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**ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT ISSUE OF WHISTLED LANGUAGE IN THE CANARY ISLANDS
ARCHIPELAGO AND ITS PLACE IN THE DECLARATION OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE
OF HUMANITY**

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1. PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

The purpose of this report is to respond to the various alerts received by ICOMOS-Spain regarding whistled language in the Canary Islands, with specific reference to the declaration or declarations of BIC, the current situation of whistled language throughout the territory, the de-virtualisation of the concept of intangible cultural heritage, its heritage status, and its correct classification as Intangible Cultural Heritage within the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, approved by the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage on 30 September 2009 at its fourth meeting, held in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

2. BACKGROUND

ICOMOS-Spain report dated 7 December 2021, responding to the consultation on the scope and extent of the property known as Silbo Gomero, inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

The aforementioned report was commissioned by the Directorate General for Cultural Heritage of the Canary Islands, through its Director General, Ms María Antonia Perera Betancor, who asked ICOMOS-Spain to advise on a possible procedure for declaring the "Silbo Gomero" as an Asset of Cultural Interest at a level higher than that of the island, raising two direct questions:

- Does Silbo Gomero exist on islands other than La Gomera?
- Is it possible to initiate proceedings to declare Silbo Gomero as a BIC of a higher level than the island?

The final conclusions of the aforementioned document stated:

- To the question, **"Does Silbo Gomero exist on islands other than La Gomera?", the answer is yes.** The documentation that has been analysed confirms that there is a community that practises this cultural expression on other islands, mainly Tenerife, Gran Canaria and El Hierro, which has passed on this cultural asset through migration and education, with intergenerational transmission in the first case, although the extent of this must be assessed with a more detailed field study. In the second case, it should be noted that there is a system of safeguarding through education, promoted by the regional administration itself, which has encouraged the spread and dissemination of the teaching of Silbo Gomero, enabling this asset to transcend its island of origin, although in this case, in the absence of more precise studies, it cannot be stated that there is intergenerational transmission in the other islands. **There is also a body of legal texts from the Canary Islands administration itself, as well as other documents related to the inscription on the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage, which highlight the "Canarian" character or the importance of Silbo Gomero for the cultural heritage of the Canary Islands as a whole, thus answering the question in the affirmative.**
- In response to the question of **whether it is possible to declare the cultural asset known as Silbo Gomero as a BIC of a higher level than the island**, ICOMOS-Spain cannot express an opinion on this legal matter. However, the provisions of the LPCC would allow such a declaration. Articles 15.d. and 27.3.b. of the LPCC indicate that the regional administration is competent to initiate, process and resolve cases of Cultural Assets whose "scope of manifestation" is greater than the island. Although it does not define the concept of "scope of manifestation", according to the content of Article 3.2. of the same



The text can be interpreted as "the territorial area in which they develop or are produced, regardless of their location, ownership or legal status". To this must be added the requirement that the process of designation as a BIC must be preceded by "the communities or organisations representing the asset", which in this case has been done. Taking into account this article, together with the provisions of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, the proven and recognised presence of a community that uses Silbo Gomero on islands other than La Gomera, where the cultural asset in question is reproduced and transmitted, may be sufficient to qualify for designation as a BIC of a higher level than the island. However, two factors must be taken into account: the extent of intergenerational transmission; and the fact that it is necessary to specifically define the scope of manifestation, i.e. on which islands the cultural asset in question is reproduced and transmitted, since the LPCC does not establish a BIC declaration at the general regional level, but must specify the territorial areas (in this case, islands or regions thereof) where the cultural asset is present. These two factors can only be resolved through the aforementioned field study and research⁽¹⁾.

