

AMERICAN COLLEGE FOOTBALL AS INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

by

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(Under the Direction of Scott Nesbit)

ABSTRACT

American College Football is a cultural expression of modern sport. This culture can be experienced by students, alumni, and fans of college football ranging from before the game begins until the post-game celebrations have ended. This cultural expression appears to fit many aspects of the definition of Intangible Cultural Heritage per the UNESCO definition in the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

INDEX WORDS: American College Football, Southeastern Conference Football, Intangible Cultural Heritage, Sport Heritage

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my Momma and Daddy for their endless love and support. Thank goodness Momma won that bet in 1996. Go Dawgs!

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“On the East Coast, football is a cultural experience. In the Midwest, it's a form of cannibalism. On the West Coast, it's a tourist attraction. And in the South, football is a religion, and Saturday is the holy day.”

- Marino H. Casem

Southeastern Conference Football has loomed large in my life since before I was born. A bet between my parents at the 1996 Georgia-Auburn game decided my educational path and football allegiance. I come from a house divided along football lines. My mom is a diehard University of Georgia fan, and my dad is an Auburn University fan, as they both attended the respective schools. At the 1996 “Deep South’s Oldest Rivalry” game between the two teams in Auburn, UGA was down by twenty one points when my dad approached her with a bet. He turned to my mom after Auburn scored and said, “whichever team wins, that’s where the kid will go to school.” My mom, never doubting her Dawgs, immediately shook his hand and accepted the bet. After the first overtime in Southeastern Conference history and the three additional overtimes that followed, Georgia had won the game and my fate was sealed.

However, my story is not unique. Many people across the United States share the common experience of football team allegiance influencing where they attend school based on their chosen team. Friendships have been made over the love of the same team, weddings in the fall have been hosted to not interfere with the time of the night game, and countless fights have

broken out over team rivalries. Football, especially in the American South, is more than just a game that is played on Saturdays in the fall, it is a cultural institution. Southeastern Conference football as a cultural practice is worth considering as an example of intangible cultural heritage.

Intangible Cultural Heritage

In 2003, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) adopted the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH). The purpose of the convention was to use a holistic approach in order to protect the intangible elements of culture through raising awareness and respect for intangible cultural heritage, as well as promoting international cooperation.¹ The convention established the Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices and today, there are 584 expressions of intangible cultural heritage on the List from 131 countries. As of 2021, 161 countries have ratified the convention. The United States, while attendant at the original convention, has not ratified the convention.²

The convention is the result of previous conventions and statements established by UNESCO such as the 1972 Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, the 1989 UNESCO Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore, the 2001 UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, and the 2002 Istanbul

1 "Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage," UNESCO, accessed April 8, 2021, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention>.

2 Lenzerini, Federico. "Protecting the Tangible, Safeguarding the Intangible: A Same Conventional Model for Different Needs." In *Climate Change as a Threat to Peace: Impacts on Cultural Heritage and Cultural Diversity*, edited by Von Schorlemer Sabine and Maus Sylvia, 141-60. Frankfurt Am Main: Peter Lang AG, 2014. Accessed April 6, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv2t4cvp.13>, p. 143-144.

Declaration.³ These previous conventions and declarations laid the foundation for the 2003 ICH Convention by bringing the discussion of intangible to the foreground on par with that of tangible culture. Additionally, these declarations and conventions have further considered culture in a more holistic sense and not simply by a western centered interpretation. Through these previous conventions and declarations, the international heritage community has been able to consider additional aspects of culture and has led to the international acceptance of intangible cultural heritage as important for both human history and our collective future.

One of the most important functions of the convention is the codification of an official definition of what intangible cultural heritage is. The 2003 convention defines intangible cultural heritage as:

the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, 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 provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. For the purposes of this Convention, consideration will be given solely to such intangible cultural heritage as is compatible with existing international human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development.⁴

3 “Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage,” UNESCO, accessed April 8, 2021, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention>; UNESCO World Heritage Centre, “Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage,” UNESCO World Heritage Centre, accessed September 8, 2022, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/>; UNESCO, “Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore,” Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore - UN Documents: Gathering a body of global agreements, 1989, <http://www.un-documents.net/folklore.htm>; UNESCO, “2001 UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity,” 2001, <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/435cbcd64.pdf>; UNESCO, “Istanbul Declaration on the Protection of World Heritage,” 2002.

4 “Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage,” UNESCO, accessed April 8, 2021, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention>.

The definition as laid out in the 2003 Convention establishes intangible cultural heritage as a living expression of culture that is both the tangible artifacts produced by the practice of intangible cultural heritage as well as the continuation of knowledge through the continual practice of the cultural expressions. The definition will be further discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

Additionally, the definition states that only cultural practices which are “compatible with existing international and human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups, and individuals, and of sustainable development” will be considered.⁵ This clause bars cultural practices that are generally racist, sexist, and classist from being considered for inclusion in the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage. This will be further discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

The 2003 convention additionally outlines five different domains in which intangible cultural heritage is expressed. These domains are as follows;

- (a) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage;
- (b) performing arts;
- (c) social practices, rituals and festive events;
- (d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;
- (e) traditional craftsmanship.⁶

⁵ “Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage,” UNESCO, accessed April 8, 2021, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention>.; UNESCO, “What Is Intangible Cultural Heritage?,” UNESCO, accessed November 15, 2021, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/what-is-intangible-heritage-00003>.

⁶ Ibid.

These five domains through which intangible cultural heritage is expressed help to sort expressions of culture into categories. The organizing of intangible cultural heritage practices into domains helps to make connections between different cultures when studying the ways that societies practice their respective cultures. This is especially true through how UNESCO presents the items that have been listed as intangible cultural heritage on the UNESCO website. The organization invites online visitors to learn more about the aspects of intangible cultural heritage that have been inscribed on the list through a web map which connects the many different practices through their common domains and further similarities. The domains and resulting connections between societies and practices can further be used as an instrument of cultural understanding and aid in peace-building efforts. These domains will be discussed in a greater depth in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

The 2003 ICH Convention also provides for the “safeguarding” of intangible cultural heritage. Per the text of the convention, safeguarding means,

*measures aimed at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage, including the identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education, as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage.*⁷

One of the ways in which UNESCO directly safeguards intangible cultural heritage is through the direct promotion of cultural aspects in prominent publications such as that of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

⁷ Ibid.

The Importance of International Sport Heritage

Sport has also become a topic of interest on the international stage beyond that of international competitions. The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development identified sport as one of the seventeen sustainability goals introduced in the 2030 Agenda. The United Nations recognizes sport as a tool that can be used to achieve peace and promote tolerance along with respect. Additionally, the United Nations views sport as having the ability to enhance the empowerment of women, young people, and communities as well as promote education and social inclusion. The recognition of sport by the United Nations as a sustainable development goal furthers the emerging importance of sport as an academic discipline.⁸

Further, UNESCO has expressed the importance of sport as a cultural function through their establishment and promotion of International Day of Sport for Development and Peace in 2013.⁹ UNESCO cited the fact that sport has played an important role in all societies through either competitive sport, physical activity, or active play. In establishing the International Day, UNESCO further declared that “sport and play are human rights that must be protected and enforced worldwide” and that sport can be a high-impact tool in humanitarian development and peace-building efforts. The international recognition of sport as an important facet of all societies furthers the necessity to analyze and consider all forms of sport, such as that of American College Football.

⁸ “Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development | Department of Economic and Social Affairs,” United Nations (United Nations, September 27, 2015), <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>.

⁹ UNESCO, “International Day of Sport for Development and Peace,” UNESCO.org, January 1, 1970, <https://www.unesco.org/en/days/sport-development-and-peace-day>.

American College Football & the Southeastern Conference

Football, as it is known today, has undergone many centuries of refinement and change. The game first originated in England in the tenth and eleventh centuries and was then known as “Dane’s Head.” The game was played by kicking a ball between towns and while legend holds that the first ball was a skull, it was more likely to be an inflated cow’s bladder. After the sport was outlawed by King Henry II in the 1100’s and subsequently reinstated by King James I in the 1600’s, the sport developed into a more formal expression as it became popular with British schoolboys. The development of the game continued in 1823 when Ellis of Rugby, in a misunderstanding of the rules, picked up the ball and ran with it as opposed to the traditional way the game was played through forceful kicking. This led to the creation of Rugby out of the original game of “Dane’s Head” and furthered the development of American football.¹⁰ The gradual progression of the sport of football from an informal game between towns to a more codified and rule-oriented sport speaks to the importance of the sport as intangible cultural heritage.

Consistent with the definition of intangible cultural heritage, football is a constantly recreated cultural expression that is passed from generation to generation. While rules and adaptations have occurred, such as increased safety measures and the introductions of pads and helmets, football maintains its status as intangible cultural heritage through how it is recreated in response to the environment, and in a modern sense, a more safety focused environment. The development of football over time from essentially a medieval sport to a modern sport emphasizes the adaptation of the sport as it is passed from generation to generation.¹¹

10 Riesman, David, and Reuel Denney. "Football in America: A Study in Culture Diffusion." *American Quarterly* 3, no. 4 (1951): 309-25. Accessed April 6, 2021. doi:10.2307/3031463, p. 311-313.

11 Allen Guttmann, “From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sports,” (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), p. 307-321.

There is an ongoing debate as to whether or not there is a sharp break between premodern and modern sport.¹² Allen Guttman argues that in order for a sport to be considered “modern” it must possess seven characteristics. Those characteristics are: secularism, equal opportunity to compete in the conditions of competition, specialization of roles, rationalization, bureaucratic organization, quantification, and the quest for records.¹³ Those who challenged Guttman’s idea of the seven characteristics that divide modern and pre-modern sport argued that there were, in fact, examples of sports both quantifying and keeping records in premodern sport history. This challenge to the stark divide between modern and pre-modern sports called Guttman’s thesis on the seven characteristics into question and muddied the waters between modern and pre-modern sports.¹⁴

It can be argued that football as we know it is a modern sport based on the definition provided by Allen Guttman. Football is a secular sport in that the game is not played to appease any gods or provide a bountiful harvest season. Football allows for an equal opportunity to participate in the game under the conditions of competition. Football has a specialization of roles ranging from head coach to quarterback coach to defensive end to running back to tight end. Football is rationalized through rules, regulations, and referees who enforce the rules and

12 Allen Guttman, “From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sports,” (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), p. 307-321.; Michael Novak, “The Joy of Sports: End Zones, Bases, Baskets, Balls, and the Consecration of the American Spirit,” (New York: Basic Books, 1976); Paul Hoch, “Rip Off the Big Game: The Exploitation of Sports by the Power Elite,” (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books; John A. Lucas & Ronald A. Smith, “The Saga of American Sport,” (Philadelphia: Lea & Febiger, 1978); Benjamin G. Rader, Review of Modern Sports: In Search of Interpretations, by Michael Novak, Paul Hoch, Allen Guttman, John A. Lucas, and Ronald A. Smith. *Journal of Social History* 13, no. 2 (1979): 307–21. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3787346>.

13 Allen Guttman, “From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sports,” (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), p. 307-321.

14 Ancient Sport and Allen Guttman Author(s): Wolfgang Decker, Translated by Corinna Goodman and Daniel A. Nathan Source: *Journal of Sport History* , Vol. 44, No. 1 (Spring 2017), pp. 64-71 Published by: University of Illinois Press; Edwin H. Cady, “The Big Game: College Sports and American Life,” (Knoxville, 1978), p. 16-30.

regulations during play. Football has a bureaucratic organization through the presence of institutions such as the university level athletic department, the Southeastern Conference, and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). Football is quantified through the many statistics that are kept of individual players, games, and bowl appearances to name a few. Finally, football's quest for records is seen through the many statistics that are continually created and broken such as how many rushing yards a player has, how many touchdowns a quarterback throws, and how many sacks a defensive player makes.

The fact that football fits the definition of modern sport as described by Guttmann does not mean that football cannot be considered as ICH despite UNESCO's general prejudice against modern sports. Other sports that fit Guttmann's definition of modern sport includes Hurling in Ireland. This sport predates the written history of Ireland and has transformed from a traditional sport to a modern sport that is played in large stadiums and is broadcasted on Irish television, much like College Football.¹⁵ The inscription of Hurling shows that modern type sports can be listed by UNESCO as ICH.

College football in the United States has been played since 1869 and has been shaped and influenced by both universities and individuals throughout its nearly 150-year history. The first football game was played on November 6, 1869, between Rutgers and Princeton in front of a crowd of around 100 people.¹⁶ While the rules and format of the game were much different than they are today, American interest in the sport took off. Football spread from the universities in

¹⁵ UNESCO, "Unesco - Hurling," Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO), accessed January 27, 2023, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/hurling-01263>.

