

More than a mountain: the contentious multiplicity of Tindaya (Fuerteventura, Canary Islands)

ISAAC MARRERO-GUILLAMÓN *Goldsmiths, University of London*

The mountain of Tindaya (Fuerteventura, Canary Islands) has been surrounded by controversy since the mid-1990s. It is, at once, a listed indigenous site, a protected natural environment, a mining resource, and the designated location of a monumental intervention by artist Eduardo Chillida, consisting in digging a grand cubic cave in its interior. This article conceptualizes Tindaya as a contentious multiplicity and analyses the mountain's competing enactments. The state's Tindaya is a 'partitioned' mountain, an entity split into different dimensions (cultural and natural; interior and exterior) that can be both legally protected and excavated. In contrast, activists have enacted a 'holistic' mountain, characterized by the inseparability of its multiple 'values' (archaeological, geological, environmental) and the need to protect it as a single whole. These two enactments constitute 'worlding' practices connected to opposing understandings of the relationship between heritage, nature, and the future. For the state, the mountain is an asset to be exploited, an opportunity to bring about prosperous futures fashioned after the spectacular projects of the metropolis. For the activists, Tindaya represents a unique opportunity to rethink the island's development model and to put indigenous heritage and environmental concerns at its centre. Tindaya's unresolved multiplicity is therefore political in the broadest sense: it is a reminder that reality can be otherwise.

'Do not touch Tindaya,' read the banner; 'the Monument already exists,' said the t-shirts. A dozen activists representing the Coordinadora Montaña Tindaya (Tindaya Mountain Coordinating Committee, henceforth Coordinadora) stood at the entrance of Fuerteventura's Government Building, about to make a statement. A few local journalists awaited, mics and cameras ready. It was Thursday morning, 23 March 2017. 'We are here today,' said Santos,¹ the Coordinadora's spokesperson, 'to announce the summit taking place this weekend, which we have called "Canary Islands for Tindaya" to underline the fact that the struggle for the mountain of Tindaya, like other recent environmental disputes, is a matter of concern for the whole archipelago'. Before outlining the activities organized as part of the summit – including talks, a festival, and a guided tour of the mountain – Santos announced that the five main environmental NGOs in Spain (Friends of the Earth, Ecologistas en Acción, Greenpeace, SEO Birdlife,

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and WWF) had signed a 'Manifesto for Tindaya', copies of which were being handed out. The text explained that the mountain was a listed site due to its extraordinary indigenous engravings, its geological singularity, and its fauna and flora. Multiple legal designations had already established this in the 1980s. And yet, for over twenty-five years, Tindaya's 'environmental and cultural value has degraded while no steps have been taken to guarantee its protection, recognition and dissemination'. Instead, the government had pursued the construction of artist Eduardo Chillida's *Monument to Tolerance* – a huge cubic cave to be bored into the mountain. The signatories demanded the abandonment of a project that 'would constitute an attack against Fuerteventura's most emblematic natural and cultural space' and that was clearly 'incompatible' with the mountain's protected status.

Two days later, around 11 a.m. on Saturday, over a hundred activists and supporters from across the archipelago slowly made their way into the Centro Polivalente del Charco, a public facility in Fuerteventura's capital, Puerto del Rosario. They were greeted by members of the Coordinadora wearing their trademark t-shirts, relieved to see their efforts over the previous months rewarded by a good turnout. Santos was once again tasked with giving a welcome speech. In it he argued that it was critical to keep up the pressure against the Monument; despite the Coordinadora's partial victories in court over the years, there were no signs of the proposed Monument being scrapped – indeed, a public-private Foundation had recently been created to manage the project. The struggle for Tindaya, he said, was relevant for activists throughout the archipelago because it effectively synthesized the key issues they all faced: the regional state's 'disregard' for the islands' environment and indigenous heritage; their 'obsession' with tourism development; and their systematic 'betrayal' of the common good for the benefit of a few. He then gave the floor to a panel of experts, who spoke at length about different facets of the controversy. Later that day, a paella meal, an open assembly, and a music festival provided opportunities for more informal exchanges between the participants.

The summit was meant to culminate with a visit to Tindaya's archaeological site on Sunday morning. The organizers thought of it as a sort of sensory counterpoint to the talks of the first day, as an opportunity to directly experience the mountain and its indigenous engravings. To everyone's disappointment, however, the tour ended up being limited to the mountain's base and surroundings (see Fig. 1). Despite the Coordinadora's negotiations, the Department of Culture and Heritage didn't authorize them to climb to the top, where the engravings are located – the reason being a 'temporary' restriction on public access to the mountain introduced in 2007 on the grounds of its preservation. During the open assembly on Saturday, activists had debated whether to climb anyway, as an act of defiance and reclamation. In the end, they decided against it; tactically and morally, activists thought it was important to 'respect the law' – the very thing they demanded of the government.

The summit was the biggest event the Coordinadora had organized in quite some time. It responded to the perceived need to scale up the conflict and show an image of inter-island solidarity at a time when it looked as if the state was getting ready to relaunch its flagship project for Fuerteventura once again. This was the latest stage in a long controversy that has its roots in the 1980s, when Tindaya was doubly listed on cultural and natural grounds. During the same period, however, the state granted several mining licences for the extraction of the mountain's rock (called trachyte), which was commercialized as an ornamental building material. In other words, Tindaya



Figure 1. The mountain of Tindaya. (Photo by the author.)

was both legally protected *and* exploited. Eduardo Chillida's proposed Monument was presented in 1995 as the state's solution to this duality: it would honour the mining rights by redirecting the quarrying towards the interior of the mountain, thereby 'protecting' the engravings and the environment from 'indiscriminate' mining. The proposal galvanized a small but determined group of activists who formed the Coordinadora and led a relentless campaign against the Monument and for the 'full protection' of the mountain, its environment, and its indigenous heritage. In contrast to the prosperous futures the state attached to the construction of Chillida's monumental cave, activists saw in the latter a 'symptom' of the authorities' slavish attachment to the dogma of tourism development and its utter disregard for pre-Hispanic heritage. Twenty-five years later, the stakes of the controversy remained essentially the same. For the state, Chillida's Monument still represented the possibility of a 'turning point' for Fuerteventura; for the activists, it stood as Tindaya's biggest threat.

