namely Charlemagne and Our Lady of Meritxell, Andorra’s patron saint:

El gran Carlemany, mon pare // Dels alarbs em deslliurà // I del cel vida em donà //  
De Meritxell, la gran Mare.

[Great Charlemagne, my father // From the Arabs, he liberated me // And from  
heaven, he gave me life // Of Meritxell, the great Mother.]

The lyrics were composed in the early twentieth century by Joan Benlloch, who as Bishop of Urgell, served as Co-Prince of Andorra from 1906 to 1919,<sup>26</sup> and is now a key figure in the development of Andorran nationalism in his own right. Secondly, and of more relevance to the upcoming analysis, is the presence of Charlemagne in the Andorran public space, particularly in the town of Escaldes-Engordany. Almost

<sup>23</sup> For an excellent overview of Andorran cultural heritage protection legislature, see Cristina Yáñez de Aldecoa, *Patrimoni Cultural d’Andorra* (Sant Julià de Lòria: Universitat d’Andorra, 2015).

<sup>24</sup> Yáñez de Aldecoa, *Patrimoni*, 51-52.

<sup>25</sup> Indeed, the fact that the Charlemagne myth is not included in the preservation lists compiled by the Andorran government and UNESCO, is likely due to the lack of a perceived need for protection (as opposed to the legend not constituting an example of intangible cultural heritage).

<sup>26</sup> Since 1278, Andorra has had two simultaneous Co-Princes acting as Heads of State in a diarchical arrangement. These are the Bishop of Urgell and the President of France (as successor to the title of Count of Foix).

the entire population of Andorra is distributed through the tiny country in a Y-shaped formation, along the motorways and roads that serve as the main arteries of communication and follow the valleys of the Valira river.



**Left: Map of Andorra with main arteries of communication** (© Wikimedia Commons, map by user Sting, translation by user Goldsztajn).

At the crux of the Y is the conurbation of Andorra la Vella (2016 population 22,615) and Escaldes-Engordany (2016 population 14,521), where half the nation resides. As the main Andorran road reaches the central

conurbation, it develops into a commercial thoroughfare, which goes by two different names, in honour of the two legendary ‘parents’ of the country. In Andorra la Vella, the road is called Avinguda Meritxell (*Meritxell Avenue*), and in Escaldes-Engordany, it is called Avinguda Carlemany (*Charlemagne Avenue*). The name of the road has resulted in local businesses adopting the Charlemagne brand.

**Right: Hotel Carlemany, with a sign for Termes Carlemany (Charlemagne thermal spa), Escaldes-Engordany (photo taken by author).**



The *Hotel Carlemany* is a luxury establishment with its own thermal spa, and construction began in 1948,<sup>27</sup> making it among the oldest buildings in Escaldes-Engordany. Indeed, the hotel itself appears on the ‘registered items’ (*béns inventariats*) list mentioned above, and is protected by the Andorran state as an example of tangible cultural heritage.

But perhaps even more notable is the *Illa Carlemany* (‘Charlemagne Block’) shopping centre. Opened in 2009, it has a surface area of 50,000 square metres, and

<sup>27</sup> For more information, visit <http://www.hotelcarlemany.com>. Last consulted 5 December 2017.

was designed by local architect Pere Aixàs to be a landmark in central Andorra.<sup>28</sup> The shopping centre's slogan translates to 'welcome to the centre of Andorra', and the *Illa Carlemany* complex has proven to be of great economic importance to a country dependent on tourism and tax-free shopping.



**Above: *Illa Carlemany* shopping centre, Escaldes-Engordany, with the slogan 'Benvinguts al centre d'Andorra' ('Welcome to the centre of Andorra') (photo taken by author).**

The presence of Charlemagne in the public space of twenty-first century Andorra invokes the long history of the country, thus reinforcing its status and credibility as a nation independent of its much larger neighbours. Charlemagne's name is writ large on the figurative and physical landscape of Escaldes-Engordany, and its use is proving a lucrative strategy. But what are the social consequences of the continued reliance on the Charlemagne myth as a trigger for collective national memory?

### **Discussion: Commodification and the Maintenance of Social Order**

The commodification of cultural heritage can be defined as 'the process through which heritage and cultural assets are gradually converted into a saleable product or experience as a consequence of actual or perceived demand.'<sup>29</sup> As a tourist destination

<sup>28</sup> For more information, visit <http://www.illa.ad>. Last consulted 5 December 2017.