¹⁶ Peter Swain, "The Origins of Football Debate: The Continuing Demise of the Dominant Paradigm, 1852–1856," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 31, no. 17 (March 2014): pp. 2212-2229, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2014.918542>, & Sam Richmond, "1st College Football Game Ever Was New Jersey vs. Rutgers in 1869," NCAA.com (NCAA.com, November 6, 2019), <https://www.ncaa.com/news/football/article/2017-11-06/college-football-history-heres-when-1st-game-was-played>.

New England down into the Mid-Atlantic states and then into the South and Mid-West. Southern universities and colleges quickly took to the sport, furthering its influence within the country.¹⁷

In the early years of the sport in the southern states, football was nearly outlawed following the death of the University of Georgia player, Richard ‘Von’ Gammon, in 1897 in a game against the University of Virginia. His death led to calls from citizens and politicians throughout the south calling for the end of the sport entirely. The calls increased to the point that a bill outlawing the sport made it to the Georgia governor’s desk, with similar ones being brought before the legislatures of neighboring states. However, despite these calls for the sport to be outlawed, there was a larger contingent, which included ‘Von’ Gammon’s mother and university officials, that led to the governor vetoing the bill. Following Georgia’s lead, surrounding states did not pursue this type of sport-ending legislation any further. The continuation of football in the south, despite the early challenges to its legitimacy, demonstrates the lasting cultural power of football and that football has become a cultural practice that has been passed down from generation to generation.

History of the Southeastern Conference

The Southeastern Conference, commonly known as the SEC, was formed officially as an intercollegiate athletic competition league in 1933. The beginnings of the SEC can be traced to December 22, 1894, when Dr. William Dudley of Vanderbilt University, gathered representatives from southern universities in Atlanta to discuss the idea of forming an organization to formally establish rules and regulations as well as solve disputes and provide

¹⁷ Ibid.

guidance for collegiate athletics. Following this meeting in 1894, the first iteration of the SEC was established as the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Association and was thus called until 1922.¹⁸

The original schools that joined together to form the conference were the University of Alabama, Auburn University, the University of Florida, the University of Georgia, the University of Kentucky, Louisiana State University, the University of Mississippi, Mississippi State University, the University of Tennessee, and Vanderbilt University as well as Tulane University, the Georgia Institute of Technology, and Sewanee University. Sewanee University withdrew from the conference in 1940, followed by Georgia Tech in 1964, and Tulane University in 1966. Additions to the conference were made in 1991 with the University of South Carolina and the University of Arkansas and in 2012 with the addition of Texas A&M University and the University of Missouri.¹⁹

The office of the Commissioner of the SEC was established in 1940 at the annual meeting in Jackson, Mississippi. The universities came to the conclusion that there needed to be one person to oversee the organization as a whole. To date, there have been eight SEC Commissioners with Gerg Sankey, the current Commissioner serving in the role since 2015.²⁰

¹⁸ Christopher J. Walsh, *Where Football Is King: a History of the SEC* (Lanham, MD: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2006), p. 9-13.

¹⁹ Bert Randolph Sugar, *The SEC: a Pictorial History of The Southeastern Conference Football* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1979), p. 1 & Christopher J. Walsh, *Where Football Is King: a History of the SEC* (Lanham, MD: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2006), p. 17.

²⁰ Christopher J. Walsh, *Where Football Is King: a History of the SEC* (Lanham, MD: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2006), p. 21.

Literature Review

This thesis will situate itself within the larger body of academic work which considers the historic and cultural importance of sport as well as discussions about intangible cultural heritage. The history and heritage of sport has fascinated historians and scholars for a long time. However, the study of the history of sport was not an outright field until fairly recently. The study of sport can trace its beginnings to Renaissance scholars who studied classical history. Sport in this context was limited specifically to the Olympics in Ancient Greece and gladiatorial matches in Ancient Rome. However, the topic of sport was seen as a minor subject in the field of classical studies and has only recently reached greater prominence as a subset of historical study in the twentieth century and has continued to grow.²¹

Perhaps the most comprehensive study of sport history is *The Oxford Handbook of Sports History* edited by Robert Edelman and Wayne Wilson. Within the Oxford Handbook, the study of sport history as an academic endeavor is generally traced back to the 1951 doctoral dissertation of John Rickards Betts entitled “Organized Sport in Industrial America.” Following the popularity of Dr. Betts’s dissertation, many physical educators organized the International Committee for the History of Physical Education.²² In the context of the study of sport history in the United States, the leading scholars who have studied the development of sports, the cultural impact of sports, and the history of sport include Stuart Hall, Raymond Williams, and Antonio Gramsci. Their early efforts in the 1970s to study sport as an aspect of culture were dismissed by many academics as “not serious.” Following their work, Elliot Gorn, Jules Tygiel, Steven Reiss,

21 Gregory Ramshaw, *Heritage and Sport: An Introduction* (Bristol, UK: Channel View Publications, 2020), p. 10.

22 Robert Edelman and Wayne Wilson, eds., *Oxford Handbook of Sports History* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020), p.1 & Gregory Ramshaw, *Heritage and Sport: An Introduction* (Bristol, UK: Channel View Publications, 2020), p. 10.

Randy Roberts, Nancy Struna, and Stephen Pope also emerged as leading academics on the history and heritage of sport.²³

The study of sport history and sport heritage certainly do not exist within an academic vacuum. Many sister studies such as kinesiology, communications, and tourism studies also play important roles in the development and study of sports history and heritage and are well represented as interdisciplinary fields with the study of sport.²⁴ The study of sport also offers the opportunity to explore topics such as the intersection of gender, class, race, age, and sexual orientation and their intersection with sport history and heritage. In more recent years, as sport has become a popular cultural phenomenon, the academic study of sport has also expanded.²⁵ This has led to American College Football, including SEC College Football, becoming more widely studied academically. Topics that have been studied in the context of College Football includes the development of football in the south and the financial benefits that colleges and universities gain through college sports.²⁶ As a whole, American College Football considered as

23 Robert Edelman and Wayne Wilson, eds., *Oxford Handbook of Sports History* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020) & Martin Polley, *Sports History: a Practical Guide* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 42 - 43 & Gregory Ramshaw, *Heritage and Sport: An Introduction* (Bristol, UK: Channel View Publications, 2020), p. 3-4; Elliott J. Gorn and Warren Goldstein, *A Brief History of American Sports* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013); Jules Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment* (Oxford University Press, 1983); Steven A. Riess, *Sport in the Industrial Age, 1850-1920* (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1995); Randy Roberts, *A Team for America: The Army-Navy Game That Rallied a Nation at War* (Boston, MA: Mariner Books, 2012); Stuart Hall, "Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms," *Media, Culture, & Society*, no. 1 (1980): pp. 57-72, <https://doi.org/10.1177/016344378000200106>; Antonio Gramsci, Quintin Hoare, and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (New York: International Publishers, 2008); Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society: 1780-1950* (London: Vintage, 1977); Nancy L. Struna, *People of Prowess: Sport, Leisure, and Labor in Early Anglo-America* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1996); Stephen W. Pope, *Patriotic Games: Sporting Traditions in the American Imagination, 1876-1926* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997).

24 Josh Howard, "On Sport, Public History, and Public Sport History," *Journal of Sport History* 45, no. 1 (2018): 24-40, muse.jhu.edu/article/691730, p. 26.

25 Kevin Moore. "Sport History, Public History, and Popular Culture: A Growing Engagement." *Journal of Sport History* 40, no. 1 (2013): 39–55, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/jsporthistory.40.1.39>.

26 J. Douglas Toma, *Football U.: Spectator Sports and Building the American University* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), p. 23-44; Jay Coakley, "Assessing the Sociology of Sport: On Cultural Sensibilities and the Great Sport Myth." *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 50, no. 4-5 (June 2015): 402–6. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690214538864>, p. 403. & J. R. Thelin, (1996). *Games colleges play: Scandal and reform in intercollegiate athletics*. JHU Press.; James H. Frey, and D. Stanley Eitzen. "Sport and Society." *Annual Review*

a cultural phenomenon is a recently emerging topic within the field and one that deserves to be explored further.

Research Question

This thesis will explore American College Football as intangible cultural heritage through examples of SEC College Football and poses the question: Can American College Football be considered intangible cultural heritage per the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage? If so, how does American College Football express itself as intangible cultural heritage and how ought we safeguard it?

Methodology

This thesis will explore the question of whether American College Football meets the definition of intangible cultural heritage in the 2003 UNESCO Convention through the examples of SEC College Football. In order to do so, the text of the convention, along with its associated definitions and domains, will be employed to analyze the many different cultural aspects of American College Football through the examples of the SEC in order determine whether or not it can be considered intangible cultural heritage. Primary sources that will be used in this thesis include student newspapers from the selected SEC colleges, additional newspaper articles, and

of Sociology 17 (1991): 503-22. Accessed April 6, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2083352>, p. 504.; Riesman, David, and Reuel Denney. "Football in America: A Study in Culture Diffusion." *American Quarterly* 3, no. 4 (1951): 309-25. Accessed April 6, 2021. doi:10.2307/3031463.; Moore, Kevin. "Sport History, Public History, and Popular Culture: A Growing Engagement." *Journal of Sport History* 40, no. 1 (2013): 39-55. Accessed April 6, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/jsporthistory.40.1.39>.; Geoffery Z. Kohe (2018) Running with the ball? Making a play for sport heritage archives in Higher Education contexts, *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 24:3, 256-269, DOI: 10.1080/13527258.2017.1378910; Edwin H. Cady, "The Big Game: College Sports and American Life," (Knoxville, 1978).

archival documents from the selected colleges. Additionally, publications created by the universities, peer reviewed journals, and additional relevant publications will be used to analyze the parallels between this sport and the UNESCO convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage.

While there are currently 14 teams within the SEC, this thesis will draw evidence from just four of the colleges within the conference. These colleges will be Auburn University, Louisiana State University, the University of Alabama, and the University of Georgia. These colleges were chosen as all are original members of the SEC, have some of the largest stadiums and fan bases, and are some of the most prominent colleges within the conference. Size of fan base was considered when choosing colleges as the size of the fan base directly relates to the size of the active cultural practitioners. Additionally, the SEC has been chosen as the focus of American College Football examples due to the author's proximity and experience with the conference.

Organization

This thesis is organized into four chapters. This introductory chapter has established the research question and discussed Intangible Cultural Heritage, the 2003 UNESCO ICH Convention, and American College Football with a focus on SEC Football. The following chapters will use the text of the 2003 ICH Convention to analyze SEC College Football as intangible cultural heritage. Chapter two will apply the definition of intangible cultural heritage to SEC College Football and discuss how SEC College Football is manifested through the domains of the 2003 ICH Convention. Additionally, Chapter two will draw direct comparisons between elements of SEC College Football and currently inscribed cultural practices on the ICH list. Chapter three will discuss safeguarding ICH and the safeguarding of American College

Football as ICH. Chapter four will conclude this thesis and will answer the question of whether American College Football, through the examples of SEC College Football, meets the criteria to be considered intangible cultural heritage per the 2003 ICH Convention.

CHAPTER 2

COLLEGE FOOTBALL AS INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

As outlined in the introduction, intangible cultural heritage means “the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage.”²⁷ When SEC Football is considered through the lens of this definition, many examples of these cultural expressions are evident. These cultural expressions are manifested by both the players and coaches who are actively engaging in the sport as well as the fans and spectators in the stands and can be identified as fitting squarely within accepted definitions of intangible cultural heritage.

Practices, Representations, Expressions...

SEC college football as a cultural practice is expressed through the playing of the game itself, the practice of tailgating, team walks, post-game traditions, fight songs and chants, cheerleading, and is tangibly represented through the use of mascots. These practices are some of the easiest and most widespread for fans and spectators to actively participate in when attending a football game.

²⁷ “Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage,” UNESCO, accessed April 8, 2021, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention>.

Tailgating

Tailgating is perhaps the most widely practiced aspect of SEC College Football. The practice of tailgating is, generally, the gathering of fans in advance of sporting event that is centered around the sharing of food and camaraderie with fellow fans. The earliest cited example of a tailgate in the United States was at the Battle of Bull Run on July 21, 1861 in Manassas, Virginia.²⁸ With the first major battle of the American Civil War happening so close a major city, Washington D.C., members of the public had an opportunity to watch the battle occur in person. Citizens packed picnics and alcoholic beverages to sit and watch the events unfold. This practice of bringing food and drink, gathering with friends, and watching an event take place, mirrors the modern tailgating practice.

The idea of a picnic before a “sporting event,” like that in 1861, extends further back than the Civil War. Parallels can be drawn between spectators observing athletic feats in the eighth century B.C. at the first Olympic Games, as well as the chariot races and gladiatorial battles of the Roman Empire.²⁹ Additionally, the idea of pre-competition revelry continued into the Middle Ages and Renaissance with archery and jousting tournaments that drew large crowds.³⁰ In more modern times, especially during the Victorian Era of Great Britain, spectators would pack picnics before horse races and rowing events. This is most similar to the modern-day concept of tailgating before a sporting event where one can gather with friends and family to eat, drink, and then cheer on their chosen champion.