I conducted fieldwork in and around Tindaya between 2016 and 2018.² I was drawn to the controversy for academic and personal reasons: it spoke to my interest in art and activism, and it was also an opportunity to return to a place that was at once alien and intimate. I was born and raised in the Canary Islands, and throughout the 1980s and 1990s my family spent most summer holidays in Fuerteventura. Fuerteventura already was a popular tourist destination then, but our recurring visits took place at the cusp of the island's accelerated transformation into a major tourist hub. Between 1995 and 2016, the number of hotel and apartment beds increased tenfold (up to 62,000) and total annual visits grew from 675,000 to over 3.4 million (González, Sobral, Hernández, Armengol & Armengol 2012). In the same period, the island's population more than doubled (from 42,000 inhabitants to 107,000). The place I 'returned' to as an ethnographer was no longer the place I once knew: it had been hit twice, first by the 'urbanizing tsunami' (Fernández Durán 2006), then by the 2008 crisis. Abandoned developments, billboards announcing apartment complexes that never materialized, and perfectly paved streets without buildings now punctuated the

arid landscapes of the island – in syncopated alternation with new resorts, water parks, and housing developments.

My argument in this article is that Tindaya's controversy is best approached as an instance of competing, and possibly irreconcilable, *enactments* of the mountain. State institutions, engineers, activists, and others have engaged in a series of practices by which Tindaya has come to exist, simultaneously, as an economic resource, a protected natural environment, and an endangered indigenous site. I draw here from a body of literature originating in science and technology studies that conceptualizes entities as the result of heterogeneous processes involving expertise, materiality, technical arrangements, legal devices, power, and so on (Law 2004; Mol 2002). In other words, entities (such as a mountain) 'do not exist prior to or independently of the practices that revolve around them' (Li 2015: 21); they are rather a performative effect of these practices. Admittedly, the argument is hardly new in anthropology; similar ideas regarding the co-constitution of social practices and material things have circulated at least since the 1920s (Abram & Lien 2011). And yet the hegemony of a social constructivist stance – based on the existence of two distinct and independent realms, a world 'out there' and the representations humans construct of it – is such that a focus on enactment and performativity still carries with it the possibility of original insight (Nustad 2011). In the specific case of Tindaya, analysing the controversy through the concept of enactment offers a viewpoint that is neither the state's nor the activists'. Contrary to both of them, I do not take for granted the existence of a single, external mountain. Instead, I conceptualize Tindaya as a contentious multiplicity resulting from the legal devices and quarrying technologies that turned it into a mining resource; the archaeological research that constructed it as a sacred mountain; the test drillings and geotechnical studies that rendered it 'sufficiently stable' for Eduardo Chillida's monumental cave; the legislative power of the state that declared it a Natural Monument; and the work of activists that turned it into a paradigm of the struggle against the destruction of indigenous heritage. As Annemarie Mol argues, an important corollary of the focus on enactment is that the entity in question, which could otherwise be conceived of as singular, may instead 'appear to be more than one' (2002: vii). Crucially, she argues, drawing from Marilyn Strathern, this multiplicity does not entail a fragmentation into many entities; rather, 'multiple' here refers to the space between the one and the many. Paraphrasing Mol, we may say that there is more than one Tindaya, but less than many.

Arguably, asserting a mountain's multiple existence has limited anthropological interest in and of itself. My aim is to tease out the political implications of Tindaya's multiplicity, to consider what it means for the practice and theorization of activism and politics at large. My approach is indebted to Fabiana Li's (2015) work on the conflict surrounding Cerro Quilish in the Peruvian Andes; her research shows how the mountain was simultaneously enacted as a mineral deposit, an aquifer, and an *Apu* or animate being, and how this multiplicity was central to the creation of powerful activist alliances capable of interrupting the construction of a mine. I am inspired, too, by Marisol de la Cadena's (2010) analysis of Ausangate, also in the Andes, a mountain that indigenous activists successfully brought into the public sphere as a sentient 'earth-being' demanding attention and respect – an irruption that disrupted 'politics as usual' and the expectation of unimpeded access to the environment. The context of these studies is hardly comparable to Tindaya's; not least because, as the next section explains, there is no contemporary indigenous population in the Canary Islands. I cite them

because they analyse how these mountains' multiplicity was achieved and sustained through activist practices and legal devices (as opposed to being an intrinsic property) and how their multiple enactments triggered a reconfiguration of the political. Similarly, this article unpacks how Tindaya has been differently performed (as mining resource, heritage site, or monument), and explores how these enactments relate to diverging political imaginaries involving distinct notions of heritage, nature, and development. I expand on the conceptual implications of this in the conclusion, where I situate my work in relation to current debates on politics and heritage as 'worlding' practices (Blaser 2016; Harrison 2015).

The rest of the article is structured as follows: the first section introduces the colonial history of the Canary Islands, a necessary step in order to situate the debates around indigenous heritage that are central to the controversy. I then move on to examine the main two enactments of Tindaya: the *partitioned mountain* of the state (the sum of separate and independent parts: legal, cultural, economic, etc.) and the *holistic mountain* of the activists (a whole made of inseparable components, both natural and cultural). I show how in the context of the Canary Islands, a region caught between the promise of European modernity and an unresolved relation with its North African Amazigh history, Tindaya's contentious multiplicity represents a point of tension between divergent ideas of the possible, the desirable, and the otherwise.

Colonial heritages

The first chapter in the history of Spanish colonial policy did not begin with the much-suffering Americas, where Cortés, Balboa, Pizarro, and Weyler have held their revels of blood. The earliest victims of these most Christian conquests were the remarkable aboriginal race of the Canary Islands, which was so completely destroyed or assimilated by the Spaniards that not all the ingenuity of modern anthropological study has been able to solve the riddle of its origin nor to decide its ethnic relationships ... In the guise of Christianity they received slavery; for civilization, extermination; while their simple, strong, and wholesome life was superseded by the empty pomp and grovelling superstition of the invaders.

A.C. Cook, 'The aborigines of the Canary Islands' (1900: 451)

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the colonization of the Canary Islands is a foundational (if understudied) moment in the history of Western modernity. The archipelago – located 100 kilometres off the west coast of Africa, roughly at the same latitude as the Western Sahara-Morocco border – had been known since antiquity to Mediterranean civilizations, including Phoenicians, Greeks, Carthaginians, and Romans. Contact, however, seems to have been sporadic until the mid-fourteenth century, when Genovese, Aragonese, Majorcan, Portuguese, French, and Castilian explorers began more systematic incursions, mostly with the intention of capturing slaves (Adhikari 2017). Until then, the indigenous population – referred to collectively as *Guanches* and Fuerteventura's more often as *Mahos* – had lived in relative isolation, each island featuring distinct economic, political, and social models. Early raids were followed by a long and violent conquest sponsored, then led by the Crown of Castile (1402-96), which marked the beginning of the latter's religio-military expansion beyond the Mediterranean. Indeed, the Canary Islands became a laboratory for the colonization of the Caribbean: slavery, the sugar plantation economy, and forced religious conversion were tried first in the Canaries (Fernández-Armesto 1982; Phillips 1993; Tejera & Aznar 1992). The consequences of colonial rule for indigenous life were devastating. Not only were the islanders' social, economic, and religious practices

banned and replaced by the colonizers'; merely a century after the start of colonial operations, it is estimated that the archipelago's indigenous population had dropped from 70,000 to 10,000. By the end of the sixteenth century, Spanish authors already talked about the extinction of the *Guanches* and their irreversible intermingling with the newcomers (Stevens-Arroyo 1993).