<sup>29</sup> Bruce Prideaux "Commodifying Heritage" 2003, 4.



and tax haven, Andorra's economy is dependent on (duty-free) shopping, with tourism-related activities accounting for 80% of the country's GDP growth. The *Illa Carlemany* shopping centre is the largest in Andorra and is found on the thoroughfare that serves as the commercial hub of the country. Given its central importance to the Andorran economy, the branding of the shopping centre was key, and the invocation of Charlemagne allows visitors to make the connection between an internationally recognised historical figure and the culture of this tiny European microstate. Of course, the commodification of medieval legend in the twenty-first century is not limited to Charlemagne in Andorra, and we find a particularly striking analogue in the international commercialisation of the Arthurian myth.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the Charlemagne brand is more broadly indexical of 'the medieval' and it is perhaps no coincidence that the (somewhat garish) *Bar Excalibur* is also found on Avinguda Carlemany, complete with medieval waxworks and a sword buried in a large stone in the entrance. While the foundation myth clearly forms part of the intangible cultural heritage of Andorra, repeated invocations of the legend of Charlemagne in the public space arguably offer it a degree of tangibility. When intangible myths somehow acquire economic value through commodification, do they not adopt tangible traits? Moreover, as noted above, does not all tangible heritage become socially meaningful through reliance on cultural constructs that are inherently intangible in nature?<sup>31</sup> Indeed, cases like this serve to highlight the reductive nature of the tangible/intangible distinction due to its porosity. Processes of commodification can be applied to all forms of cultural heritage, be they tangible or intangible.

Cultural heritage (however in/tangible) is frequently employed as a device of social cohesion. In 2007, UNESCO's World Heritage Committee added '[the enhancement of] the role of communities in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention'<sup>32</sup> to its list of strategic objectives. In terms of financial support, during the period 2007-2013, the European Regional Development Fund allocated €3.2 billion to cultural heritage preservation programs from its €347 billion cohesion policy budget.<sup>33</sup> But who are the intended beneficiaries of this social cohesion? By promoting unity among (for example) Andorrans, who exactly is included in (or excluded from) the narrative? Andorra is a country that has seen rapid demographic growth since the middle of the twentieth century, with the population increasing from 6,176 in 1950 to 78,264 in 2016 (peaking at 85,015 in 2010).<sup>34</sup> This is overwhelmingly due to immigration, and recent statistics show that only 39.4% of the population are Andorran nationals, with 29.9% Spanish citizens, 5.5% French

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<sup>30</sup> For more on the commodification of the Arthurian legend, see Elizabeth S. Sklar "Marketing Arthur", 2002.

<sup>31</sup> For more on the limited usefulness of this distinction, see Laurajane Smith and Natsuko Akagawa, eds. *Intangible Heritage* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009).

<sup>32</sup> Accessible online at <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/2007/whc07-31com-24e.pdf>. Last consulted 30 November 2017, 193.

<sup>33</sup> European Commission, *Mapping of Cultural Heritage Actions in European Union Policies, Programmes and Activities* (updated August 2017), 13.

<sup>34</sup> Andorran state statistics, accessible online at <http://www.estadistica.ad/serveiestudis/web/index.asp>. Last consulted 30 November 2017.

citizens, 15.8% Portuguese citizens, and 9.5% from other countries.<sup>35</sup> Having lived for an extended period of time in Andorra, working with both members of the Portuguese migrant community and naturalised Andorrans, I can attest to the persistence of societal divisions between ‘Andorran Andorrans’ on one hand, and migrants (and their naturalised descendants) on the other.<sup>36</sup>

Of course, it could be claimed that Charlemagne serves as a symbol of European cohesion, as put forth by the ‘Charlemagne: A European Icon’ project. However, at its greatest extent in the early ninth century, the Carolingian Empire did not extend into the Iberian Peninsula far beyond than the borderlands running along the Pyrenees (including Andorra and surrounding areas). Almost all of what is now Spain, and the entirety of present-day Portugal, never fell under Charlemagne’s rule, governed instead either by the Muslim Emirate of Cordoba, or the Kingdom of Asturias (in the north-west corner of the Peninsula). Given Charlemagne’s relative lack of presence in Spain, and complete absence in Portugal, it can be argued that Charlemagne, though not absent from the literature of the Iberian peninsula,<sup>37</sup> does not constitute a significant element of the collective national memories of these countries, quite the reverse of what we have seen for Andorra. If, as I maintain, Andorran heritage protection (including the perpetuation and commercialisation of the Charlemagne origin myth) only serves to promote cohesion among ‘Andorran’ Andorrans, does this not increase the cultural and social distance with the (majority) migrant population? This raises the question of how cultural heritage intersects with issues of diversity and human rights. International legislature has long adopted a pluralist attitude to cultural expression, considering it a basic human right, as shown in article 27 of the UN’s 1966 *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*:

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language.<sup>38</sup>

However, when cultural diversity is encountered at the national level, the communal heritage of non-hegemonic groups is not accorded the necessary recognition, posing as it does a problem for the national narrative:

The process of identification of ‘national heritage’ did not necessarily involve negotiation and consent from all... members. In the past, dominant strands of society claimed ownership of the national heritage. The elite determined which elements of

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<sup>35</sup> Andorran state statistics from 2013. Servei de Política Lingüística, *Coneixements i Usos Lingüístics de la Població d’Andorra: Situació Actual i Evolució (1995-2014)* (Andorra: Govern d’Andorra), 8.

<sup>36</sup> For further qualitative insights, consult Margarit and Monné (2010).

<sup>37</sup> See *Charlemagne and his Legend in Early Spanish Literature and Historiography*, ed. Matthew Bailey and Ryan D. Giles (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2016); this was the first volume to come out of the ‘Charlemagne: A European Icon’ project.

<sup>38</sup> United Nations, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966*, accessible online at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CCPR.aspx>. Last consulted 1 December 2017.

heritage were worthy of affirmation or preservation in the public space at the national level. Frequently, the more powerful groups ignored diversity in favour of a one-dimensional narrative.<sup>39</sup>

In short, the reproduction of national heritage symbols in public space (in our case, the modern invocations of the Charlemagne origin myth) serves to maintain the social order, with ‘Andorran’ Andorrans at the top, and the heritage of migrant workers accorded less representation. Assmann and Shortt remind us that processes of collective memory can be powerful agents of societal change,<sup>40</sup> although here we see quite the reverse, wherein such narratives serve the purpose of maintaining pre-existing order. Of course, this happens everywhere, not just in Andorra. Moreover, I am not advocating that ‘Andorran’ Andorran cultural heritage should not be preserved or celebrated, far from it. However, the demographic situation of Andorra brings certain imbalances into sharp relief: foreign nationals outnumber ‘Andorran’ Andorrans two to one, and yet their (predominantly Spanish and Portuguese) cultures are not always accorded the same importance in Andorran public life. The present case shows how the perpetuation of nationalist myths, and their placement in the public space, serves to reinforce hegemonic societal order.

## Conclusions

In summary, the Charlemagne origin myth has been transformed, through processes of cultural heritage commodification, into a lucrative brand in Andorra (particularly in Escaldes-Engordany). However, given the long-standing recourse to the figure of Charlemagne in narratives of collective memory, any attached benefits of social cohesion are limited to those with Andorran heritage. This is problematic when we consider that, although this sector of population is a demographic minority in Andorra, it occupies the highest socioeconomic strata. As such, the perpetuation of the Charlemagne myth can be seen as a means to maintain societal hegemony, in which ‘Andorran’ Andorrans are accorded more visibility than migrants, despite only making up a third of the country’s population. The preservation of cultural heritage is a sensitive business, and situations like that of Andorra, in which a large number of disenfranchised migrants exist alongside a smaller, socioeconomically dominant group of ‘locals’, provides new challenges. The intersection of heritage, diversity and rights cannot be overlooked, and the case of Andorra may require a pluralist approach to heritage preservation, in line with the diverse origins of the country’s population:

As heritage professionals we engage in seemingly innocuous heritage conservation projects but we need to be aware of the wider socio-political context and consider the likely impact of our work. We need to find ways – as practitioners, policy

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<sup>39</sup> William Logan, Michele Langfield and Máiréad Nic Craith “Intersecting concepts and practices”, *Cultural Diversity, Heritage and Human Rights*, eds. Michèle Langfield, William Logan and Máiréad Nic Craith (London / New York: Routledge, 2010), 12.

<sup>40</sup> Assmann and Shortt, “Memory and Political Change”, 4.

makers, researchers and educators – to learn to work within this new paradigm, to deal with the many disjunctures between conservation and human rights principles, and to engage more fully with the public whose cultural heritage we are seeking to conserve.<sup>41</sup>

Charlemagne is a continued presence in this landlocked microstate, hidden away in the Pyrenees. His myth is central to the collective historical memory of those with roots in this tiny country, allowing Andorra to maintain its claim to nationhood in the face of the two giants that bear down upon it, France and Spain. However, we have seen that the invocation of medieval legend is not without its potential problems, particularly in a rapidly changing society characterised by mobility and migration.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 18.

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