A final paragraph was added to the two conclusions, stating:

- *For this reason, this report, which is based on an analysis of the documentation consulted, concludes and recommends that, in order to better answer and explore the two questions posed at the beginning of this report, it is necessary to carry out independent research and fieldwork to assess how many islands Silbo Gomero is present on, what the mechanisms of teaching, reproduction, transmission and safeguarding in general have been, and what the extent of intergenerational transmission is.⁽²⁾*

3. PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

3.1.- The legal framework

At the regional level

In accordance with Article 137 of the Statute of Autonomy, "*the Autonomous Community of the Canary Islands has exclusive competence over cultural heritage, without prejudice to Article 149.2 of the Constitution, which in any case includes the regulation of the legal regime governing the assets, activities and other manifestations that comprise it due to their historical, architectural, artistic, archaeological, ethnographic, paleontological, scientific or technical value, as well as the intangible assets of Canarian popular culture and the linguistic particularities of the Spanish language spoken in the Canary Islands.*"

For its part, Article 70(2)(p) of the basic statutory provision stipulates that the island councils, as institutions of the Autonomous Community, shall exercise executive functions of an insular nature within the framework and limits of the applicable legislation on historical and artistic heritage.

Based on the above, the applicable legislative regime will be Law 11/2019 of 25 April on the Cultural Heritage of the Canary Islands. The purpose of this law, as set out in Article 1, is to "[...] *establish the legal regime*

¹ *At the time of drafting the aforementioned report and responding to the question raised, various technical reports of a legal nature had not been taken into consideration, which subsequently provided an answer to this question. These reports have made it possible for the Silbo of the island of La Gomera to be recently declared a Site of Cultural Interest. The question thus raised has therefore been fully resolved.*

² *At the time of writing the aforementioned report, certain scientific data, articles and specific studies that could shed further light on the issue raised were not available. These documents, together with other recently published documents, are attached to this report as annexes.*



of the cultural heritage of the Canary Islands in order to guarantee its identification, protection, recovery, conservation, enhancement, dissemination and promotion, as well as its research, appreciation and transmission to future generations, so that it may serve the public as a tool for social cohesion, sustainable development and the foundation of cultural identity.

For its part, Article 2 of the aforementioned Law states that the cultural heritage of the Canary Islands consists of "[...] the movable and immovable property and **intangible manifestations of the indigenous peoples of the Canary Islands, of popular and traditional culture, which have historical,** artistic, architectural, archaeological, ethnographic, bibliographic, documentary, **linguistic,** landscape, industrial, scientific, technical or any other cultural value, regardless of their ownership or legal status...".

The subject of this study, whistled language in the Canary Islands, and based on the provisions of Article 3, paragraph 1.c) of the aforementioned regulation, constitutes **part of the intangible cultural heritage** of the Canary Islands, as it is an unequivocal part of the "[...] customs, representations, expressions, knowledge and techniques of the indigenous peoples of the Canary Islands, of the popular and traditional culture that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognise as an integral part of the cultural heritage of the Canary Islands". In this regard, Title VII on Specific Heritage dedicates Chapter V to Intangible Heritage, stating in Article 106 that **"oral traditions and expressions"**, including **"manifestations of whistled language"**, shall form part of this heritage.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the provisions of Article 108 of the aforementioned law, which states that the protection of these assets that make up the intangible heritage shall be carried out through their inclusion in one of the instruments provided for in the Law itself. It should also be noted that section 2 of article 3 of the Canary Islands Cultural Heritage Law states that all references contained therein to the location of an asset, in relation to manifestations of intangible cultural heritage, shall be understood "[...] as the territorial area in which they are developed or produced, regardless of their location, ownership or legal status".

Clearly, these obligations and duties derive, a priori, from the declaration of public interest and utility, and it is mandatory to establish a catalogue indicating the corresponding degree of protection. To this end, the provisions of Articles 22, 25 and 27, in addition to those already mentioned in Law 11/2019 on Cultural Heritage of the Canary Islands, are considered fundamental.

Law 11/2019 on Cultural Heritage in the Canary Islands already states in its preamble that **the degree of protection and cataloguing corresponding to any asset considered to be intangible heritage shall be that of BIC** (Site or Building of Cultural Interest), and it does so by referring to Law 10/2015 of 26 May on the Safeguarding of Cultural Heritage. In this regard, Article 106 of the same law establishes, in addition to the concept, what assets are considered intangible, thus developing the provisions of the preamble.