Unlike the case of the Americas or Australia, the study of indigenous lifeworlds in the Canary Islands is therefore complicated by the bio-socio-cultural discontinuity, or rather rupture, produced by colonial rule – put simply, there are no living *Guanches* in the Canaries today, and there haven't been for a long while. Historiographical research has shown how they have been repeatedly re-imagined as a distant or relative other whose main function is the legitimation of colonial interests and the celebration of the modern, enlightened subject (Estévez 2014). The *Guanches* were conceptualized as noble savages from Atlantis in the eighteenth century, claimed as Cro-Magnon, therefore of Celtic ascendance, by French authors in the nineteenth century, as pure Arians by Nazi archaeologists in the 1930s, and as part of a single pre-Hispanic Iberian and North African community that Franco's regime reclaimed as its own between the 1940s and the 1970s (Farrujia 2014).

For the purposes of this article, an important aspect of the conquest was the colonizers' seemingly limited interest in making sense of indigenous lifeworlds, which translates into a very poor historical record. The colonial archive is, for the most part, made of texts written by officers who did not learn the indigenous languages. Those who did were involved in the evangelization of the local population and translated their practices into a Judaeo-Christian framework (Farrujia 2014). Strikingly, questions such as where the *Guanches* came from, how they had arrived on the islands given the apparent lack of sailing skills, or how to account for the variations in language and customs between the islands do not seem to have been widespread preoccupations among those directly involved in the colonial administration. Even more strikingly, these are questions that still have not been appropriately answered. Archaeological and anthropological research is limited and inconclusive, and little is known beyond the fact that the indigenous population was of Amazigh origin and arrived from Northern Africa around year zero (Fregel *et al.* 2019; Maca-Meyer, Villar, Pérez-Méndez, Cabrera de León & Flores 2004).

I spoke to several archaeologists directly involved in the Tindaya controversy, and a recurring theme in our conversations was precisely the lack of institutional support for the study and dissemination of indigenous heritage *in its own terms*, meaning as part of the Amazigh cultures of Northern Africa. José Farrujia, whose work I cited above, told me: 'There is a tendency to promote only the European, post-conquest legacy, which conforms to a notion of monumentality that speaks to UNESCO's canon; the indigenous heritage is in contrast systematically undervalued. Colonial-era churches and manor houses are very often restored and integrated in the archipelago's heritage circuits, whereas the numerous indigenous remains that have been identified (including cave paintings, engravings, settlements, and meeting places) rarely are. Farrujia's comments echo Laurajane Smith's well-known critique of 'authorized heritage discourse', of how it privileges monumentality, participates in grand narratives of nation building, and ultimately promotes 'a certain set of Western elite cultural values as being universally applicable' (2006: 11).

Arguably, the state's disregard for indigenous heritage in the Canary Islands is but the latest instance of a long history of violence against the *Guanches*, whose lifeworlds

didn't have a place within Spain's self-image as a Catholic empire, first, and as a modern European country, later on. In this context, concerned archaeologists have become the main spokespersons for the *Guanches*, the keepers of their afterlives, and the mediators between indigenous remains, state institutions and the contemporary inhabitants of the archipelago. Some have also become activists, committed to challenging official heritage policy and making public *another* heritage. The idea of 'heritage from below' or 'activist heritage' is relevant here. Chiara de Cesari's work in Palestine shows how certain NGOs have reclaimed heritage (and art) as a platform to creatively summon the past in the task of creating 'a new consciousness for the citizens of the state-to-come' (2010: 629). Similarly, Nathalie Peutz's (2018) ethnography of heritage politics in Yemen's Soqoṭra Archipelago analyses how cultural heritage – specifically Soqoṭran poetry – became a vehicle for exercising 'sovereign anticipation': that is, for cultivating the prospect of political self-determination. Both of these works show how heritage can become a resource for emancipatory politics, understood not simply as the preservation of subaltern cultural expressions, but as a prefigurative, future-orientated activity – what Rodney Harrison calls a worlding practice aimed at 'assembling and caring for the future' (2015: 34). The Tindaya controversy shows, too, how indigenous heritage and environmentalism can be connected through activism and used to challenge the state's understanding of desirable futures. As I elaborate on below, however, this is an undertaking riddled with great difficulties, from the complications associated with speaking on behalf of an absent people to limited public support for the cause.

The partitioned mountain

By all accounts, up until 1979, Tindaya was a mountain among many others. It may have featured in folk tales, there may have been rumours about human remains, and it may have attracted some artisanal quarrying, but so did other mountains in the area. At that point in time, Tindaya was mostly a site for herding goats, hunting partridges, and growing cereals. In other words, it was fully integrated into the economic and leisurely life of the arid plains of Northern Fuerteventura. When I asked Ezequiel – born in the village of Tindaya in the early 1930s and a goat herder from the age of 12 – whether he remembered seeing the mountain's indigenous engravings as a young man, he said of course he did, but added that he didn't make much of them, or of the bones that could also be found near the mountaintop. He told me that goat herders left their own imprints on the mountain rock with their makeshift metal climbing sticks, and that they dismissed the idea that the 'marks' they saw on the rocks could be 'from the *Guanches*'. Echoing the words of other elders I spoke to, Ezequiel said: 'I can only tell you about what I saw; and it didn't have any value'. Fermín, a keen partridge hunter from a nearby village, told me that as a young man he 'didn't pay any attention' to the engravings, despite having enjoyed many a sunset alongside them.