²⁸ Tonya Williams Bradford and John F. Sherry, “Domesticating Public Space through Ritual: Tailgating as Vestival,” *Journal of Consumer Research* 42, no. 1 (2015): pp. 130-151, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucv001>, p. 134 & Richard Hall, “They All Fought at Bull Run,” *Minerva*, no. 3 (1991), p. 9.

²⁹ Gilbert LeRoy Little. “Leashing the Dawgs: a Structuralist Analysis of Sporting-Event Tailgating as a Social Problem at the University of Georgia, Athens, 2000-2007,” 2007, p. 3.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

The beginning of football specific tailgates in the United States can be traced to the first football game between Princeton and Rutgers on November 6, 1869. The tradition of the pregame picnic quickly spread to the other northeastern colleges and then travelled south to the mid-Atlantic and southern colleges as teams and fans travelled to watch the games across the country. This weekly cultural exchange caused the pregame picnic to quickly become common practice at football games nationwide. Additionally, as owning an automobile became more common, tailgating acquired its name from fans drive to the football game and then hosting the picnic from the tailgate of the automobile. In fact, tailgating became so popular that Americans began to tailgate other events such as the US atomic bomb tests in the southwest, thus spreading the practice of tailgating even farther.³¹

The Green Bay Packers claim that they were the first to coin the term “tailgating” in 1919 but this is debated.³² Within the SEC, tailgating began with fans traveling to see their team play and bringing a picnic to eat before the game. The practice expanded as teams began to play more games each year. In turn, the sport rose in popularity which drew more fans to the games and therefore more tailgaters. As football became more popular in the south, the practice of tailgating before the game was “made a social function” where those who wanted to watch the game began to fully embrace the pregame ritual of tailgating.³³ In 1922, during the rivalry game between Auburn and UGA, the Auburn *Plainsman* published an article in the student newspaper stating that before the game even began,

“There is a great contingent of supporters there on either side and the spirit runs high. It was certainly running high this time. It was manifest in the hurrying, scurrying crowds that flashed up and down the streets, in the flourishing display of the Orange and

³¹ Tonya Williams Bradford and John F. Sherry, “Domesticating Public Space through Ritual: Tailgating as Vestival,” *Journal of Consumer Research* 42, no. 1 (2015): pp. 130-151, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucv001>, p. 135

³² Adam Goldstein, *Tailgate to Heaven* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Press, 2012), p. 65.

³³ Fuzzy Woodruff, *A History of Southern Football, 1890-1928, in Three Volumes*, vol. 1 (Atlanta, GA: Walter B. Brown Publishing Co., 1928), p. 28.

*Blue of Auburn and the Red and Black of Georgia, both cheered to the point of frenzy, and altogether, in the blood-curdling yells, the tooting of myriad horns, the babbling of thousands of voices, rising in sympathy or in friendly strife.*³⁴

As the early games were unable to be hosted at the universities themselves for lack of stadiums and distance of travel in the early 1900s, fans who traveled to see their team play dressed in their school colors and packed lunches to eat while they enjoyed the game just as they did at the Auburn-Georgia game as reported in the *Plainsman*.

Today, tailgating takes place before most football games, both professional and at the college level, and has evolved to be almost a sport of its own with regionalisms and school specific traditions. At the heart of tailgating is the social element of camaraderie and brotherhood set within the context of cheering for the same team, sharing in that heritage, and taunting the same rivals. Tailgating as a practice can take many forms depending on what time of day the event is scheduled and where in the United States the tailgate is taking place, but in general tailgating follows a general pattern. As Tonya Bradford and John Sherry have argued, “Tailgating is now commonly understood in American society to be a social gathering comprising individuals grilling, eating, drinking, and socializing in advance of an event.”³⁵ This practice can be considered the event before the event where a social layer is added to a sporting event and allows fans and observers to feel as though they are participating in the action off the field. There is a wide variety of what is considered to be tailgating, with the practice being individualized and “customized” by practitioners as it is estimated that nearly 70 million people tailgate before a collegiate or professional football game each year.³⁶ Tailgating can range from

³⁴ “Tiger's Victory Over Georgia Hard Earned, But Decisive,” *The Auburn Plainsman*, November 18, 1922, p. 1-2.

³⁵ Tonya Williams Bradford and John F. Sherry, “Domesticating Public Space through Ritual: Tailgating as Vestival,” *Journal of Consumer Research* 42, no. 1 (2015): pp. 130-151, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucv001>, p. 134.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

two people sharing a cooler of beer, sitting on the tailgate of a truck, and listening to the game on the radio, to dozens of people with a full buffet, kegs of beer, and televisions and even to recreational vehicle (RV) camps with a full spread of picnic tables, flat screens, and live bands.

In whatever manner a tailgate is practiced, it is evident that it is just about as popular as the football game itself. Within the Southeastern Conference, the statistics about tailgating speak for themselves. For example, the University of Alabama's football stadium, Bryant-Denny Stadium, is capable of seating 101,821 people, but on any given Saturday, it is estimated that between 135,000 and 140,000 people show up to tailgate, many without tickets to the game itself.³⁷ This trend is true for practically all of the teams within the SEC. On average, more people show up to tailgates before the game than will be able to attend the game. Simply being close to the stadium and participating in a tailgate speaks to the importance of tailgates and how widespread and influential tailgates are as an intangible cultural practice within the Southeastern Conference.

There is precedent for practices similar to tailgating being recognized by the international community. Examples of intangible cultural heritage that are already listed as part of the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List includes the Grass Mowing Competition and Custom in Kupres, Bosnia and Herzegovina. During the Grass Mowing Festival, people travel from across Bosnia and Herzegovina to participate in the sporting event of speed grass mowing as well as the festival that surrounds the competition similar to how football fans will travel to see their chosen team play and participate in the pregame festivities such as tailgating. The practice is, according to UNESCO, "the most important social event in the Kupres municipality." All ethnic and religious groups in Kupres are allowed to participate with the overarching link

³⁷ Christopher J. Walsh, *Where Football Is King: a History of the SEC* (Lanham, MD: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2006), p. 146.

between the cultures being the Grass Mowing Competition. This is very similar to the many SEC College Football Teams coming to tailgate before the game and sharing in the practice of SEC College Football despite their different backgrounds and team affiliations. The Grass Mowing Festival combines sport competition with a social celebration that is centered on food and watching the sporting competition just as SEC College Football does.³⁸

Team Walks

One of the more recent additions to SEC college football practices are the team walks. Beginning in the 1960's, teams began a procession for the fans prior to the game.³⁹ A few hours before kickoff, the coaches and players will parade into the stadium as part of a spectacle to engage with the fans before the game begins. These practices have become very popular across the SEC and are able to bring together fans, players, and coaches alike with each school having its own interpretation of the practice. At Louisiana State University, their team walk is called "Walk Down Victory Hill" where the team parades from Victory Hill to the stadium as university fight songs are performed by the marching band.⁴⁰ Similarly, at Auburn University, they participate in the "Tiger Walk." This tradition at Auburn was started in the 1960s when children would follow the team as they walked from the Athletic Complex down Donahue Drive to Jordan-Hare Stadium. The most famous Tiger Walk took place on December 2, 1989, when Auburn hosted the University of Alabama for the first time. Previously, all games between the

³⁸ UNESCO, "Grass Mowing Competition Custom in Kupres," UNESCO, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/grass-mowing-competition-custom-in-kupres-01512>.

³⁹ Warren St. John, *Rammer Jammer Yellow Hammer: A Road Trip into the Heart of Fan Mania* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2004), p. 228

⁴⁰ Tom Boyd, "Coach Addresses Pep Rally Crowd," *The Daily Reveille*, October 28, 1959, p. 1.

two were hosted at a neutral site in Birmingham, Alabama. Auburn University estimated that close to 20,000 people attended the Tiger Walk that day.⁴¹

The University of Georgia was one of the SEC schools to adopt this tradition later than others. In 2004, former head coach, Mark Richt looked to bolster enthusiasm for the football team and decided to institute the Dawg Walk in conjunction with the Redcoat Marching Band warm up at the Dean William Tate Student Center located next to Sanford Stadium. Two hours and fifteen minutes before the start of the game, the team is bussed down to the Dean William Tate Student Center and with the Redcoat Marching Band, they parade down into the west end zone of Sanford Stadium all the while signing autographs, taking photographs, and hugging fans.⁴²

This tradition of engaging with the team and coaches before the game in a parade fashion has quickly become popular among fans. As an element of intangible cultural heritage, the team walk allows for the fans to interact with members of the team in a more direct sense rather than simply cheering them on within the stadium. Therefore, it has become a common practice as part of the pregame ritual. However, in terms of the integrity of the practice, the practice follows the pattern similar to tailgating, in that there has been the gradual development with new technology adding to the practice and not detracting from it. This can be best seen through the introduction of smart phone cameras replacing the film cameras of the 1980s, when the practice first began. Now, instead of waiting to see the photos of the team walk in the newspaper, the walk can be live-streamed and witnessed by those who are not present at the stadium. Despite this advancement in technology, the practice itself has not changed. Even though the practice could

⁴¹ Paul Hemphill, *A Tiger Walk Through History* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2008).

⁴² Amy Farley, "Fans Walk With Dogs," *The Red and Black*, October 21, 2005, pp. 5-6. & Cris Douglas, "Dawg Walk' Added," *Red and Black*, June 10, 2004, pp. 27-28.

be viewed halfway across the country, it still follows the pattern of the team parading into the stadium to mark the beginning of the game.

Team walks, like parades and processions, are events where those who are being honored process before a crowd ahead of the subsequent cultural practice. A similar practice that is currently listed as part of UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List is that of the Marches of Entre-Sambre-et-Meuse in Belgium. During the practice of the Marches of Entre-Sambre-et-Meuse, citizens of Sambre and Meuse in Wallonia, process in a military type formations through the towns accompanied by fife and drum bands to honor their local Saint. Similarly, at SEC College Football team walks, the football team and coaches are led through crowds of spectators with the accompaniment of a brass band which serves to unite the fans before the football game. Both practices allow fans and practitioners to promote social cohesion through mutual participation in the marching and watching of the procession and solidifies the idea of the practice of team walks as an example of intangible cultural heritage that has precedence in listing through practices such as the Marches of Entre-Sambre-et-Meuse.⁴³

Post-Game Traditions

Following a victory on the football field, universities have developed many traditions to celebrate the win. These practices are part of the intangible cultural heritage of SEC football culture and help to demonstrate the linkage between the material environment and the intangible cultural heritage that fans, alumni, and students continue to practice. Two examples of these post game traditions, which are some of the most recognizable in the SEC, are the University of Georgia's "ringing the Chapel Bell" and Auburn University's "Rolling of Toomer's Corner."

⁴³ UNESCO, "UNESCO - Marches of Entre-Sambre-Et-Meuse," Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO), accessed April 12, 2023, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/marches-of-entre-sambre-et-meuse-00670>.

At the University of Georgia, the post game victory tradition is for fans to ring the Chapel Bell. The tradition spans back 126 years to December 1, 1894 and was first recorded in a reference in the *Red & Black* student newspaper. The newspaper recounted after the football game that, “The night had far spent itself when the last echo of the bell was heard and the dying embers of the great bonfire was all that was left to remind the passer by (sic) that the great day was over. Georgia had triumphed!” And thus the tradition of ringing the Chapel Bell to celebrate a football victory began.⁴⁴

The ringing of the Chapel Bell at the University of Georgia is the practice of ringing prominent bells in order to notify the community of a victory for their team in a football game. Fans, students, and alumni gather to either participate in the ringing of the bell or will listen to the chiming as part of their celebration. Parallels of these post game celebration traditions, such as the ringing of the UGA Chapel Bell, on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List can be seen through the listed practice of the Annual Carnival Bell Ringers Pageant from the Kastav Area in Croatia. The listed practice is centered on a festival that feature the ringing of bells in celebration much like that of the ringing of the UGA Chapel Bell.⁴⁵ The ringing of bells is used as a tradition in the cases of the tradition from Kastav to strengthen community bonds through common celebration similarly to how the community of fans at the Universities of Georgia come together to celebrate football victories with the ringing of bells. More than bells simply being wrung in the Bell Ringer’s Pageant, the practice seeks to integrate newcomers into the traditional culture of the town, much like how those who are not as familiar

⁴⁴ “Hoo! Rah! Rah! An Old Score Settled!,” *The Red and Black*, December 1, 1894, p. 1.

⁴⁵ UNESCO, “Annual Carnival Bell Ringers' Pageant from the Kastav Area,” UNESCO, accessed June 6, 2021, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/annual-carnival-bell-ringers-pageant-from-the-kastav-area-00243>.

with the cultural practices of SEC College Football can easily learn some part of the traditions through ringing the UGA Chapel Bell.