Articles 15 and 27 of the aforementioned Law establish the procedure by which such assets shall be declared BIC, further indicating that the Government of the Canary Islands is competent to initiate, investigate and resolve proceedings for the declaration of Assets of Cultural Interest *that "[...] constitute intangible cultural heritage, provided that their scope of manifestation exceeds the island, and upon request from the communities or organisations representing the property"* ⁽³⁾

³ The possible doubt raised in the request from the Directorate General for Cultural Heritage of the Canary Islands through its director and expressed in the ICOMOS-Spain report dated 7 December 2021 regarding the scope within which a property is declared a BIC



At the state level

At the national level, Law 10/2015 of 26 May on the safeguarding of intangible heritage, mentioned above, specifically establishes in Article 3, **general principles for safeguarding actions, the nature of equality, non-discrimination, participation, recognition and respect for all intangible manifestations of culture.**

For its part, the National Plan for Intangible Cultural Heritage has as its fundamental objective the safeguarding of such heritage and the establishment of measures to ensure its viability, including actions for identification, documentation, research, **preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission and revitalisation, as well as raising awareness in society and achieving institutional recognition within the framework of cultural policies.**

At the international level

The General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, "UNESCO", at its 32nd session, held in Paris from 29 September to 17 October 2003, considered and declared as Intangible Cultural Heritage *"the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and techniques, as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces that are inherent to them, which communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognise as an integral part of their cultural heritage"*. This intangible cultural heritage, which is transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and in this way provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. **It should be considered as a factor in bringing people closer together, facilitating exchange and mutual understanding.**

3.2 The framework of cultural heritage

At the regional level

As previously indicated, Decree 30/2024 of 19 February declared the whistled language of the island of La Gomera, or Silbo Gomero, to be an Asset of Cultural Interest in the category of *tradition and oral expression* within the Autonomous Community of the Canary Islands.

In light of the above, it is worth mentioning, due to its relevance to the following sections of this report, that the proceedings for the declaration of the whistled language or Silbo Gomero on the island of La Gomera as a Site of Cultural Interest were initiated on 6 August 2020. This file was initiated at the request of the President of the Island Council of La Gomera on the basis of the agreement adopted at the plenary session of the Island Corporation on 31 July 2020. Subsequently, by Resolution No. 18/2022, of 4 February, of the former Directorate General for Cultural Heritage, it was agreed to initiate the file for the declaration of Silbo Gomero as an Asset of Cultural Interest, in the category of Tradition and Oral Expression, in the Canary Islands (BOC No. 36, of 21-02-2022).

disappears when the provisions of section 2 of article 3 of the Canary Islands Heritage Law are applied, as this clearly states that "[...] References contained in this law to the location of an asset shall be understood, for intangible heritage, as the territorial area in which they are developed or produced, regardless of their location, ownership and legal status." For greater clarity in this regard, it should be noted that, although with different results, declarations of BIC status have been processed for the whistled language on the islands of La Gomera and El Hierro. Thus, Decree 30/2024 of 19 February, the Canary Islands Government declares Silbo Gomero as an Asset of Cultural Interest in the category of tradition and oral expression within the Autonomous Community of the Canary Islands.

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This is relevant given that, prior to the aforementioned proceedings, other proceedings had been initiated to declare the whistled language of El Hierro Island, or Silbo Herreño, a BIC, without any final decision being made other than that of expiry. This is surprising given that, based on the documentation examined, all of which is public and consists of various technical reports provided by different entities and endorsed by experts in the field, the declaration of BIC made sense and was favourable, with only the final administrative procedure of approval by the regional government pending, which never took place.

The following table shows the administrative procedures initiated and their outcomes.

BIC DECLARATION REQUESTED	SCOPE	DATE OF INITIATION	NATURE OF THE REPORTS	DATE OF DECISION	MEANING OF THE DECISION
Whistling on the Island of El Hierro	Insular	11-12-2017 ⁴	FAVOURABLE	11-03-2020	EXPIRY ⁵
Whistling on the Island of El Hierro	Island	27-04-2020 ⁶	FAVOURABLE	Inactive	EXPIRY ⁷
Whistling on the Island of La Gomera	Regional	04-02-2022 ⁸	FAVOURABLE	19-02	FAVOURABLE ⁹
Whistling on the Island of El Hierro	Insular	19-10-2022 ¹⁰	NO REPORTS	04-12-2024	NULLITY OF THE PROCEEDINGS FOR LEGAL REASONS. ¹¹

From the above, and as of today, only the Silbo of La Gomera Island or Silbo Gomero is recognised as a BIC, leaving the whistled language of El Hierro Island or Silbo Herreño without any protection whatsoever.