Things began changing once news of the 'extraordinary discovery' of 'aboriginal rock art' in Tindaya started to circulate (Machín 1979). Pedro Carreño, a local amateur archaeologist, then aged 21, reported finding a great number of foot-shaped engravings, triggering the interest of the Department of Culture and professional archaeologists. The importance of the site was soon corroborated: it was, in fact, the largest known concentration of engravings of the kind in the Canaries, and hence a key opportunity for the study of indigenous culture (see Fig. 2). Following preliminary archaeological research (Hernández & Martín 1980), a strong consensus emerged around the need to interpret the engravings in relation to comparative archaeological and ethnographic



Figure 2. Tindaya's foot-shaped indigenous engravings. (Photo by the author.)

evidence in the Sahara Desert and Northern Africa, where similar engravings were well documented, and the religious significance of the mountain, as indicated by the engravings themselves:

Without a doubt, Tindaya's summit is a place we may call sacred, or at least very special: it is isolated, of difficult access, it overlooks a large area, etc.; all of its topography gives it such character ... One has to specifically want to go to Tindaya, via a difficult route that leads nowhere else. The location is therefore not accidental; the engravings were done in the summit because that place was chosen for them (Castro 1987: 311-12).

The discovery of the engravings had two important effects. First, it prompted the process that would result in the listing of the mountain as a Historic-Artistic Monument in 1983 (or an Asset of Cultural Interest under the new legislation), the highest level of protection available. Second, archaeologists, journalists, and environmental activists started to disseminate a new Tindaya, very different to that known to locals and used by hunters and herders. It was 'the sacred mountain of Tindaya', and over the course of the following decade, it became slowly 'stabilized' (Law 2004) until it was routinely referred to as such in everyday speech, by the media, and even in official documents. The reinvention of Tindaya as a sacred mountain was certainly instrumental in instituting a new sense of its 'value', and would go on to become part of the activist repertoire against the state's plans. The sacredness of land, studies have shown, can be a powerful political tool. In *Unearthing conflict*, for instance, Li (2015) explains how the idea of Cerro Quilish's sacredness, with its Christian resonances, emerged over the course of the controversy as a response to the threat of mining and played a key role in translating the Andean notion of an *Apu* to a wider audience. Alf Hornborg's (2005) study of the struggle against a superquarry in Kelly's Mountain (Cape Breton, Nova Scotia) shows how the Mi'kmaq were able to mobilize a renewed sense of the mountain's sacredness against its designation as a granite resource. As Tindaya and many other examples show, however, when it comes to developmental conflicts, sacredness is hardly sacred.

While Tindaya's historical and cultural significance was taking shape, the enactment of a rather different mountain was simultaneously being facilitated by the Ministry of



Figure 3. The extraction and commodification of trachyte: (left) one of Tindaya's quarries, and (right) CajaCanarias (now CaixaBank) headquarters in Tenerife. (Photos by the author.)

Energy and Industry.³ In February 1983, a thirty-year mining licence was granted to Cabo Verde Inc., allowing the company, based in the island of Gran Canaria, to extract its rock for ornamental purposes. There and then, the mountain's trachyte became a natural resource, or, more precisely, part of a 'resource environment': that is, 'the complex arrangements of physical stuff, extractive infrastructures, calculative devices, discourses of the market and development, the nation and the corporation, everyday practices, and so on, that allow ... substances to exist as resources' (Weszkalnys & Richardson 2014: 7). The mining licence produced a significant shift in the mountain's existence: whilst it already supported small-scale economic activities such as goat herding, quarrying required new forms of imported expertise and labour,⁴ and more importantly transformed its rock into a commodity. Soon after, it would start to feature in institutional buildings across the archipelago, such as Fuerteventura's Airport and Courthouse or the CajaCanarias Bank headquarters in Tenerife (see Fig. 3).

The enactment of the mountain as a mining resource therefore coincided with the listing of the mountain as a cultural asset. A report was commissioned to explore this duality, and it concluded that these two seemingly opposed processes were in fact compatible: 'In reality, the rock extraction area does not affect the engravings, as long as the archaeological site is respected according to the legislation' (Tejera 1983). It could be argued – as activists have – that a great deal of incompetence was required to create a situation in which one governmental body could enact the mountain as a mining resource while another could protect it as a Cultural Asset. Although this remains a possibility, the assumption that the law should be a consistent whole is likely unfounded. As Melinda Benson argues, the law 'is not a single, coherent enactment but is instead a mosaic of overlapping and often contradictory authorities' (2012: 1445). Benson makes the case in her study of how Mount Taylor in New Mexico has a dual legal entity as a uranium deposit available for mining and a sacred Native American space entitled to protection. Her argument, to which I subscribe, is that the law is not a discursive operation on an external geographical domain, but a 'world-making' enterprise that performs and materializes space – in this case, two competing Mount Taylors attached to two completely different relationships to the land.

Tindaya's legal duality may also be analysed as a corollary of the state's own design. As Bruno Latour (1993) has argued, the modern Western state is founded upon the principle of 'purification': the distribution of reality into separate domains (e.g. nature, culture, economy, energy, education, security, health) featuring their own legal regimes

and management structures. In the case of Tindaya, it was precisely the existence of independent departments for energy, heritage, and the environment, each legislating the mountain in parallel, that made it possible to simultaneously protect it and exploit it *within* the law. More specifically, the state's actions were based on a double separation: between the mountain's top (where the engravings are found) and its slope (where the quarries are located), and between the mountain as a cultural site and a natural resource (subject to completely separate legislative frameworks). I call this legal-conceptual mechanism the *logic of partition*.

Far from an isolated occurrence, the logic of partition has continued to underpin the state's actions throughout the controversy. In 1993, for instance, a new ten-year licence for rock extraction was granted to a second mining company, Cantería Arucas Ltd, despite the fact that, by that point, the mountain had been declared 'of national interest' by the 1987 Natural Spaces Act (*Ley de Espacios Naturales 12/1987*). The Act provided a general framework for the protection of the archipelago's 'natural environment, its ecosystems and volcanic landscapes', but depended on the islands' governments to develop the 'necessary measures' for each site. In the case of Tindaya, these measures, discussed below, wouldn't be developed until 1997, under a new legislative framework (with the mountain now designated a 'Natural Monument') and at a time when the controversy over the mountain had reached new highs.

Paradoxically, it was the government's attempt to resolve Tindaya's dual protected/exploited status that fuelled the controversy. The legal responsibilities associated with the protection of the mountain as an Asset of Cultural Interest led to the commissioning of a Special Protection Plan (SPP) in 1993. The SPP was meant to find a viable strategy for closing the quarries, protecting the engravings, and designing a conservation plan. The team that won the contract, PRAC (Spanish acronym for Environmental Restoration Projects in the Canary Islands), developed an 'integrated' approach built around the idea of a 'Cultural Resort' that would 'interpret' the mountain's multiple 'values': ethnographic, archaeological, cultural, historical, geological, environmental, and so on. In order to achieve this vision, it was paramount to stop the quarrying activity. PRAC proposed that the mining rights be compulsory purchased, but the government rejected the plan on account of its cost. The team then developed the idea of an *artistic* intervention in the quarries that would honour the mining companies' existing rights *and* produce aesthetically pleasing results. In other words, the strategy was to reimagine the quarries in the language of art, in order to end quarrying 'once and for all'. In their pursuit of an integrated strategy which attended to the mountain's multiplicity, PRAC ended up deepening the logic of partition, by making the quarrying activity finance the conservation of natural and cultural heritage.