Auburn University practices perhaps one of the more strange post game victory traditions. Following a football victory the Auburn students, alumni, and fans will “Roll Toomer’s Corner.” At the intersection of College Street and Magnolia Avenue across from Toomer’s Drugs, fans gather to throw toilet paper into the large live oaks trees that were planted by the Class of 1917.⁴⁶ However, it wasn’t until 1972 that toilet paper was actually thrown after a victory over bitter rival Alabama in the Iron Bowl. Terry Henley, the team’s halfback, was quoted before the game as saying, “We are going to beat the No. 2 out of Alabama.” After his reference to “No. 2,” cheeky Auburn students and fans grabbed their rolls of toilet paper and continued the joke by rolling the trees on Toomer’s Corner.⁴⁷

At Auburn University, the post game tradition of rolling the oaks is linked not only to football but to the identity of the university as a whole. The importance of this landmark, as well as the practice of throwing toilet paper, in celebration is recognized by students, the community, and even rival universities. It demonstrates the link between the material space of the campus as well as the intangible tradition of victorious Auburn students gathering to continue the over fifty-year tradition of rolling their Toomer’s Oaks.⁴⁸

Rolling Toomer’s Corner is the practice of decorating large oak trees with toilet paper in order to celebrate a football victory. Fans, students, and alumni will gather at Toomer’s Corner

⁴⁶ Gary Keever, “The Poisoning of the Toomer's Oaks – A Rivalry Gone Awry,” Auburn University Horticulture (Auburn University), accessed November 20, 2020, <https://hort.auburn.edu/news-and-events/a-rivalry-gone-awry/>.

⁴⁷ Paul Hemphill, *A Tiger Walk Through History* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2008), p. 144 & John Duncan, “The Duncan Report: That Was the Week That Was, 17-16,” *The Auburn Plainsman*, January 11, 1973, pp. 9-11, <https://content.lib.auburn.edu/digital/collection/plainsman/id/2219/rec/106>.

⁴⁸ Gary Keever, “The Poisoning of the Toomer's Oaks – A Rivalry Gone Awry,” Auburn University Horticulture (Auburn University), accessed November 20, 2020, <https://hort.auburn.edu/news-and-events/a-rivalry-gone-awry/>.

with their supply of toilet paper rolls in order to throw the rolls into the branches of the oak trees. The tradition of Rolling Toomer's Corner is similar to the Czechia tradition of Handmade Production of Christmas Tree Decorations from Blown Glass Beads. The Czechia tradition is practiced through the decorating trees during the Christmas season with strings of blown glass beads. While there is a large difference between toilet paper and handcrafted glass beads, both practices involve many people across generations coming together in celebration to decorate trees.⁴⁹

Fight Songs & Chants

Fight songs and chants are further examples of cultural practices that are a part of SEC college football. This practice of fight songs and chants involves fans of football teams singing songs or participating in chants that display their allegiance to their team. Fight songs and chants came into the university consciousness with the rise in the popularity of football in the late 1800s. The songs and chants were originally published in the student newspapers in order for the student body to learn them.⁵⁰ However, many of the published fight songs were created for individual rivalry games and were rather long and complex. One such example is "The Song of the Chattahoochee" which was written by an Auburn student in 1922 for the student body to sing at the annual Auburn-Georgia game. The song is five verses long without a chorus and plays off of the idea of the schools being on either side of the Chattahoochee River from each other.⁵¹

⁴⁹ UNESCO, "Handmade Production of Christmas Tree Decorations from Blown Glass Beads," UNESCO, accessed June 5, 2021, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/handmade-production-of-christmas-tree-decorations-from-blown-glass-beads-01559>.

⁵⁰ "Dick 'Russell Leads Georgia Yells,'" *The Red and Black*, February 10, 1914, p. 1. & "Tiger Yells," *The Auburn Plainsman*, September 11, 1925, p. 2.

⁵¹ "The Song of the Chattahoochee," *The Auburn Plainsman*, November 18, 1922, p. 2.

While songs such as this are very interesting, they were quickly forgotten by students at the schools due to their long length and specificity to one game a year.

Within the Southeastern Conference, there are two general types of fight songs. One type focuses on taunting the rival team and the other focuses on honoring the school from which the song originates. Examples of songs to taunt the rival team include the University of Alabama's "Yea Alabama!" which includes the lyrics, "Go teach the Bulldogs to behave," and "Send the Yellow Jackets to a watery grave" to play on the competitive nature of football games and to tease Alabama's next-door neighbor.⁵² Other songs that focus on honoring the schools they are sung about include the University of Georgia's, "Glory to 'Ole Georgia" and Louisiana State University's "Fight for LSU," both of which speak of winning on the football field for the glory of their school and continues the hope of the fans that their school will win in the future and inspire even more songs.⁵³

Chants are one of the more direct ways that fans show allegiance to their teams. Typically, the chants that are used in American College Football, are simple indicators of fandom and follow the pattern of "Go mascot!" and are said to a fellow fan or rival who will respond with their own version of the chant. Within the SEC, these chants include examples such as "Go Dawgs!," "Go Cocks!," "Go Tigers!," and "Go Rebs!". Sometimes these chants take on regionalism that are unique to teams such as LSU saying "Geaux Tigers!" which references the typical Cajun spelling that is pronounced "o". Other chants, such as the University of Alabama's makes reference to the school colors instead of the mascot in their chant "Roll [Crimson] Tide!". Another example of a chant that does not follow the typical pattern is that of Auburn University,

⁵² "Pep Rally Explored," *The Crimson White*, November 19, 1957, p. 5.

⁵³ "Dick 'Russell Leads Georgia Yells ," *The Red and Black* , February 10, 1914, p. 1. & Peter Finney, *The Fighting Tigers: 1893-1933, One Hundred Years of LSU Football* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press , 1993), p. 168.

where they chant “War Eagle!,” which is also the title of their fight song. According to university legend, the chant began in 1892, either when a Civil War veteran or a professor with a pet eagle attended the football game against the University of Georgia. Legend holds that during the game, the eagle began to fly around the field and helped Auburn win the game. This resulted in Auburn fans using the chant “War Eagle!” instead of ‘Go Tigers!’ and the writing of “War Eagle” as the official fight song in 1955.⁵⁴

Fight songs and chants in SEC College Football are the practice of fans, students, and alumni reciting the same verses of either a chant or a song as a group in order to identify themselves as part of the same in group, cheer on their team, and establish camaraderie. Chants and fight songs, as they are referenced in the oral traditions and expressions definition is best compared to Al-Taghrooda, traditional Bedouin chanted poetry in the United Arab Emirates and the Sultanate of Oman. The practice of Al-Taghrooda involves the ritualistic chanting of short poems that is sometimes done in a call and response manner. This is very similar to chants and fight songs that are practiced in SEC College Football which often feature call and response style chanting.⁵⁵ Both the poetry of Al-Taghrooda and the fight songs and chants of SEC College Football are performed in celebrations outside of the practice of College Football such as at weddings and other festivals. UNESCO recognizes that the most important aspect of the poetry of Al-Taghrooda is the social binding during the exchange of verses.⁵⁶ This is the same as with SEC College Football fight songs and chants which serve the primary purpose to bring the community of fans together.

⁵⁴ Hannah Lester, “A Look Into the Rich History of Auburn Traditions,” *The Auburn Plainsman*, 2019.

⁵⁵ UNESCO, “UNESCO - Al-Taghrooda, Traditional Bedouin Chanted Poetry in the United Arab Emirates and the Sultanate of Oman,” Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO), accessed February 8, 2023, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/al-taghrooda-traditional-bedouin-chanted-poetry-in-the-united-arab-emirates-and-the-sultanate-of-oman-00744>.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

Cheerleaders

Cheerleaders are almost as ubiquitous in the realm of football as the football players themselves. They serve to engage the crowd in the fight songs, chants, and cheers of their university and to generate enthusiasm for the game within the stadium. These athletes have parallel histories to the football teams themselves and have become an integral part of the intangible cultural heritage in Southeastern Conference Football through their continuation of songs, chants, dances, and cheers.

Cheerleading began in the Southeastern Conference through the need to teach new university students the school fight songs and cheers and to lead them in the cheering during the football games. Most student newspapers published the fight songs and cheers. However, the publications were not enough to disseminate the cheers to the student body so that they could be sung and chanted at football games. In order to achieve this, older students would actively teach the younger ones the fight songs and chants at the football games and became the first unofficial cheerleaders. These students who were leading the cheers began to recruit others to be part of their “cheer squads.” The squads became so popular within the universities that starting in the 1920s, students either had to try out for a chance to be on the squad or be elected into the squad.⁵⁷

The practice of cheerleading in SEC College Football is an example of dance that is generally performed to marching music to entertain. Performers, usually women, will wear colors that are related to their football team. A similar practice to SEC College Football Cheerleading that can be found on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list is that of

⁵⁷ Elmer G. Salter, “McFaden Reduces Squad to Twenty-Four Men,” *The Auburn Plainsman*, September 20, 1929, p. 3. & Leets Anils, “31 Students Tryout for Cheerleader Position,” *The Crimson White*, March 12, 1959, p. 6.

Frevo, performing arts in the Carnival of Recife occurring in Brazil. This practice is an example of dance that is generally performed to marching music. Performers will often wear colors that are symbolic of the dancer's religious devotion, much like cheerleaders wearing their school colors.⁵⁸ These two cultural practices are both focused around a performance set to marching music and serve as an additional facet of entertainment, usually performed by women, as part of a larger festival. While these practices are significant in their own rights, they are both seen as a smaller portion of a larger festival.

Mascots

Representations of ICH within SEC college football are seen through the team mascots that are used to symbolize the different colleges and universities. Mascots act as a culturally unifying feature to a football team and gives fans and players a common element to rally around.⁵⁹ More than that, mascots serve a greater purpose than simple branding for teams. They act as “totems adopted for the purposes of good fortune” and are seen as “culturally powerful and relevant representations in order to disseminate their power.”⁶⁰ This interpretation of mascots as mystical forces to bring good luck (and wins) runs parallel to the etymology of the word “mascot”. The origin of the word comes from French “masco” or “mascotte,” a word meaning “witch.” The modern interpretation of the word stems from Edmond Audrain's 1880 operetta

⁵⁸ UNESCO, “UNESCO - Frevo, Performing Arts of the Carnival of Recife,” Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO), accessed February 8, 2023, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/frevo-performing-arts-of-the-carnival-of-recife-00603>.

⁵⁹ Mary C. Daily, “Mascots: Performance and Fetishism in Sport Culture,” *Platform: A Postgraduate EJournal of Theatre and Performing Arts* 3, no. 1 (2008): p. 45.

⁶⁰Ibid.

“La Mascotte” that tells the story of a young woman who brought luck to those around her.⁶¹

From this, the concept of mascots as lucky figures was solidified in the lexicon and was brought to American sports in 1889 by Yale University adopting an English bulldog named Handsome Dan as their mascot.

Within the Southeastern Conference, the majority of mascots are animals:

- University of Georgia Bulldogs
- Auburn University Tigers
- Louisiana State University Tigers
- University Kentucky Wildcats
- University of Arkansas Razorbacks
- University of Missouri Tigers
- Mississippi State Bulldogs
- University of Florida Gators
- University of Mississippi Landsharks
- University of South Carolina Gamecocks.

Non-animal mascots include the Vanderbilt University Commodores, the University of Tennessee Volunteers and the University of Alabama Crimson Tide. In addition to the non-animal mascots both the University of Tennessee and the University of Alabama have a

⁶¹ Mary C. Daily, “Mascots: Performance and Fetishism in Sport Culture ,” *Platform: A Postgraduate EJournal of Theatre and Performing Arts* 3, no. 1 (2008): p. 43 & Richard Traubner, *Operetta: a Theatrical History* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2003).

secondary animal mascot with the University of Tennessee having a blue tick coonhound and the University of Alabama having an elephant.⁶²

Nicknames for schools were chosen for a variety of reasons, including regional identity. For example, at Louisiana State University, the school decided on the tiger as a mascot due to the name of a regiment in the Confederate Army from Louisiana called the “Tiger Rifles.” The regiment gained fame during the Civil War to the point where all the infantry of Louisiana at that time were called the “Louisiana Tigers.” The mascot of the tiger was officially adopted by the university in 1896 as a nickname for the football team because it was based on militaristic state history that was designed to fight the enemy as well as their southern heritage which has ties to the Confederacy.⁶³ While this connection to the Confederacy is part of a larger theme in SEC College Football, the connection to the “Tiger Rifles” and the Confederacy is not something that is largely recognized or known by many fans.

However, mascots are not always permanent and changing mascots is not an uncommon practice. In 2010, the University of Mississippi abandoned its mascot, “Colonel Reb.” Supporters and onlookers alike perceived this caricature of a plantation owner and Confederate officer as carrying divisive, racist connotations. The University of Mississippi decided to change their mascot to a black bear and then to a landshark. Yet, while they have officially changed their mascot to “Tony the Landshark,” Ole Miss is still referred to as the “Rebels” as their “athletic nickname” on sport broadcasts, by their fans, and “Rebels” is what is painted in the end zone of their home, Vaught-Hemingway Stadium. Mascots like “Colonel Reb” are evidence that mascots are deeply embedded in not just SEC College Football, but also the larger cultural expressions of

⁶² Roy E. Yarbrough, *Mascots: the History of Senior College and University Mascots/Nicknames* (Lynchburg, VA: Bluff University Communications, 1998), p. 14, 19, 41, 47, 76, 79, 106, 109, 184, 186, 192.