At the national level

The declaration of Silbo on the island of La Gomera, or Silbo Gomero, as an autonomous region means, in line with the above and based on the provisions of Law 10/2015 of 26 May for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, that the whistled language on the island of La Gomera or Silbo Gomero, but not the whistled language of the island of El Hierro or Silbo Herreño or any other whistled language that manifests itself in the archipelago of the Canary Islands, is under the maximum protection of the Spanish state.

At the international level

The whistled language of La Gomera, or Silbo Gomero, has been included on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity since 30 September 2009, by decision of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of UNESCO.

UNESCO's decision on the whistled language of the island of La Gomera, or Silbo Gomero, clarifies fundamental aspects for the drafting of this report in the following sections.

⁴ Official Gazette of the Canary Islands No. 244 of 21 December 2017

⁵ Official Gazette of the Canary Islands No. 60 of 26 March 2020

⁶ Official Gazette of the Canary Islands No. 190 of 16 September 2020

⁷ No express resolution of expiry has been issued, but it is implied given the legislation in force.

⁸ Official Gazette of the Canary Islands No. 36 of 21 February 2022

⁹ Official Gazette of the Canary Islands No. 41 of 19 February 2024

¹⁰ Official Gazette of the Canary Islands No. 216 of 2 November 2022

¹¹ BOC - 2024/249. Monday, 16 December 2024 - 4186

III. Other Resolutions

Ministry of Universities, Science, Innovation and Culture 4186 -

Directorate-General for Culture and Cultural Heritage.

Resolution of 2 December 2024, agreeing to withdraw the proceedings initiated by Resolution of 19 October 2022, of the former Directorate-General for Cultural Heritage, for the declaration of the "Silbo Herreño" as an Asset of Cultural Interest in the category of "oral tradition and expression" of island origin, for reasons of legal certainty.



Thus, the decision of the Intergovernmental Committee 4.COM.13.71, which inscribes Silbo Gomero on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, based on the information provided by Spain in the nomination file, highlights the importance of this asset for the heritage of the Canary Islands in general: "*Silbo Gomero is widely practised by the inhabitants of the island of La Gomera, who recognise it as their distinctive contribution to the cultural heritage of the other islands of the Canary archipelago*", stating further that the safeguarding measures are aimed at protecting and promoting "*the whistling language of the Canary Islands, and are backed by a firm and sustainable commitment on the part of the State and the communities concerned*".

4. ANALYSIS AND STUDY

This section is based on the scientific documentation analysed (scientific articles, books, sound and audiovisual archives, as well as documentary programmes broadcast on different television channels), most of which is from after 2021, and which has been obtained or provided by public administration entities and experts, associations linked to whistled language, and independent scientific experts, some of whom have been consulted on the various issues raised in the alerts received, as well as others arising from them, and who have studied, analysed, and published on whistled language, expressly in the context of the Canary Islands as well as in other contexts worldwide.

4.1 Whistled language in the Canary Islands.

The following analysis is a summary and shows elements common to the whistled language on each of the islands of the Canary archipelago, as well as in other areas not belonging to the territory indicated.

Based on the above, it is hereby stated that:

- Based on the scientific documentation analysed, whistled language is defined as "a language, but not a tongue, that replaces spoken language, in this case, spoken Spanish".
- On this premise, and always based on the scientific documentation analysed, it can be stated that the existence of whistled language in the Canary Islands is currently manifested in the following way:
 - LA GOMERA: Preserved, protected and promoted today, including in public education. A constant presence and growing in strength since the 1960s. Deeply rooted in the culture, it is known and practised by most of the population. It is the island of whistling par excellence, and the one that has given its name to the phenomenon of Silbo Gomero or Silbo de La Gomera. As already mentioned, it has been classified as a Site of Cultural Interest (BIC) since 2024 and has been included in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity since 2009.
 - EL HIERRO: Preserved and maintained with vigour until the 1960s, when its use declined significantly. There are still many whistle blowers alive, although they are now elderly. There is a wealth of graphic and ethnographic documentation that amply demonstrates its use. Given the state of knowledge about it, its recovery is straightforward, although urgent. There is strong potential for social and administrative activity aimed at its recovery, defence and use.