I have described elsewhere the serendipitous circumstances that led to Eduardo Chillida's involvement in Tindaya (Marrero-Guillamón 2020). Suffice it to say here that he was one of the country's most sought-after artists at the time, and that he responded positively to the invitation to intervene in Tindaya. Indeed, soon after he visited the mountain with his collaborator Fernández Ordóñez, they released the first sketches of their proposed *Monument to Tolerance* – a huge 50 × 50 × 50 metre cubic cave inside the mountain, connected to the exterior through two shafts and a tunnel (see Fig. 4). The project bypassed the existing quarries altogether and aimed, in the words of the artist, at the 'soul' of the mountain. Government officials were very quick to celebrate the possibility of having 'a Chillida' (and not just *any* Chillida, but the culmination of his lifework!) and declared the 'project' – at that stage just a series of drawings – of regional



Figure 4. Casa Alta Museum, detail of multi-screen, 3-D simulation of Chillida's Monument. (Photo by the author.)

interest. Drawing from Joseba Zulaika's (1997) analysis of the politics surrounding the construction of the Guggenheim-Bilbao Museum, I would argue that politicians were 'seduced' by Chillida's project, 'lured' by the prospect of being associated with a work of great impact and visibility. Indeed, PRAC's SPP was shelved shortly after, and the government focused instead on the development and promotion of Chillida's Monument – a decision that brought with it new and major challenges.

An ad-hoc managing committee with members of the Departments of Culture, Tourism, Industry, Environment, and Heritage was formed to manage the project. This was a bureaucratic device capable of accessing previously nonexistent funds, as well as cutting through the state's own partitions – or at least of connecting its separate departments. It was this committee that came up with the financing strategy for the Monument: they bought out one of the mining companies (Cantería Arucas) and partnered with the other (Cabo Verde) for the construction of the Monument, at a cost of almost €6 million only in mining rights. This administrative procedure, including the partnership deal, was taken to court by activists and resulted in a corruption scandal that stalled Chillida's project between 1996 and 2000.

But the project's difficulties did not end there. The listing of the mountain as both an Asset of Cultural Interest and a Natural Monument, mentioned above, required that the state develop two separate technical documents specifying the corresponding protection and conservation measures. These documents were written over long periods, after Chillida's project had already been declared of regional interest. In both of them, the state made space – conceptually and legally – for the construction of Chillida's Monument as part of a rather *sui generis* conservation strategy, again based on deploying the logic of partition. The Conservation Norms, for instance, argued that the protection of the mountain's geology was not incompatible with the mining activity required to build Chillida's project, as long as the latter happened in the interior of the mountain. The list of authorized uses hence includes 'mining extractions in the interior of the Natural Monument, provided they constitute a defined subproduct in terms of

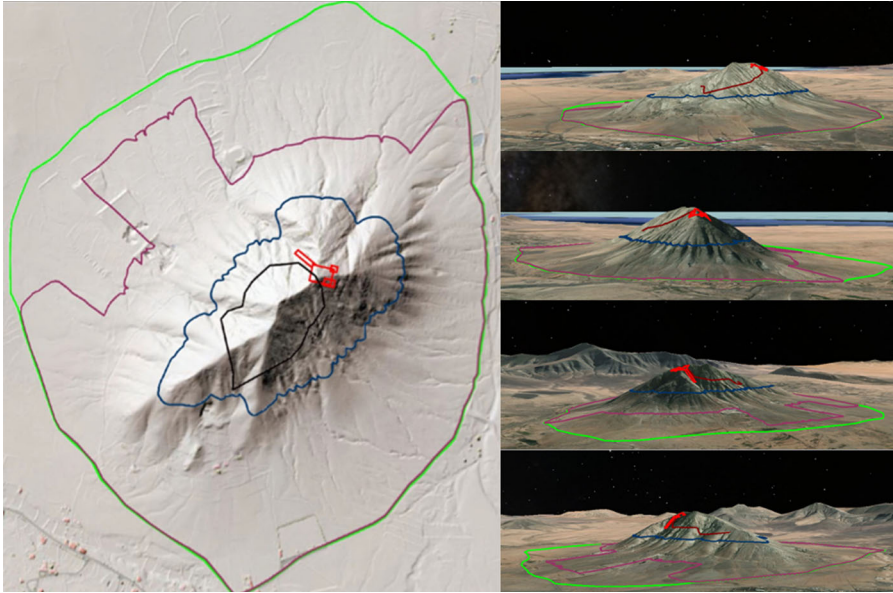


Figure 5. Map and 3-D rendering of Tindaya, showing the footprint of the Monument (in red) in relation to the different protection plans. (Photo courtesy of Ben Magec.)

the volume and type of excavation, and whose execution is part of the construction of a leisure facility for the protected area' (BOC 16-4-97, p. 4014). Similarly, the delimitation of the area under protection on cultural grounds (as an Asset of Cultural Interest) set a new precedent by limiting it to the immediate perimeter of the engravings, as opposed to extending it to the whole archaeological 'site', that is, the mountain. The document does not mention Chillida's project, although the boundary line twists and turns in a way that leaves the Monument's orifices just outside the protected area. Predictably, both the Conservation Norms and the delimitation of the archaeological site were taken to court by activists, the cases remain open, and are another reason why the Monument hasn't been built as of spring 2021.

The result of the concoction of legal processes described in this section is what I call the *partitioned mountain*: 'striated' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987) along cultural and natural lines, interior and exterior features, zones of heritage relevance and those available for further excavation (see Fig. 5). The state's Tindaya is the mirror image of the 'purifying' practice that defines modernity (Latour 1993), an expression of 'high modernist' faith in the mastery and optimization of nature (Scott 1998).

The activists' mountain: holism and affect

There had been some protests against the quarries in the 1980s, but it was the announcement of Chillida's monumental project that triggered the formation of a small yet determined social movement tasked with 'saving Tindaya'. The Coordinadora Montaña Tindaya was born in 1996, following a public talk by archaeologist María Antonia Perera in which she described the mountain's key importance and the threat it was under. Three women in attendance that evening, a psychiatrist, a journalist, and a teacher, all of them active in the island's environmental movement, decided that action



Figure 6. Coordinadora Montaña Tindaya's inaugural press conference, January 1997. (Photo courtesy of Sofia Menéndez.)

was necessary and urgent. They set up a working group, invited others to join them, and soon after the Coordinadora was launched with a press release and a series of campaign posters (see Fig. 6).