⁶³ David G. Baker and W. Sheldon Bivin, *Mike the Tiger* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2003).

the region as collective cultural heritage. As a call back to the Old South, the continuation of “Colonel Reb” and references to the “Rebels” allow for those in the region to continue to express their connection to the Old South and express their cultural identity.

Some universities are able to have live animal mascots in addition to costumed characters on the sidelines. In the Southeastern Conference the schools with animals include: The University of Georgia’s English bulldog, “Uga,” Auburn University’s eagle, “Aurea,” Louisiana State University’s tiger, “Mike,” the University of South Carolina’s gamecock, “Sir Big Spur,” the University of Tennessee’s bluetick coonhound, “Smokey,” Mississippi State University’s English bulldog, “Bully,” the University of Arkansas’ Russian boar, “Tusk,” the University of Kentucky’s bobcat, “Blue,” and Texas A&M University’s collie, “Reveille.” In the 1940’s the University of Alabama had a live Elephant named Alamaite, but the elephant retired as the mascot in the early 1960s, when the costumed elephant “Al” took over the mascot duties.⁶⁴ Of the schools with live animal mascots, where the mascot will eventually retire from “active duty” or die, the name of the mascot is passed along to another animal to carry on the tradition, typically with the name having a Roman numeral added.

The practice of having a mascot at an SEC university is essentially the creation of a symbol that is agreed upon by the community that will serve as the representation of the school and football team. A parallel can be drawn between the practice of having college mascots and the Processional of Giants and Dragons in Belgium and France. This practice involves the creation of effigies of giants, animals, and dragons which “serve as emblems of the identity for certain Belgian and French towns.” The effigies represent mythical heroes and animals along with contemporary local heroes, historical, Biblical, and Legendary characters for the Belgian

⁶⁴ Kelly Kazek, “When Bama Had Live Elephants for Mascots,” AL, August 12, 2015, https://www.al.com/living/2015/08/on_world_elephant_day_looking.html.

towns of Brussels, Dendermonde, Mechelen, and Mons and the French towns of Cassel, Douai, Pézenas and Tarascon. The effigies are paraded through the towns and are generally used in multiple festivals each year.⁶⁵ The use of the effigies as an emblem of identity for certain towns that are used for multiple celebrations each year follows the same pattern as SEC universities using mascots to be indicative of their identities that are brought to multiple games a year across the United States. Much like how SEC universities use mascots as identity markers to differentiate themselves from other universities, the Belgian and French towns who participate in the procession are represented by their chosen identity markers as part of the larger ICH listed practice.

Marching Bands

An additional practice in SEC College Football is that of marching bands which are comprised of student musicians that play fight songs and perform during the game and at halftime on the football field. Marching bands in the Southeastern Conference generally formed out of cadet bands that aided in the military functions of the universities. In their early form, they were groups of musicians, typically a drum corps and a few horn players that aided in the troop formations and to play at functions for the university.⁶⁶ Once football rose in popularity in the south, these cadet bands began to play at the football games and developed fight songs as well as other ceremonial songs for the university such as the Alma Mater. A commonality that all Southeastern Conference Universities share is that all have a university marching band that

⁶⁵ UNESCO, "Processional Giants and Dragons in Belgium and France," UNESCO, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/processional-giants-and-dragons-in-belgium-and-france-00153>.

⁶⁶ Harry Crozier Patzig, "A Description of the Ten Southeastern Conference Marching Band Programs" (dissertation, 1983), https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4903&context=gradschool_disstheses.

performs during game time as well as halftime. The performances generally range from eight to twelve minutes and present a new show with each football season.⁶⁷ The marching bands help to excite the crowd, demonstrate school spirit unique to each university, and simply to entertain the fans. These musical performances act as part of the intangible cultural heritage of the universities as they link music, song, cheers, and revelry together.

Today, the marching bands perform at every home game, during game time, travel with the football team to away games as well as bowl appearances. They perform elaborate halftime shows and frequently play at other university sporting events, including basketball and volleyball. Across the SEC, marching bands have grown from bands of around 12 men in the early 1900s to upwards of 300 members today and are some of the largest student organizations on campus. Additionally, bands have grown in their makeup to include non-musicians, such as dancers, color guard, and baton twirlers.⁶⁸

The practice of marching bands at SEC College Football games is similar to the practice of the Carnival of Granville and the Valencia Falls Festivity, which are inscribed on the ICH list. During the Carnival of Granville in France, in celebration of Shrove Tuesday, the citizens of Granville host a parade with 40 floats each separated by marching bands. While the marching band is not the focal point of the festival, they are an important element that cannot be removed from the Carnival similarly to marching bands in SEC football games.⁶⁹ Additionally, at the Valencia Fallas Festivity in Spain, marching bands are incorporated in the festival celebrating the coming of spring. Similar to the Carnival of Granville, marching bands parade through the streets

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ UNESCO, "Carnival of Granville," UNESCO, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/carnival-of-granville-01077>.

of Valencia and are a crucial element of the festival.⁷⁰ Both the festival in Valencia and the Carnival in Granville make use of marching bands to bring communities together in celebration through the use of music in the same way that marching bands in the SEC College Football setting do.

Cultural Spaces...

The cultural spaces of SEC college football include the football stadium and the surrounding campus where tailgating is practiced. Within the Southeastern Conference, the football stadium can be considered the cultural center of College Football.⁷¹ For many in the American South, Saturdays in the fall must include a pilgrimage to their team's stadium to tailgate and watch the game. These stadiums bring together fans, students, alumni, players, and coaches and allow them to participate in the cultural heritage of football within the most iconic representation of the football landscape. However, elements of latent class distinction and the pressure to renovate and expand exist in tandem with the cultural heritage of SEC football within the confines of the stadium.

The modern sports stadium can trace its roots to the Ancient Greek hippodromes and stadia. The Ancient Greeks were one of the first civilizations to standardize spectator sport and include the development of stadia for foot races and hippodromes for racing horses in their civic plans. These sporting arenas increased in popularity across Ancient Greece with the establishment of the Olympics. This led to the later development of sporting arenas such as

⁷⁰ UNESCO, "Valencia Fallas Festivity," UNESCO, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/valencia-fallas-festivity-00859>.

⁷¹ Ahmet Yavuz Karafil, and Mehmet Haşim Akgül. 2022. "The Interaction of Fanaticism and Efanatism in Football: Structural Model Review." *Kinesiologia Slovenica* 28 (2): 20–33. doi:10.52165/kinsi.28.2.20-33.; Craig A. Forney, *The Holy Trinity of American Sports : Civil Religion in Football, Baseball, and Basketball*. 1st ed. Sports and Religion. Mercer University Press, 2007.

hippodromes and stadia becoming grander and more impressive. These arenas were generally built into the landscape to take advantage of the hilly Greek topography. The natural incline allowed for the creation of seating that was able to allow for more spectators to watch the sporting event take place.⁷² Over time, this form of the stadium was refined with more modern materials such as concrete and steel to create the stadiums that are seen today.⁷³

Histories of the teams that play within the stadia are also part of the material culture of the football stadium. Often, universities will use imagery from past victories as decorations within their stadium. For example, universities will hang banners or permanent signs that feature the years of conference championship and national championship wins. Specifically, at the University of Georgia's Sanford Stadium, banners displaying the year are flown to commemorate SEC and National Championship wins. Additionally, many stadiums are surrounded by statues of famous past players and coaches like at Jordan-Hare Stadium at Auburn University or statues of deceased mascots such as at the University of Georgia. While stadiums have a rich history that stretches back to the Ancient Greeks, they are continually creating and honoring histories that they aid in writing, where the material culture of the built environment reflects the intangible cultural heritage of the stadium.

Stadiums in the Southeastern Conference are some of the largest and most impressive stadiums in the United States today that draw the most visitors each year. The stadiums of the University of Georgia, Auburn University, the University of Alabama, and Louisiana State University are all located fairly centrally on their campuses and host millions of fans each football season. While these stadiums have gone through many additions and renovations over

⁷² Geraint John, Rod Sheard, and Ben Vickery, *Stadia: A Design and Development Guide*, vol. Fourth (Oxford, UK: Elsevier, 2007), p.3 - 4.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

their histories, they are able to tie the origins of the sport on college campuses to the modern expression through their architectural history.

Of the stadiums explored in this thesis, the first to be constructed was Tiger Stadium of LSU, built in 1924. The stadium was designed by German engineer, Theodore C. Link and was funded through a state severance tax.⁷⁴ Following Tiger Stadium, Sanford Stadium was constructed at the University of Georgia in 1928 and originally was able to seat around 18,000 people and was built by the architectural design firm of Atwood and Nash.⁷⁵ At the same time that Atwood and Nash were also contracted to build Bryant-Denny Stadium at the University of Alabama which was finished in 1929, just one year after UGA's stadium.⁷⁶ Jordan-Hare Stadium was constructed in 1939 by the architects Warren, Knight, and Davis.⁷⁷

Each of these stadiums were constructed having stands made of concrete and steel that were placed on either side of the field. The end zones were left open without stands constructed around them. The very basic form of the original stadiums reflects the burgeoning popularity of football in the South to where the schools felt that there was demand enough from students and fans to field a team as well as invest in the construction of the stadium. While the stadiums may look much different today, the original fabric of the stadiums is still contained and used by the universities as many stadiums have not changed locations and all additions were made to be extensions of the first stadiums.

⁷⁴ Peter Finney, *The Fighting Tigers: 1893-1933, One Hundred Years of LSU Football* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), p. 143.

⁷⁵ The Red and Black, "9,000 Stadium Seats Completed," *The Red and Black*, September 28, 1928, p. 6.

& The Red and Black, "Stadium Reaches Half-Way Mark," *The Red and Black*, October 19, 1928, p. 1

⁷⁶ Alva W Stewart, *College Football Stadiums: An Illustrated Guide to NCAA Division I-A* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2000), p. 9.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

As the popularity of football grew across the South in the 1930s and 1940s, the sport became a high-profile event at the college level. Universities in the Southeastern Conference soon filled in the space between the stands to create fuller stadiums that were able to seat more spectators. In order to achieve this, universities built additional seating to connect the sides of the stadium. LSU was the first to do this in 1936, which added 24,000 seats to the stadium.⁷⁸ Auburn followed the trend of bowl enclosure with their seating expansions in 1960 and 1970.⁷⁹ This was followed by Alabama in 1966 whose bowl enclosure resulted in the capacity of the stadium being brought to 31,000.⁸⁰ The University of Georgia was the slowest to enclose their stadium. The western end zone was enclosed in 1964 to add 7,261 seats and eastern end zone was enclosed in 1981 to complete the bowl.⁸¹ The connection of the original sides of the stadium to each other through the addition of seating in the end zones allowed the stadiums to offer more seating and appear grander and similar in fashion to famous stadiums and amphitheatres such as the Rose Bowl in California and the Coliseum in Rome.

Following the expansion of the stadiums, the logical next step needed was to develop upwards in order to add even more seats. This meant adding grandstands above the existing seating. Louisiana State University added the upper deck and club level seats to the stadium in the 1970s.⁸² The west side upper deck at Jordan-Hare stadium was finished in 1980 with the east

⁷⁸ Peter Finney, *The Fighting Tigers: 1893-1933, One Hundred Years of LSU Football* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), p. 143.

⁷⁹ Alva W Stewart, *College Football Stadiums: An Illustrated Guide to NCAA Division I-A* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2000), p. 21.

⁸⁰ The Crimson White, "Denny's Just Like Bow; Rededication Set Saturday," *The Crimson White*, November 11, 1966, p. 1.

⁸¹ Alva W Stewart, *College Football Stadiums: An Illustrated Guide to NCAA Division I-A* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2000), p. 65.

⁸² Peter Finney, *The Fighting Tigers: 1893-1933, One Hundred Years of LSU Football* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), p. 143.

side upper deck finished in 1987 at the cost of \$30 million dollars for both projects.⁸³ Sanford Stadium at the University of Georgia began to build upwards in 1994 with the construction of an additional seating deck on top of the southern stands.⁸⁴ As these stadiums have remained in the same location and have maintained the same seating in the lower stands, following the enclosure of the bowls, the stadiums had nowhere else to build but up as building a new stadium was not seen as an option by the universities. Because of this, the stadiums are the tall imposing structures that can be seen on campuses today.