- *TENERIFE: Preserved until the 1940s. Extensively documented. Numerous whistlers remain alive, although they are elderly. There is strong potential for social and administrative activity aimed at its recovery, defence and use.*
 - *GRAN CANARIA: Preserved until the 1940s. Extensively documented. There are still many whistle blowers alive, although they are elderly. There is strong potential for social and administrative activity aimed at its recovery, defence and use.*
 - *LANZAROTE: Its use has not been confirmed. However, there are references to its existence.*
 - *FUERTEVENTURA: Its use has not been confirmed. However, there are references to its existence.*
 - *LA PALMA: Its use has not been confirmed. However, there are references to its existence.*
- The whistled language on the island of La Gomera, or Silbo Gomero, **is not the only one that exists in the Canary Islands**, and the recognition granted by the island, regional and national authorities, as well as by UNESCO as the most influential international body, does not mean, **nor should it mean at any time, that it was or is considered to be the only one that exists**.¹²

4.2 Scientific studies and their contribution.

The documentation analysed¹³ agrees on the following facts:

- **The existence of a whistled language, with varying degrees of profusion and entity, in much of the Canary Islands, as indicated in the previous section.**
- **There is only one whistled language in the Canary Islands, which, with various nuances and adapted to the characteristics of the territory and population of each island, has evolved in such a way that there are differentiating elements between the different islands, but based on an original matrix.**
- **Determining or establishing the origin of the whistled language on a specific island rather than across the entire Canary Islands can only be described as utopian, especially based on the scientific documentation analysed, when there is evidence that it may originate from the African Atlas region.**
- The whistled language common to each island constitutes a phonological system that uses basic whistles to differentiate between vowels and consonants, which the inhabitants of each island, regardless of their location, recognise and understand. It is, in any case, a form of transmitting the Spanish language.
- While it is true that there is a general understanding of whistled language throughout the Canary Islands, it is also true that today, **as an articulated language**, it is only clearly understood on the islands of La Gomera and El Hierro. This statement does not imply that whistled language does not exist on the other islands, but rather that there is an immediate need for formal studies to be carried out, particularly on the islands of Tenerife and Gran Canaria, in order to preserve and recover this language, as has been done on the islands of La Gomera and El Hierro. Delaying a study on these islands could lead to the irreparable and irreversible loss of an exceptional heritage.

¹² At this point, it should be noted that, in order for UNESCO to declare the whistling language of La Gomera as intangible cultural heritage, institutional support from the island, regional and national administrations was required, among other things. Of the former, it is worth **highlighting the agreement recorded in the minutes of the plenary session of the Island Council of El Hierro dated 2 June 2008, which grants the necessary institutional support for the registration of Silbo Gomero while recognising the existence of the whistled language on the island of El Hierro or Silbo Herreño.**

¹³ All documentation analysed is listed in section 6.- Bibliography



- The promotion and recovery of whistled language with different emphasis on each island should not be understood as an indication of its non-existence, but rather as a considerable and worrying decline in interest and practice. Thus, the existence of a community that uses whistled language on the islands of La Gomera, initially, and currently on El Hierro, is due to the existence of cultural associations and the cultural interest of its inhabitants, who recognise it as their own heritage and a means of transmission. This interest has been observed to a lesser extent, but still strongly, for some time now on the islands of Tenerife and Gran Canaria.

4.3 The de-virtualisation and use of the concept of world heritage. The heritage status of the property.

The analysis of the documentation that has been accessed, and being aware of repeating ourselves, reveals the existence, albeit with nuances and particularities, of a whistled language throughout the Canary Islands community, a language accepted by the whole of Canarian society, although, in principle and to a greater extent, by older people and those in rural areas who have practised and continue to practise it regularly throughout the archipelago.

Despite this social recognition, there is a particular political interest in the forced implementation ***of a specific whistled language***, that of the island of La Gomera, over the other whistled languages, which, although essentially the same, differ in nuances and particularities that are mainly related to the characteristics of a specific territorial area or island where they are practised.