As its name indicates, the Coordinadora was designed to co-ordinate the opposition to Chillida's project, and indeed it forged close relationships with other environmental groups in the Canary Islands and mainland Spain. The collective emerged at a time when Fuerteventura's environmental movement, echoing a national trend (see Hamilton 2018), was already concerned with a range of issues beyond conservationism, such as the island's precarious energy model, its over-reliance on tourism, and the extensive presence of the military.⁵ A core group of no more than a dozen activists, most of them teachers, led a relentless campaign against the Monument. Their strategy consisted in promoting Tindaya's multiple 'values' (i.e. geological, historical, cultural, environmental, ethnographic), and denouncing the incompatibility of Chillida's Monument with the protection that had already been awarded to the mountain. They deployed a wide range of tactics, including legal challenges to every aspect of the Monument's planning, the disruption of public events involving Chillida and/or the Monument, public talks promoting indigenous heritage, newspaper articles, poems, letters and petitions, guided tours of the mountain, information stands, solidarity festivals and markets, and activist 'merchandise' (such as t-shirts, reusable plastic cups, and stickers). Across these multiple forums, they enacted what I call, following their own formulation, a 'holistic' mountain, characterized by the inseparability of its multiple 'values'. A mountain, too, whose condition was 'symptomatic' of the multiple threats to the Canary Islands' natural environment, and whose defence drew from a combination of political commitments and affect.

Sofia was one of the Coordinadora's founders. A journalist by training, originally from Madrid, she established herself in Fuerteventura in the mid-1990s as the island's correspondent for a national newspaper. She brought with her over a decade's worth of experience in environmentalism, and quickly became involved in local organizations. Sofia and I became close during fieldwork; she was very welcoming from the outset,



Figure 7. Activist juxtapositions: (left) graffiti ('Leave Tindaya alone') and (right) a view of Tindaya's shadow from the mountaintop. (Photos courtesy of Sofía Menéndez.)

keen to share her knowledge, show me around, and introduce me to other people. One evening, having finally found a working projector, we met at her house and went through her 35 mm slide collection. The images documented the early years of the Coordinadora, before digital photography became the norm. As one would expect, they elicited many memories: Sofía's words provided a vivid soundtrack to the images and their fading colours. At first, it surprised me that the pictures documenting activist actions – what I expected to see – were punctuated by landscape pictures of the mountain and its surroundings and close-ups of plants, rock patterns, or shadows: 'look how beautiful it is', 'it's gorgeous', 'it's totally magic!', she would say as we encountered them (see Fig. 7). In hindsight, I believe the juxtaposition between these two types of images to be indicative of the affective dimension of the activists' attachment to the mountain. Sofía's commitment to 'saving Tindaya' was not only the result of a pre-existing political conviction, but also responded to a special bond with the mountain cultivated through innumerable visits and an appreciation of its sacredness for the *Mahos*. Sofía's activism, and by extension the Coordinadora's, fed from these different registers. At the height of the conflict, for instance, she organized direct actions against the proposed Monument (e.g. disrupting a royal visit to an exhibition where it was featured), wrote scathing newspaper articles denouncing the corruption scandals surrounding the government's plans, and made an experimental film re-creating an indigenous ritual in which women danced and 'made love' to the mountain.

By the time I started fieldwork, Sofía and most of the original core group had taken a step back; they remained engaged with the Coordinadora, but a new group of activists had taken over the day-to-day running of the collective. Ten or so activists, mostly former teachers and (semi-)retired professionals (e.g. an architect, a photographer), carried out most of the organizational work. Their approach was broadly continuist: they held regular meetings, organized public activities, maintained a strong social media presence, published different materials, and financed the collective by selling activist merchandise. When I asked them why Tindaya mattered to them, they inevitably invoked Tindaya's multiple 'values': geological (its distinct shape, rock, and colour), natural (the wildlife it is host to), ethnographic (the folk tales it features in), and of course historical-archaeological (the indigenous engravings). All of these, as they would never tire of repeating, had at some point been acknowledged by the state, but subsequently ignored. Moreover, they had been treated as separate issues, when it was obvious that they were related: it was the mountain's physical singularity and

its commanding presence in the landscape that surely drove the *Mahos* towards it and made them decorate it with engravings; it was quite possible that some relation existed between indigenous ritual practices in Tindaya and post-Conquest folk tales concerning the ‘mountain of the witches’; even the ‘cultural’ significance of the engravings required taking into account their relationship with ‘nature’: for example, their alignment with the Winter Solstice, or their relationship with the rain cycle (see Perera, Belmonte, Esteban & Tejera 1996). For the activists, ‘saving Tindaya’ meant acknowledging and *caring* for all these different ‘values’ as part of a single, ‘holistic’ entity. Indeed, the Coordinadora’s main demand, unchanged since its inception, is that Chillida’s project be abandoned and a *comprehensive* conservation plan be developed instead – one that provides an *integrated* framework for the protection of Tindaya’s cultural and natural environment.

One of the key domains where these demands have been made is the legal sphere. The long string of lawsuits and appeals mentioned above has provided a stage for the confrontation between the state’s logic of partition and the activists’ holistic approach. Even a cursory analysis of this twenty-plus-year-long legal battle is beyond the scope of this article; suffice it to say that the Coordinadora’s strategy has been to use case law to challenge the two main devices that would allow the construction of the Monument: the delimitation of the area protected on cultural grounds (which limits it to the mountaintop) and the norms detailing the protection afforded to the mountain as a natural site (which allow rock extraction inside the mountain). The Coordinadora’s lawyers have denounced the unprecedented nature of these partitions (‘grotesque’, ‘irrational’, and ‘arbitrary’ were the words the lead lawyer used to describe them to me) and argued that Tindaya is a ‘unitary’ entity, ‘inseparable’ from its environment. The results so far have been mixed: these legal proceedings have effectively obstructed the possibility of the construction of Chillida’s Monument for over two decades, but the Coordinadora’s core arguments have not gained legal standing as of spring 2021.