Colleges and universities quickly learned that college football was a very profitable enterprise when ticket sales, concessions, and media coverage were combined and brought millions into the university's budget. The University of Alabama caught on to this trend quickly and established a dedicated press box for the stadium in 1961. In 1998, the university added 13,500 seats through the addition of 81 sky boxes as well as two reception areas for donor club members.⁸⁵ Auburn University completed their addition of modern era press boxes and luxury suites in 1989.⁸⁶ The University of Georgia followed in 1984 with the construction of "the Letteman's Club" for former players and in 1994 with the addition of 50 "SkySuites" for luxury box seating.⁸⁷ Louisiana State University followed in 2000 with the completion of 70 sky boxes known as "Tiger Dens."⁸⁸

With the addition of luxury seats and press boxes, the universities were making it explicit that football was no longer simply a sport that the school engaged in. Instead, football has

⁸³ Alva W Stewart, *College Football Stadiums: An Illustrated Guide to NCAA Division I-A* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2000), p. 21.

⁸⁴ Keith Demko, "Skysuites Open for Home Kickoff," *The Red and Black*, September 14, 1994, p. 3.

⁸⁵ Alva W Stewart, *College Football Stadiums: An Illustrated Guide to NCAA Division I-A* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2000), p. 9.

⁸⁶ Alva W Stewart, *College Football Stadiums: An Illustrated Guide to NCAA Division I-A* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2000), p. 23

⁸⁷ Keith Demko, "Skysuites Open for Home Kickoff," *The Red and Black*, September 14, 1994, p. 3.

⁸⁸ Brennan David, "Stadium Construction Nears Completion," *LSU Reveille*, June 13, 2006.

become a lucrative business for the university that can be used to attract donors, students (and student athletes), and through those, more funds. This phenomenon is best summarized through the “Flutie Effect,” which will be discussed in greater depth in the following chapter.⁸⁹ The “Flutie Effect” is the phenomenon that posits that there is a correlation between a successful athletic program and a higher number of quality applicants to the university following either a winning season, championship win, or a win where the university upsets another team.⁹⁰ Through this phenomenon, universities have doubled down on viewing football as not only an aspect of school pride and culture, but also as a revenue generator to attract additional students and therefore donors to the university.

The most recent phase of development in SEC football stadiums has included the expansion of the areas surrounding the stadium as well as upgrades to locker rooms and other recruiting facilities. As the SEC has emerged as one of the top conferences in the country, recruitment is one of the most important aspects for the continuation of a school’s football program in addition to fans of the sport. Due to this, major expansions have been made to stadiums in order to attract recruits and to make the stadium stand out in comparison to other schools that may be vying for the same athletes.

Beginning around the 2010s, schools began to place more of an emphasis on how the stadiums themselves and the area surrounding them look to possible recruits and to wealthy fans in order to attract their talent and money respectively. One of the largest examples of this is in 2007, Auburn University added a state-of-the-art Jumbotron to their stadium. Eight years after that, in 2015, Auburn replaced their Jumbotron, the large screen in the stadium which can project

⁸⁹ Austin F. Eggers, Parker T. Redding, and Peter A. Grootius, “The Flutie Effect: The Influence of College Football Upsets and National Championships on the Quantity and Quality of Students at a University,” *International Journal of Sport Finance* 16, no. 2 (2021): pp. 59-68.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

gameplay and the score, with what is now the largest Jumbotron in college football.⁹¹ Following Auburn, LSU added a Jumbotron to replace their scoreboard in 2009. After this, in 2012, LSU completed renovations to the plazas surrounding the stadium as well as the addition of “Tiger Gold” lights and a new stadium sign. In addition to this, the university also added further seating through the addition of 66 luxury suites, 3,000 club level seats, and 1,400 more seats in the grandstands which brought the current seating to 102,321.⁹² Finished in 2018, University of Georgia renovated the west end zone of Sanford Stadium to include a new home locker room, a hospitality lounge, and improved entry to the stadium from Tate Plaza.⁹³ At the University of Alabama, it was announced in 2019 that the Crimson Tide Foundation, a fundraising campaign for university athletics, had plans to begin a \$65 million dollar campaign to expand the stadium through the addition of 3,862 new premium seats, more sky boxes, locker room and tunnel improvements, renovation of the recruiting areas, expansion of the concourses, and renovation of the concession stands.⁹⁴

This most recent phase of stadium development can be seen as the extension of the money-centered phase of development that has extended to a level that includes the recruitment and retention of athletes. Through this, the stadium has taken on an additional role of not only being the host site for the game of football but also for the continuation of football at the school in the wooing of potential athletes and donors.⁹⁵

⁹¹ The Plainsman, “Jordan-Hare Renovations Delayed but 'Not Dead',” *The Auburn Plainsman*, November 8, 2016.

⁹² Tyler Nunez, “Construction on Tiger Stadium Begins,” *LSU Reveille*, October 26, 2012.

⁹³ Michael Hebert, “A Look Inside Sanford Stadium's \$63 Million Upgrade,” *The Red and Black*, September 3, 2019.

⁹⁴ The Crimson Tide Foundation, “Bryant-Denny Stadium,” The Crimson Tide Foundation, accessed February 14, 2021, <https://www.crimsontidefoundation.org/csi/BryantDenny.aspx>.

⁹⁵ Brian M. Ingrassia, *The Rise of Gridiron University: Higher Education's Uneasy Alliance with Big-Time Football* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2015), p. 139-150.

It can be argued that the additions and “upgrades” degrade the cultural heritage of the stadium due to how large some of the upgrades are. In 2015, Auburn University announced that it was going to invest \$3.5 million dollars towards a new scoreboard. The announcement was met with mixed, though mostly positive reviews from students as reported in the *Plainsman*. One opinion that appeared to reflect that of many students was offered by student Lauren Van Tuyl who stated, “I think at first I thought it was going to be a waste of money... In one of my classes, we discussed it and apparently the athletics department took out a loan for the University, but then they’re going to pay the University back. I don’t think it would make me go to the game. A scoreboard is not going to get me to go. But if it’s going to get other people to go, then I think it’s good.”⁹⁶ Opinions such as this appear to be common for university alumni as well. In response to the western end zone upgrades to the University of Georgia’s Sanford Stadium in 2018, alumnus and season ticket holder Steve Burgess believes that these upgrades will “help the program” while he fondly reminisced about “the days when [he] was in school when it was just the lower sections and the upper deck on either side.”⁹⁷ While changes to the stadium seem to negatively impact the cultural heritage and integrity of the stadium on its face, it appears that fans and alumni who have experienced these changes to the stadium do not necessarily care how the upgrades impact the historic character and integrity of the stadium. Instead, these changes are seen as necessary and are part of the natural life of the stadium. While these alterations to the stadium impact, and to some degree lessen, the material and design integrity of the stadium, the

⁹⁶ Ben Wallace , “Auburn Scores Big: College's Largest Video Board Coming Fall 2015,” *The Auburn Plainsman* , May 21, 2015, <https://www.theplainsman.com/article/2015/05/auburn-scores-big-colleges-largest-video-board-coming-fall-2015>.

⁹⁷ Erin Schilling, “Upgrading the Doghouse: Sanford Stadium Construction to Be Completed Fall 2018,” *The Red & Black* , January 6, 2018, https://www.redandblack.com/upgrading-the-doghouse-sanford-stadium-construction-to-be-completed-fall-2018/article_5a2e04dc-f0e9-11e7-b15a-e7ce84c664cd.html

tangible culture that is the stadium continues to serve the same purpose and continues to express its significance as a cultural center.

As the football stadiums have developed and grown throughout their almost 100-year histories, their historic character has been brought in to question due to the many additions and alterations to their physical structure. Since football has developed as a sport and has changed from its original form, the change of stadiums overtime mirrors the development. When football grew in popularity, stadiums grew to accommodate more fans within their structures. When football began to be reported on the radio and televised, press boxes and fly cameras were added to the stadium. And when inter-conference competition for recruits expanded, stadiums adapted to be more “state of the art” in order to draw in recruits. The development of the stadium directly mirrors how football developed from a new sport in the late 1800s to one of the most popular and commercialized sports in the United States today. Because of this, the integrity of the stadium remains, in terms of location, setting, feeling and association and is reflected in how all of the stadiums are still located in their original site of construction and serve their original function of being where football is practiced on the university campus. The integrity of the stadium is directly linked to the continued use of the stadium for the same purpose and despite the many changes that have been made to the stadiums, to the universities and the fans, they are the same stadium and integrity of the stadium, such as the integrity of location, setting, feeling and association remain despite the loss of integrity of workmanship and design.

Within the Southeastern Conference, the football stadium is the largest example of the tangible heritage of football culture. While there have been many changes to the stadiums through added seating, additional grandstands and levels, and press boxes and luxury suites, the integrity of the stadium remains. The historical value of the stadiums is significant enough to the

universities that the stadiums have never been torn down or relocated, only added on to. The continued use of the stadium as the location where football is practiced is the strongest element of the preserved integrity of the stadium. The addition of more seating, press boxes, and additional grandstands serve to show that stadiums are living types of buildings that adapt and change with the culture that is associated with and through this, retain their cultural heritage in spite of the tension that exists between culture and money.

SEC College Football stadiums are cultural spaces. Cultural spaces such as this are integral to many currently listed ICH practices. In the Kirkpınar Oil Wrestling Festival in Edirne, Turkey, the men who are participating in the wrestling process in to the “Men’s Field” which is the designated location for the oil wrestling to take place. Much like SEC College Football, the practice includes the traditional playing of music, a certain outfit that those who are participating in the sport must wear, as well as announcers who communicate what occurs on the field to the surrounding audience. More specifically, the establishment of the “Men’s Field” is similar to the SEC College Football stadium. Both are generally rounded in shape, have a grassed playing space, and have stands that are for audience members to watch the action on the field. The oil wrestling, like SEC College Football, will only take place in the designated “Men’s Field” or stadium and is tied to having the practice take place in the assigned cultural space.⁹⁸

SEC College Football, when viewed holistically, has parallel examples to many aspects of intangible cultural heritage that are currently listed by UNESCO. These currently listed practices range from festival type cultural practices such as tailgating to musical cultural expressions like marching bands. The wide variety of currently listed ICH practices that are reflected in the SEC College Football speaks to the connection between ICH and SEC College

⁹⁸ UNESCO, “UNESCO - Kirkpınar Oil Wrestling Festival,” Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2010, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/krkpınar-oil-wrestling-festival-00386>.

Football. However, there is tension between SEC College Football and intangible cultural heritage as defined by the 2003 Convention. Specifically, tension exists in the ways that SEC College Football is disseminated via media, and the racism, sexism, and classism, which goes against the 2003 Convention clause where ICH must “promote respect for cultural diversity and human creativity,” which will be discussed later in this chapter.⁹⁹

Intangible cultural heritage is not simply the documented examples of culture. Instead, intangible cultural heritage is a living expression of culture. Specifically, as defined by the 2003 UNESCO ICH Convention, intangible cultural heritage 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 provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.”¹⁰⁰

Constantly Recreated by Communities and Groups in Response to Their Environment...

As part of being a living expression of culture, intangible cultural heritage is adapted by the practicing communities based on the practitioner’s environment, nature, and history. The most evident example of how communities have recreated the cultural practice of SEC football in response to their environment was demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to curb the rampant spread of the disease between athletes, coaches, fans, and their families, the SEC and individual universities implemented rules and procedures that were specifically designed to allow the continuation of college football while ensuring the health and safety of those on the field. The precautions taken included mandating practices to be held outside only,

⁹⁹ “Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage,” UNESCO, accessed April 8, 2021, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention>.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

stadium capacity greatly reduced, no tailgating allowed on university campuses, and no mascots or cheerleaders allowed on the field during games. The precautions put in place by the NCAA and the SEC were the most direct change to the intangible cultural heritage of SEC football. Due to the fact that the intangible cultural heritage of the SEC is based around the interaction of people with each other be it either on the football field, in the stands, or at the tailgate. But due to COVID-19 precautions focusing on separating people to stop the spread of the virus, additional guidelines proposed by the SEC were adopted by the fourteen member schools in August of 2020.¹⁰¹

Each university was allowed to determine the number of fans allowed in their stadium per state and local guidelines or per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention physical distancing guidelines in the absence of local guidelines. However, within the stadium, the SEC mandated that face masks that cover the nose and mouth are required when fans enter, exit, move about the stadium, or are within six feet of another person. For concessions, food and beverages are done in a “grab-and-go” format to increase physical distancing and plexiglass barriers have been installed within the stadiums to protect the food service workers.¹⁰² Stadium rules included host schools providing the visiting team with at least 500 tickets to attend the game. Additionally, the SEC mandate included only allowing essential personnel to be on the field such as the players, coaches, game officials and referees, medical personnel, law enforcement, and a limited number of photographers and media. The SEC also mandated that live mascots could not be allowed on the field during games, marching bands could not perform before the game or

¹⁰¹ Southeastern Conference, “SEC Announces Initial Medical Protocols,” The Official Website of the Southeastern Conference, August 7, 2020, <https://www.secsports.com/article/29613811>.