Proof of this is the large number of press articles and, regrettably and totally reprehensibly, the public opinion of certain political authorities who, through the misuse of the concept of cultural heritage and its heritage status, distort it and use it as a political weapon. This bellicose discourse is also reflected in the actions of public administration bodies, whose acts, procedures and inaction jeopardise the permanence and existence of the heritage asset itself.

An analysis of the various administrative procedures and the documentation contained therein reveals clear inaction towards certain cases in favour of others, using subterfuges as a basis for expiry or, at best, delaying the final resolution of these cases, thus contravening the basic principles established by all legislative regimes for the protection of cultural heritage.

In addition, it is worth noting the clear use of the press, social media and civil associations by representatives of various administrative bodies and officials, as well as political entities, which has led to social distancing and a loss of interest in cultural heritage, or at the very least, a disregard or contempt for it. We can even cite such regrettable events as the declaration of "*persona non grata*" status to individuals and experts of high and proven scientific standing, both national and international, who have expressed their free opinion or published studies and articles on the subject that should, at the very least, be respected and taken into consideration.

4.4 Protective bodies – Guardianship and custody of heritage

At the regional level

Law 11/2019 on Cultural Heritage in the Canary Islands establishes, as is to be expected, that the protection of the heritage referred to is mandatory, with the authorities being responsible for its protection and care, i.e. its protection and guardianship. This is also expressed, and in a highly

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, in Article 27(4) of Organic Law 1/2018 of 5 November reforming the Statute of Autonomy of the Canary Islands.

The aforementioned Law, in section 2 of its article 57, establishes very clearly the general duty of protection and conservation, stating that:

- *"2. The public administrations of the Canary Islands, within the scope of their respective powers, shall guarantee the protection and conservation of the cultural heritage of the Canary Islands, regardless of their ownership or legal protection regime, with the aim of making their protection compatible with their use and enjoyment by the public and their preservation for future generations."*

With specific reference to intangible heritage, which includes whistled language, the provisions of Article 108 of the aforementioned Law must be observed, which clearly states that:

- *1. The protection of the assets that make up the intangible heritage shall be carried out through their inclusion in one of the instruments provided for in this law.*
- *2. The assets that make up the intangible cultural heritage shall be collected and inventoried in stable formats that enable their transmission to future generations, promoting their research and documentation for this purpose.*
- *3. Public administrations shall ensure respect for, conservation and protection of intangible cultural heritage through its promotion, dissemination, study and compilation.*
- *4. Public audiovisual media shall promote the recognition and use of the Canarian language.*

At the state level

At the national level, Law 10/2015 of 26 May on the safeguarding of intangible heritage already establishes in its preamble that, with regard to intangible assets, emphasis should be placed ***on the action of "safeguarding" practices and the communities that carry them out in order to preserve the conditions of their intrinsic evolutionary process, which is achieved through intra- and intergenerational transmission.***

At international level

The UNESCO General Conference, at its 32nd session held in Paris from 29 September to 17 October 2003, adopted the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. This normative instrument, which entered into force on 20 April 2006 and was ratified by Spain on 25 October of that same year, establishes the consideration and obligation to safeguard and protect intangible cultural heritage, setting out the appropriate measures for this purpose, some of which are set out in the aforementioned text. To nullify the principles and considerations thus established indirectly implies on the part of the State Party or the competent public bodies, a manifest misuse of the heritage property or, at the very least, a misuse that is inconsistent with the spirit of the principles established in the aforementioned convention, which may be considered a matter for complaint to the General Assembly of the States Parties, which, if it deems it appropriate, shall take the measures it deems necessary for the safeguarding of the property.



From the information provided in this section, it can only be concluded that the provisions established and cited in the various protection regimes, whether regional, national or international, are not being complied with, at least in view of and with reference to the various files on whistled language on the island of El Hierro or Silbo Herreño.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1.- General

Based on the above and the analysis of the documentation listed in section 6, *Bibliography*, of this report, ICOMOS-Spain wishes to state that the work carried out proves:

- ***A) the articulated nature of the whistled language on the island of El Hierro and its survival on the island, without forgetting the data on its presence in Gran Canaria and Tenerife;***
- ***B) the survival of whistled language in El Hierro and in some areas of Gran Canaria and Tenerife;***
- ***C) the existence of several communities that use whistling as an articulated language within the Autonomous Community of the Canary Islands;***
- ***D) the identity-defining and representative nature of whistling in El Hierro, both for the community that uses it and for the inhabitants of the island as a whole and, to a lesser extent, in the territories of Gran Canaria and Tenerife;***

Thus, we understand that the name given to the phenomenon of whistled language in the Canary Islands should correspond to its communities that use it. However, the name or names should not hide the fact that whistled language is an element specific to several islands of the archipelago, with special roots and transmission in La Gomera and El Hierro and at risk of disappearing due to intergenerational transmission in at least Gran Canaria and Tenerife, although efforts are currently being made to recover it.