However important they have been to the controversy, these lawsuits and appeals are hardly visible on a day-to-day basis. They are also largely impenetrable for a lay audience. In contrast, the public face of the Coordinadora has relied on a very accessible and affective approach to ‘saving Tindaya’. The image of the foot-shaped engravings – *podomorfos* in Spanish – plays a key role here. It has become an icon of the struggle; it acts as the Coordinadora’s logo; it is printed on banners, t-shirts, cups, stickers; and it has been graffitied as a form of protest (see Fig. 8). These feet stand for the sacred mountain, for the *Mahos*, and for the preservation of the environment and indigenous heritage more broadly. Their hypervisibility cannot be fully understood without taking into account the importance that activists place on the *experience* of the engravings. Several of them told me how climbing to the mountaintop and seeing the footprints of the *Mahos* had been transformative, how it had convinced them of their significance and the urgency of looking after them.⁶

This sense of connection with, and responsibility over, *Maho* heritage was particularly obvious in one of the highlights of the 2017 Festival for Tindaya mentioned in the introduction. Around 10 p.m., in between music performances, two of the Coordinadora’s members, Ángel and Inma, got on stage and read a manifesto written with the explicit intention of capturing how activists *felt* about Tindaya. I cite it at some length as part of its interest lies in the linguistic staging of the conflict:



Figure 8. Activist merchandise featuring the engravings. (Photo by the author.)

Hundreds of years ago, the *Maho* people fell in love with a mountain. Its colour, its remarkable shape, its location in the landscape, the way it sees off the sun each day ... it all caught the attention of the indigenous population, who chose it as the place to look for answers and find hope. They took care of it, revered it; they tattooed hundreds of feet on its skin. And they gave it a name: Tindaya ... [The powers that be] have perverted the law, unprotected its value, ignored its history and its incomparable heritage. But they haven't been able to silence the voices that defend it; Tindaya's history is the history of a proud and conscious people who will not capitulate before the power of money and ignorance ... This is why we are here, and will continue to be until we achieve the complete protection of the mountain, until we have absolute certainty that future generations will be able to learn from and admire the beauty of a mountain that speaks to us with its [engraved] feet, its greatness and its placid gaze towards the horizon. And we will not be moved until the establishment acknowledges what the people already know: that the monument already exists! [*general applause*]

Despite the manifesto's triumphalist tone, activists are in the minority in their defence of this holistic, affect-rich Tindaya. They have, for over two decades, faced very limited public interest in indigenous heritage. They have also come up against the inherent difficulty of speaking on behalf of the *Mahos*, their efforts often dismissed as unfounded speculations or primitivist fantasies. Activists are confronted as well with scarce support for environmentalism; ideas such as limiting growth or tourism are not particularly popular in Fuerteventura. The notion of the land as an economic resource to be exploited is far more dominant, and the state's promotion of Chillida's project has successfully tapped into it (see Fig. 9). In my conversations with villagers, for example,



Figure 9. An activist's impression of Tindaya's future as a tourist resort. (Image courtesy of Juan Guerra.)

I often heard that the Monument 'would be good for the island', that 'it would provide jobs and opportunities for young people'.

These kinds of clashes between activist and local understandings of the environment are well documented elsewhere. In his study of the conflict between conservationists and the local community on the Greek island of Zakynthos, Dimitris Theodossopoulos (2003) shows how land ownership, for the latter, was understood to provide, among other things, an entitlement to participate in and benefit from tourism development – a moral 'right' disrupted by the introduction of a Marine National Park and its associated restrictions. Furthermore, Theodossopoulos unpacks how the islanders' working relationship to their environment did not have a place in the conservationists' dichotomous understanding of nature and culture, where the former is to be kept in (or returned to) a 'wild' state. The ways in which environmental 'protection' can efface valuable local knowledges or disrupt sustainable livelihoods is in fact a recurring theme in studies of conservation disputes (see also Hamilton 2018; Heatherington 2010). Often, these tensions are the result of the imposition of general, top-down conservation measures without any meaningful engagement with local practices. In Tindaya, however, the situation is slightly different: the state is the main advocate of *limiting* environmental protection in order to accommodate Chillida's Monument, an approach that finds support in the local community and that turns environmentalists into a vocal minority with limited power.

I invited activists to discuss some of these issues following one of the Coordinadora's fortnightly meetings in 2016. A group of ten stayed and took part in a freeform conversation. Ángel, a high-school principal, was keen to underline that, for him, Tindaya's conflict was symptomatic of a 'neo-colonized society' where tourism development had been imposed from the outside and endorsed by local institutions and elites. He continued:

[B]ecause of our neo-colonial condition, people's lack of cultural awareness prevents the development of a territorial consciousness that would enable us to defend a magical asset [such as Tindaya]. Because

that doesn't have any value for Capital. No value at all. Capital only knows about immediate and commodified value ... Tindaya is just another manifestation – and a very serious one at that – of the dynamic that Capital implements in a neo-colonized territory.

The question of the general lack of knowledge about Tindaya and indigenous heritage more broadly was central to the activists' arguments. Santos, for instance, remarked how the state had spent almost €30 m in promoting Chillida's unbuilt Monument, but not a penny on the protection or dissemination of the mountain's values. This was the reason people didn't know about Tindaya's importance. In fact, the state actively prevented people from getting to know it, for instance by closing it to the public and making it almost impossible to visit it legally. 'They're doing exactly the contrary of what they should be doing; they've left it to *us*, to the civil society, to disseminate its values with public talks and so on, which is what *they* should be doing.' Santos's point was echoed by Inma, who added:

It is very important to understand that *we have to protect the mountain from people's ignorance* ... People have only heard about Chillida's project, not about the mountain's values ... This is why we've tried to speak as little as possible about Chillida, and focus instead on Tindaya's values, so that people get to know about them, and we can reach them that way. As Santos said, a lot of people climb to the top and say, 'But this is already a monument! We don't need to build anything here!'

These statements – not exempt from an element of self-righteousness – are indicative of activists' perceived entitlement to, and responsibility for, educating the people. From the outset, the Coordinadora had a strong focus on *teaching* people about Tindaya, seen in the kind of activities they favour (e.g. talks by experts, guided tours, information desks) as well as the explanatory tone of their publications. The fact that most members have historically been teachers may have also contributed to this. In this sense, the Coordinadora's holistic mountain is, to an extent, a pedagogical project that hinges on the conviction that the more people know about Tindaya's 'values', the more likely they are to want to see it fully protected. It also draws from a belief in the power of the mountain itself, particularly its engravings, to generate inalienable affective attachments of the kind they have experienced.

Conclusion

For over two decades, Tindaya has existed in the form of an unresolved, contentious multiplicity. Partitioned into an amalgam of separate and independent components by the state, reassembled into an indivisible whole by activists, the mountain is caught between conflicting understandings of the value of indigenous heritage and the environment, as well as diverging imaginations of Fuerteventura's future. Throughout the controversy, the state has approached the mountain mainly as a resource and asset to benefit from, starting with the concession of mining rights and culminating in the laboured legal argument establishing the compatibility between conservation measures and the construction of Chillida's *Monument to Tolerance*. In contrast, activists have insisted on enacting another Tindaya: a mountain whose protection should concern environmentalists across the archipelago; a mountain that symbolizes the neglect, but also untapped potential, of *Maho* heritage. As long as these competing enactments remain active, that is, performed, Tindaya will remain more than *a* mountain.