¹⁰² Southeastern Conference, “SEC Fan Health and Safety Guidelines for Football,” The Official Website of the Southeastern Conference, August 18, 2020, <https://www.secsports.com/article/29684002/sec-announces-fan-health-safety-guidelines>.

during halftime, visiting team marching bands and spirit squads could not travel with the team, and other on field performances, presentations, and recognitions were not allowed.¹⁰³

Outside of the stadium, the Southeastern Conference had opted to let the individual schools decide how they wanted to handle tailgating. As of mid-September 2020, two weeks before the delayed start of the football season, the University of Georgia, the University of Alabama, Louisiana State University, and Auburn University ruled to not allow tailgates to occur on campus. These rules only applied to on campus tailgating. Fans who wished to tailgate, could do so off campus in the town proper as long as they followed town ordinances about social distancing and mask wearing.¹⁰⁴ The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the traditions of tailgaters in the Southeastern Conference and across the country during the 2020 football season. Some tailgaters had been able to boast that they have been tailgating in the same spot on campus for upwards of fifty years and now, in order to abide by the COVID-19 tailgating guidelines, they were unable to continue the tradition for the season. For fans such as these, there was a feeling of loss due to their inability to continue their Saturday in the fall tradition. During the 2020 football season, traditions and practices had to adapt to fit into the new COVID-19 guidelines but they were not left to the wayside, these traditions are so deeply ingrained into Southeastern Conference football that they persisted despite the changed environment.

In order to continue the tailgating tradition during the COVID-19 pandemic, many have resorted to “homegating.” For many people, it is hard to picture college football without some kind of tailgating, which has led to bringing the practice of tailgating into their own homes. Sports fans participated in some of the same traditions such as tailgating from the comfort of

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

their backyards. Cooking out, grilling, inviting friends and family over and “stocking up on booze” in preparation to watch the game continued in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic. “Homegates” grew in popularity due to the relative ease that they offered compared to traditional tailgates. By hosting the “homegate” at home, the “homegaters” were able to avoid traffic and hassle of driving to the University and navigating through campus, having to haul food and drink, and rival fans.¹⁰⁵

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, live animal mascots were barred from being on the sidelines of the field during game time. The NCAA and the SEC decided that in order to protect the mascots, their handlers, and the players, coaches, and field staff, live mascots should not participate in the football game.¹⁰⁶ This move upset many fans. At the University of Georgia, the last time that Uga was not on the sidelines for a game in Sanford Stadium was in 2009, due to the unexpected death of Uga VII.¹⁰⁷ Likewise, at Auburn University, the eagle “Aurea” always flies around Jordan-Hare Stadium before kickoff. For Auburn fans, not seeing their “War Eagle” fly before kickoff was upsetting because the flight has become part of their cultural tradition to start the game. Mascots loom large as a fixture during football games and not allowing them on the sidelines was a major change.

The precautions put in place by the NCAA and the SEC due to COVID-19 were the widest sweeping challenges to the cultural heritage of football in the SEC. Long held traditions such as tailgating, seeing mascots, and being able to attend games within the stadium were

¹⁰⁵ Inside Tailgating, “Tailgating at Home: Great Tips for the Homegating Lifestyle,” Inside Tailgating, September 27, 2020, <https://insidetailgating.com/tailgating-at-home-great-tips-for-the-homegating-lifestyle/>.

¹⁰⁶ Jared Leone, Natalie Dreier, and Michelle Ewing, “No Live Mascots Allowed: Uga Won't Be on Sidelines at Georgia Games in 2020,” WSBTV (Cox Media Group National Content Desk, September 12, 2020), <https://www.wsbtv.com/sports/college/university-of-georgia/no-live-mascots-allow-fans-wont-see-uga-sideline-georgia-games-this-season/UKUMG536YFHZHH7Z3NOOSYZ37E/>.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

directly affected by COVID-19 precautions. The impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic from the 2020 football season have continued into the present. However, fans, alumni, coaches, and players have learned to adapt to the new pandemic-shaped environment. Despite the many changes and curveballs that COVID-19 presented SEC college football with, students, fans, and alumni were able to overcome many of the challenges and continue some of the most cherished traditions of SEC college football. Adaptations including “homegating” and engaging in fight songs, cheers, and chants from home proved the resilience and importance of the cultural heritage of the SEC and that SEC football is directly linked to the cultural heritage that it is part of even when the fans are separated from the game itself. These adaptations in the face of unprecedented uncertainty from the COVID-19 Pandemic proves that these practices are both living and traditional and illuminates how Southeastern Conference football is cultural heritage.

Provides a Sense of Identity and Community

Perhaps the most evident aspect of SEC College Football as intangible cultural heritage is expressed through the sense of identity and community. This is best demonstrated through the loyalty that SEC college football fans have for their chosen universities. This sense of identity is achieved either through the fan achieving alumni status at the university, having a loved one or close friend who did, or who chose their allegiance simply out of proximity to their current or former dwelling.

Practices such as tailgating exhibit a sense of community which is created and maintained through participation in SEC College Football. In an article discussing tailgating at the University of Alabama in the *Crimson White*, the practice of tailgating is summarized as an example of community building through football. The author of the piece states,

Aside from all the tangible aspects of Gameday tailgates, the activity offers something more to fans: the sense of community. While your personal tailgate may include parents and close friends, the tent two down from yours may include your roommate's family, sorority sister, or friends you met through tailgating in the same spot. Each person shares something in common with everyone else, enjoying the sport and lifestyle of football in the south, and being able to share it with others.¹⁰⁸

While SEC College Football allows participants to develop individual communities of fans, alumni, and students, an even larger sense of community is established through practices such as tailgating and simply cheering on the chosen team.

This sense of identity is further shown to the public through clothing, home goods, jewelry, automobile stickers, and sometimes even tattoos. If the logo of a university and football team can be put on to something to be sold, it is frequently done. The purchase of these branded goods are used by fans to signify their allegiance to their chosen team. These marketable identifiers of SEC university and team allegiance help to further identify those who are fans of a team and create a larger sense of identity for the community.

Additionally, things such as chants are employed to identify members of your community in public when one is spotted sporting a branded signifier of the chosen SEC university. For example, if someone were to spot another person wearing an Auburn University t-shirt, a fellow fan would call out "War Eagle!" to them to signify that they are in the same community. Because of phenomena like this, it is evident that fan allegiance provides for a larger sense of community when someone identifies with a particular SEC university.

SEC College Football also affords fans with the opportunity to engage with other fan community groups through events such as watch parties that are hosted by university alumni

¹⁰⁸ Lauren Ferguson, "Tuscaloosa Tailgating a League of Its Own ," *The Crimson White*, September 20, 2012, <https://thecrimsonwhite.com/12724/culture/tuscaloosa-tailgating-a-league-of-its-own/>.

associations. SEC Alumni Association watch parties are a popular way for fans and alumni to gather to participate in SEC College Football culture with each university having alumni association chapters in most major cities in the United States totaling approximately 1.1 million alumni members.¹⁰⁹ University alumni associations make it a point on their websites to help alumni and fans find watch parties in their area and meet as a community to watch the football game together.¹¹⁰

Transmitted from Generation to Generation

An additional aspect of intangible cultural heritage is that the culture is transmitted from generation to generation as a living expression of culture. This means that the younger generations are taught about the cultural practices by the preceding generations. In SEC college football, this is built off of the sense of identity and community that many people find with their university allegiance. Through this, elders in a family unit who either attended the university or have an allegiance for the university tend to teach the same allegiance to their progeny. This cycle then, generally, continues so that all family members become fans, or alumni, of the same university. Frequently, this can be attributed to the university that is chosen by the family being the first university which the person is exposed to. However, there are times in which children decide to break from family tradition and choose a different SEC university to attend.

Additionally, there are instances in which families are comprised of fans of two different SEC

¹⁰⁹ LSU Alumni Association, "LSU Alumni Chapters: LSU Alumni National Chapter Locations," LSU Alumni Association, 2023, <https://www.lsualumni.org/chapter-locations>. The University of Alabama Alumni Association, "Membership," [alumni.ua.edu](https://alumni.ua.edu/membership/) (The University of Alabama Alumni Association, 2023), <https://alumni.ua.edu/membership/>; University of Georgia Alumni Association, "Alumni Chapters," UGA Alumni, September 14, 2022, <https://alumni.uga.edu/chapters/>; Auburn Alumni Association, "Benefits of Membership," Auburn Alumni Association, August 2, 2022, <https://www.alumni.auburn.edu/benefits-of-membership/>.

¹¹⁰ Auburn Alumni Association, "Auburn Alumni Association: Game Watch Locations," Auburn Alumni Association (Auburn University, September 6, 2022), <https://www.alumni.auburn.edu/game-watch-locations/>.

universities. This sometimes results in the parents acting against their partner to try and transmit the culture of their chosen SEC university so that their child will choose allegiance to the same SEC university.

One of the main ways that SEC College Football is transmitted from generation to generation is through traditions surrounding SEC College Football that are practiced not only when fans are attending a game on campus but are also practiced throughout the year. Inherited tailgating spots are one of the ways that SEC College Football is quite literally passed from generation to generation. An example of this is the tailgate spot of Rusty Welch at LSU, who has been tailgating in the same spot for 25 years since he graduated from the university. The spot has been host to gatherings of up to 200 people and has even developed a website to communicate with other fans about what they will be cooking for the tailgate, what others can bring, and tout their sponsorships.¹¹¹ According Welch's website for tailgating, they "are looking forward to passing the tailgate experience along to the next generation" and continue the tradition of tailgating in the same spot.¹¹²

Another example of transmission from generation to generation is the "bulldawg head painting" at the University of Georgia. Mike "Big Dawg" Woods was an ardent UGA fan who attended every football game with a bulldog painted on his head by his wife. After his passing in 2017, his son Trent took up the head painting mantle and decided to have his mother paint his head for the home games. The head painting tradition of the Woods at games became larger than the family and was frequently shown on the Jumbotron at Sanford Stadium and was included in

¹¹¹ Dena Winegart, "Tailgate Tales: 25-Year-Old Tailgate Doesn't Miss a Beat at Early Kickoff," *Reveille*, November 11, 2017, https://www.lsureveille.com/daily/tailgate-tales-25-year-old-tailgate-doesnt-miss-a-beat-at-early-kick-off/article_c3678cb0-c723-11e7-af33-dfba038427b2.html.

¹¹² Ralph Welch, "Tiger Tailgating: About Us," *tigertailgating*, accessed February 13, 2023, <https://www.tigertailgating.com/about-us>.

TV broadcasts of games.¹¹³ Generation to generation traditions such as these at the family level help to demonstrate the individualized experiences of fans where they have developed traditions around SEC College Football.

An additional way through which older generations transmit SEC College Football to younger generations is through combining SEC College Football traditions with existing religious traditions. For example, at Auburn University, each Christmas the university hosts between 900 and 1000 families at an event where Aubie, the Auburn mascot, dresses up as Santa Claus and will take photographs with children.¹¹⁴ Through events such as this, older generations are able to instill the importance of SEC College Football in their children by linking religious traditions such as visiting Santa Claus with the mascot of the university.

Promotes Respect for Cultural Diversity and Human Creativity

While SEC college football, in its most exalted interpretation, can be seen as a means for colleges and universities across the American South to engage in friendly rivalries which encourage sportsmanship and athletic competition, there are elements of the sport that are in opposition to the ideas of “respect for cultural diversity and human creativity” through racism, sexism, and classism.

¹¹³ Jed May, “Trent Woods Carries on His Family's Head-Painting Tradition ,” The Red & Black , April 25, 2017, https://www.redandblack.com/gday/trent-woods-carries-on-his-familys-head-painting-tradition/article_ded558aa-296d-11e7-934d-9b7ff39cb194.html.

¹¹⁴ Lydia McMullen , “Aubie Claus Is Coming to Town ,” The Plainsman, November 12, 2020, <https://www.theplainsman.com/article/2020/11/aubie-claus-is-coming-to-town>.