5.2.- Regarding the whistled language on the Island of El Hierro

In line with the previous point, based on the various procedural and legislative issues, such as:

- At the regional level, Law 11/2019 of 25 April on the Cultural Heritage of the Canary Islands.
- At the national level, Law 10/2015 of 26 May on the safeguarding of Intangible Heritage.
- At the international level, the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, "UNESCO", at its 32nd session, held in Paris from 29 September to 17 October 2003.

ICOMOS-Spain understands that Silbo Herreño meets the requirements of current legislation for its declaration as a BIC (Intangible Cultural Heritage) as a manifestation of PCI (Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity). In this regard, the desire to officially and institutionally designate the whistling language of the island of El Hierro as Silbo Herreño is considered legitimate from every point of view, now that fieldwork has reliably verified aspects that could have been considered controversial in the recent past.



5.3.- On the impact on Silbo Gomero as intangible cultural heritage

ICOMOS-Spain, insofar as the results of field research indicate the continued existence of articulated whistled language in El Hierro and other islands, understands that:

- *A) it is up to the community or communities that use the language to determine whether they wish to maintain the strictly insular name for the whistle language of each island and/or agree on another common name for the whistle language in the Canary Islands, for which 'Silbo Canario' could be an option;*
- *B) The survival of whistling in El Hierro and/or other islands of the Canary archipelago can never be considered a risk or threat to Silbo Gomero, but rather an extraordinary contribution to whistling as a formidable reference point for the cultural richness of the Canary Islands. It is comparable to the joy that anyone might feel upon discovering that an animal species believed to be extinct in a given territory is still alive.*
- *C) We cannot ignore that a rapid change in the name of "Silbo Gomero" implies the loss of a large part of the "brand value" generated since 2009 and up to the present, but this is a matter completely unrelated to the principles and values of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.*



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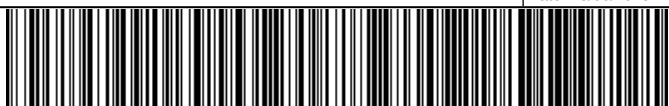


Letter of support for Silbo Herreño written by Mr José Juan Batista Rodríguez in April 2018

Letter from members of the scientific community with the aim of guaranteeing the protection, continuity and research of whistling language practices in the Canary Islands, drafted and signed by:

- Maximiano Trapero Trapero - Professor of Spanish Philology and Honorary Professor Emeritus at the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. 2017 Canary Islands Award for Historical Heritage.
- Antonio Tejera Gaspar - Professor of Archaeology, University of La Laguna. 2011 Canary Islands Historical Heritage Award.
- María Jesús Rodríguez Medina - Doctor of Translation and Interpreting and Senior Lecturer at the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria.
- María Antonia Perera Betancor - Archaeologist. Doctor of Prehistory from the University of La Laguna. Director General of Cultural Heritage for the Government of the Canary Islands during the 2019-2023 term.
- Julien Meyer - Linguist and bioacoustician, French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS). Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) European Prize 2015 – COFUND for research on whistled languages.
- Manuel J. Lorenzo Perera - Doctor of History. Ethnographer. 2022 Canary Islands Prize for Popular Culture.
- María de la Cruz Jiménez Gómez - Doctor of Archaeology. Retired professor of Prehistory, Anthropology and Ancient History at the University of La Laguna.
- Colette Grinevald - Linguist. Emeritus Professor of Linguistics at the University of Lyon 2, France. Member of the Special Group of Experts on Endangered Languages convened by UNESCO (2003).
- José-Juan Batista-Rodríguez - Professor of Philology at the University of La Laguna and member of the Canarian Academy of Language.



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