I will conclude by teasing out some of the wider political and theoretical implications associated with Tindaya's multiplicity. In a classic paper, Annemarie Mol (1999) argued that an entity's multiple enactments constitute different versions of itself, related yet

separate – not different ‘perspectives’ on a single entity, then, but different ‘realities’ whose relationship is contingent, if not contentious. Whether these multiple enactments coexist peacefully, enter into conflict, subsume one another, cancel each other out, and so on, becomes the very matter of politics. Li’s work on Cerro Quilish again offers invaluable insight in this regard. The mountain’s multiple enactments, she argues, ‘disrupted the equivalences at the root of proposals to “manage” the impacts of mining activity with technological solutions and compensation agreements with affected communities’ (2015: 122). As an Apu/sacred being *and* an aquifer which was ‘a source of life’, Quilish was incommensurable with and irreducible to the logic of quantification and compensation. Quilish’s multiplicity, sustained by activist practices, had the capacity to preclude the possibility of mining. In the words of one of the anti-mining movement’s leaders, ‘Quilish is more than Quilish’ – at stake in the protests wasn’t only its protection, but rather the right to assert a people’s lifeworld in the face of extractivism.

Tindaya’s multiple enactments are also inscriptions of opposing articulations of the relationship between nature and culture, between heritage and futurity, in the context of Fuerteventura. Rather than different conceptualizations of the mountain, they are ‘worlding practices’: that is, the processes by which realities are brought into existence (Blaser 2016). The state’s Tindaya-as-resource, and its concomitant disinterest for the traces of indigenous life, is the foundation of one such reality: a ‘modern’, developmental future in broad continuity with the archipelago’s colonial history. The activists’ enactment of Tindaya as an indivisible whole may be conceived as the foundation of another future, one that centres on indigenous heritage and environmental concerns. As stated above, politics is precisely the terrain where these worldings enter into contact, conflict, or negotiation; where the fact that reality could be otherwise becomes palpable (see Blaser 2016).

This argument echoes parallel discussions in the field of heritage. The latter, Harrison contends, is ‘fundamentally concerned with assembling and designing the future’; it involves working with the traces of the past in order to ‘remake both ourselves and the world in the present, in anticipation of an outcome that will help constitute a specific (social, economic, or ecological) resource in and for the future’ (2015: 35). Consequently, different heritage practices will produce different pasts and cultivate and care for different futures; they will contribute, in short, to enacting different realities. I have shown how official heritage policy has reduced the traces of indigenous lifeworlds in Tindaya to a historical relic whose protection mustn’t in any way interfere with the development of modern tourist infrastructures. Activists, on the other hand, have insisted on the need to centre and preserve this legacy for future generations, to teach people about Tindaya in the hope that it will result in them caring for it. The persistence of Tindaya’s competing enactments therefore plays a key political function: it sustains the controversy, and with it a palpable sense that things are not yet set in stone, that the future could be otherwise.

NOTES

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¹ All names are pseudonyms, except when participants wanted otherwise.

² There were two periods of intensive fieldwork (summer of 2016 and winter of 2017) complemented by punctual engagements. As soon as I started fieldwork, it became clear that Tindaya wasn't only located in the eponymous village, but rather distributed across multiple sites, including government buildings, activist archives, educational materials, architect studios, and museums. Research took me to four of the seven Canary Islands (where I met with activists and government officials and attended relevant events), San Sebastián (where Eduardo Chillida's archives and heirs are based), and Madrid (where the proposed Monument's engineers and environmental scientists have their offices).

³ There are three levels of government of relevance to Tindaya: central (structured into ministries), regional (divided into departments), and island (also in departments). All three levels have had partial legislative power over the mountain at different points in the controversy.

⁴ The quarries were not a full-time mining operation: rock extraction was intermittent, according to demand, and conducted by the company's quarrymen.

⁵ Fuerteventura has long been a Spanish military outpost. It has been a place of banishment, hosted the infamous Spanish Legion, and continues to act as training ground for the army and NATO troops.

⁶ I was moved, too, by the experience in ways I didn't anticipate. I unpack this experience and use it as the basis for an ethno-speculative exercise in a forthcoming text entitled 'Waiting for Tindaya: modern ruins and indigenous futures in Fuerteventura'.

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Plus qu'une montagne : la multiplicité controversée du mont Tindaya (Fuerteventura, îles Canaries)

Résumé

Depuis le milieu des années 90, le mont Tindaya (Fuerteventura, îles Canaries) est au cœur d'une controverse. Site indigène naturel protégé et ressource minière à la fois, c'est également le lieu qu'a choisi l'artiste Eduardo Chillida pour une œuvre monumentale consistant à creuser une gigantesque grotte cubique dans les entrailles de la montagne. Cet article conceptualise le mont Tindaya comme multiplicité controversée et analyse deux visions opposées d'une montagne. Aux yeux de l'État, Tindaya est une montagne « compartimentée », une entité divisée en plusieurs dimensions (culturelle et naturelle, intérieure et extérieure) que l'on peut à la fois protéger juridiquement et exploiter. Des militants, en revanche, défendent une montagne « holistique » qui se caractérise par l'inséparabilité de ses « valeurs » multiples (archéologique, géologique, environnementale) et la nécessité de la protéger dans sa globalité. Ces deux visions de la montagne constituent des pratiques de « mondiaison » connectées à des compréhensions opposées de la relation entre patrimoine, nature et avenir. Pour l'État, la montagne est un atout à exploiter, une opportunité de lendemains prospères en fonction des projets pharaoniques de la métropole. Pour les militants, le mont Tindaya représente une occasion unique de repenser le modèle de développement de l'île en donnant un rôle central au patrimoine indigène et aux préoccupations environnementales. La

multiplicité irrésolue du mont Tindaya est donc une question politique au sens large du terme : elle rappelle que la réalité peut être différente.

Isaac Marrero-Guillamón is Lecturer in Anthropology at Goldsmiths, University of London, where he convenes the MA in Visual Anthropology. His work explores the relationship between activism, aesthetics, and futures. He has conducted ethnographic research on urban and heritage controversies in Spain and the United Kingdom.

*Department of Anthropology, Goldsmiths, University of London, New Cross, London SE14 6NW, UK.
i.marrero@gold.ac.uk*