From the 1890's until 1966, no African-American athletes played on the varsity level in the SEC.¹¹⁵ On September 30th, 1967, the Southeastern Conference was integrated for the first time when Nate Northington played his first game for the University of Kentucky against Ole Miss. Despite landmark steps made by people such as Nate Northington, integration of the SEC was not a fast or smooth process. The University of Kentucky and the University of Tennessee were the first two universities to integrate. They were followed by Auburn University, Vanderbilt University, Mississippi State University, and the University of Florida in 1970, the University of Alabama in 1971, and finally by the University of Georgia, Louisiana State University, and the University of Mississippi in 1972.¹¹⁶

Despite the important role that marching bands play in the cultural heritage of SEC football, bands have faced issues of sexism and racism. Beginning in the 1920s, when women were admitted to schools in the SEC, the marching bands began to expand to include females as dancers, baton twirlers, and as members of the color guard. Originally, women were not allowed to participate in the band as musicians and instead were only allowed as auxiliary members of the band. However, this gender division within the marching band did not last and beginning in the 1940s and 1950s, women were allowed to play as musicians within the band.¹¹⁷

Following the integration of colleges in the United States beginning in the 1960s, the integration process in marching bands was a slow transition. That pattern of integration within the marching band was slower and resulted with bands in the SEC becoming integrated in the

¹¹⁵ Charles H. Martin, *Benching Jim Crow: the Rise and Fall of the Color Line in Southern College Sports, 1890-1980* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2010), p. 257.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 258.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

mid-1970s, following a similar parallel to the football teams themselves. Recently in 2020, racist connotations around some songs that are played have come into the public consciousness and have promoted marching bands to eliminate some songs from their repertoires. For the 2020 football season, the RedCoat Band will no longer perform “Tara’s Theme” from *Gone with the Wind*, a film from 1939 that is set during the time of the Civil War in Georgia. The elimination of the song was made public in a statement published on Twitter by Brett Bawcum, the Director of the RedCoat Band. Mr. Bawcum stated that, “To be clear, the issue with the tradition is not the motivation of those who have embraced it, but rather the possibilities it may limit in those who haven’t. I value tradition, but I value creating a welcoming environment much more.” Mr. Bawcum’s statement reflects the living nature of intangible cultural heritage and that communities can, and will, make changes which better reflect the dominant school of thought surrounding a practice. That dominant thought in the 2020’s is that songs with connotations that harken back to the Old South will not be played. The RedCoat Marching Band is no stranger to inclusive change. As referenced in the statement by Mr. Bawcum, in 1971, the Band Director Roger Dancz, dropped “Dixie” from the former name that the band had operated under since 1955 as the “Dixie RedCoat Marching Band.”¹¹⁸ This mirrors the current movement away from references to “Dixie” in the South and while the term has not been pulled from fight songs, it has been removed from names of the bands as presented in 1971. The adaptation, albeit slow, helps to show that the cultural heritage can change over time. The change of name for the RedCoats and the replacement of “Tara’s Theme” with “Georgia on My Mind” speaks to the unique ability

¹¹⁸ Brett Bawcum, Message to the Redcoat Band Community. Twitter Post. June 17, 2020, 8:31 PM. <https://twitter.com/UGARedcoatBand/status/1273413110209142790>

of intangible cultural heritage traditions to adapt as they are performed by subsequent generations based on the current values of society. However, changes such as this have not been present at all the universities across the SEC and are an ongoing process of change.

While the changes have not been wide sweeping, they signal that the universities are aware of the impacts that traditions and culturally significant naming of groups and connotations that the music has on minority communities, which universities do not wish to exclude. They also show that the cultural heritage of football within the SEC is malleable and can be adapted to best reflect the values of society at present. Though cultural change is a slow process, it demonstrates the importance of the cultural heritage of SEC football through how universities and fans will adapt their cultural traditions surrounding football without getting rid of the tradition completely. One of the conditions to be inscribed as ICH by UNESCO is that the cultural practice must be compatible with mutual respect. While elements of SEC College Football are changing to match the hegemonic view that mutual respect is necessary, the change does not detract from its eligibility for inclusion as inscribed ICH. Instead, it strengthens how SEC College Football meets the requirement for being compatible with mutual respect.

Classism is also prevalent in SEC college football and is best exhibited through the social stratification within the football stadium where economic and class distinctions can be observed. These differences emerge when the location of the seats and caliber of the game are examined. Most evidently, major price distinctions exist between the lower bowl of the stadium, the executive boxes, the club level, the student section, and the “nosebleeds,” in addition to the sight lines at each of these sections. The price of tickets also depends on the caliber of the game being played. When two large schools who are having impressive football seasons meet in the stadium, the cost of tickets are increased. Conversely, when an SEC team plays schools that are members

of smaller conferences and the game is expected to be dominated by the SEC team, the cost of tickets tends to be less than if teams of the same caliber were playing. Football stadiums are able to demonstrate the interplay between the intangible cultural heritage of football in tandem with the material fabric of the sport. However, within this space, the stadium has become an arena that brings the class distinctions that are attached to the sport to the forefront.

However, there are also some who are simply in the stadium to work and not enjoy the game. Facilities crew, security, and food vendors all work together to keep the stadiums presentation ready before each Saturday in the fall. Their work is more far reaching than most realize. The facilities crew and stadium employees tend to work ten-hour days in the fall in order to ensure that the stadium lights, field, grass paint, escalators, elevators, concessions, and hedges are ready to greet fans and be seen on television each Saturday. Unfortunately, the jobs performed by the facilities management crews go largely unnoticed by many fans despite the quality work that is done. This is exemplified through the additional workers who are hired to clean the stadium following the game in order to get rid of the mess that is left behind by those who bought tickets to the game.¹¹⁹

Between those who view the stadium as a place of work, there are major distinctions as well. For example, head coaches and their coaching staff at Southeastern Conference make hundreds of thousands if not millions of dollars a year. On the other hand, those who are working security, scanning tickets, cleaning the restrooms, and are working in the concession stands make a considerably smaller salary. Additionally, the players on the field help to demonstrate the class distinctions within the stadium. While some may argue that the players are compensated through

¹¹⁹ Henry Queen, "More than Meets the Eye: Georgia Gamedays Made Possible by behind-the-Scenes Work," *The Red and Black*, November 20, 2019, https://www.redandblack.com/gameday/more-than-meets-the-eye-georgia-gamedays-made-possible-by-behind-the-scenes-work/article_ae85aeea-d4f4-11e9-a586-b37c0c9bba90.html.

athletic scholarships, at the heart of the matter, players fill a role similar to that of those who are working for the enjoyment of those who bought tickets much like the concession stand workers, janitors, and ushers.¹²⁰

Though cheerleading began as a male dominated sport, following the admission of female students to universities in the 1920s, the sport slowly integrated female students as a part of the cheer squads. The inclusion of these female cheerleaders caused a general shift in how students perceived of their school's cheer squads. There have been many issues surrounding the concept of gender and the sexualization of cheerleaders with the inclusion of women within the sport. Nearly as soon as women were admitted to SEC universities, there were calls for them to be part of the cheer squads. In a letter to the editor of the *Red & Black* at the University of Georgia, male students stated that, "We believe that it would add to the color of the games if the women assisted in leading the cheers. We are for women cheer leaders for next year."¹²¹ The involvement in women in cheerleading led to the development of cheerleading as a cultural icon which symbolized "youthful prestige, wholesome attractiveness, peer leadership and popularity while simultaneously representing mindless enthusiasm, shallow boosterism, objectified sexuality, and promiscuous availability."¹²² This attitude of sexualizing the female cheerleaders only grew as the sport developed further which can be best seen through the change in uniform over the years. While this does coincide with modesty standards of the day and the necessity of sportier uniforms for the modern-day cheerleaders, skirts have gotten tighter and shorter and

¹²⁰ Geraint John, Rod Sheard, and Ben Vickery, *Stadia: A Design and Development Guide*, vol. Fourth (Oxford, UK: Elsevier, 2007), p. 298.

¹²¹ The Red and Black, "Views and Reviews," *The Red and Black*, November 16, 1934.

¹²² Mary Ellen Hanson. 1995. Go! Fight! Win! Cheerleading in American culture. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green University Press, p. 2. & Natalie Adams and Pamela Bettis, "Commanding the Room in Short Skirts," *Gender & Society* 17, no. 1 (2003): pp. 73-91, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243202238979>, p. 73.

midribs can be seen. When compared to the original cheerleading uniforms, the difference between the two is striking. Additionally, sexism seen through how, generally, the only women on the football field are cheerleaders instead of coaches, trainers, or other positions of power.

In addition to the issues regarding the sexualization of cheerleaders, race has also been a prominent issue within cheerleading in the SEC. Though all of the schools in the SEC had been integrated in 1970, both academically and in the football realm, cheerleading was one of the later institutions in the university setting to integrate. The most prominent example of the integration of cheerleading and the pushback that was received is that of Richie Haley, the first African American male Auburn cheerleader, in 1979. The inclusion of Haley on the squad was met by opposition from both the white alumni and donors, who did not want a Black man interacting with the white female cheerleaders, and members of the African American community who thought that Haley being on the squad was merely “tokenism.”¹²³ The resistance Haley met, demonstrates the complexity of race relations and how they impact the cultural practice over time.

However, despite the shift in cheerleading from a male led position to one that is currently female centered and marred by sexualization, the integrity of cheerleaders as an element of SEC football cultural heritage remains strong. This is achieved through the cheerleaders fulfilling the same function that they did in the early 1900s of being students of the university that lead the football fans in songs, cheers, and chants of their team. When viewed holistically, the integrity of the practice of cheerleading as an element of the culture of SEC football is proven through the understanding that even though females have been added,

¹²³ Rick Harmon, “Just How Stupid Is Richie Haley?,” *The Auburn Plainsman*, April 19, 1979, p. 5. & Laura Grindstaff and Emily West, “‘Hands on Hips, Smiles on Lips!’ Gender, Race, and the Performance of Spirit in Cheerleading,” *Text and Performance Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (2010): pp. 143-162, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10462931003628910>.

uniforms have been changed, and cheerleading has grown to exist outside of football, the central element of the tradition remains the same through the continuation of engagement with the fans and the fight songs and chants.

As included in this element of what intangible cultural heritage is, it is necessary for a cultural practice to respect cultural diversity and human creativity. American College Football in the SEC does not neatly meet this requirement in order to be inscribed as ICH on the List. These racism, sexist, and classist elements that exist within college football are terrible in their own right but are not considered on the same level of other practices that have been barred from inscription of ICH such as female genital mutilation. Yet, it is possible for SEC college football to adapt over time as a living cultural practice to move away from these racist, classist, and sexist elements.

CHAPTER 3

SAFEGUARDING & INSCRIBING COLLEGE FOOTBALL AS INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

The 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage defines “safeguarding” as,

*measures aimed at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage, including the identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education, as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage.*¹²⁴

UNESCO seeks to safeguard intangible cultural heritage by encouraging their continued practice.

The Safeguarding of Inscribed Sports

Currently, sports and games that are listed as intangible cultural heritage are mainly safeguarded through specialized and umbrella organizations, publications, festivals, demonstrations, exchanges of expertise, promotion activities, loan services (both monetarily and of traditional sport equipment), and through education.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ “Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage,” UNESCO, accessed April 8, 2021, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention>.

¹²⁵ UNESCO, “UNESCO - Programme of Cultivating Ludodiversity: Safeguarding Traditional Games in Flanders,” Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO), accessed March 19, 2023, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/BSP/programme-of-cultivating-ludodiversity-safeguarding-traditional-games-in-flanders-00513>., UNESCO, “UNESCO - Tocati, a Shared Programme for the Safeguarding of Traditional Games and Pports,” Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO), accessed March 19, 2023, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/BSP/tocat-a-shared-programme-for-the-safeguarding-of-traditional-games-and-sports-01709>., UNESCO, “UNESCO - Traditional Korean Wrestling (Ssirum/Ssierum),” Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO), accessed March 19, 2023, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/traditional-korean-wrestling-ssirum-ssireum-01533>., UNESCO, “UNESCO - Tahteeb,

Hurling, one of the most popular inscribed sports, is currently being safeguarded through large scale organizations in Ireland such as the Gaelic Athletic Association and the Camogie Association (Camogie is the female variant of hurling), which aims to transmit the skills and values associated with hurling. Hurling is also being safeguarded through local hurling clubs teaching members of their communities how to play the sport at school events and local tournaments. As the sport is incredibly popular in Ireland, there is a museum in Kilkenny that will teach tourists how to play the sports in addition to exhibits on important hurling players, the development of the sport and its link with Irish mythology.¹²⁶

Another example of the safeguarding of inscribed sports which has proven successful is that of the Programme of Cultural Ludodiversity: Safeguarding Traditional Games in Flanders, Belgium.¹²⁷ In partnership with non-governmental organizations, local communities and associations, UNESCO has sought to safeguard a wide variety of traditional sport and games including shooting games, bowl games, throwing games, and ball games. Through this programme, UNESCO has worked in tandem with local communities to teach others how to play the traditional games as well as emphasizing the importance of ensuring the continuation of the games in Belgium.

One of the main non-governmental organizations that aids in the safeguarding of sport and games is Sportimonium, which was mentioned in the 2011 Register of Good Safeguarding

Stick Game,” Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO), accessed March 19, 2023, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/tahteeb-stick-game-01189>.

¹²⁶ The Kilkenny Way, “Legends Hurling Bar,” The Kilkenny Way Hurling Experience | Group Activities Kilkenny | Kilkenny Group Attractions | Family Attractions Kilkenny, accessed February 19, 2023, <https://www.thekilkennyway.com/kilkenny-hurling-legends-bar.php>.

¹²⁷ UNESCO, “UNESCO - Programme of Cultivating Ludodiversity: Safeguarding Traditional Games in Flanders,” Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO), accessed March 19, 2023, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/BSP/programme-of-cultivating-ludodiversity-safeguarding-traditional-games-in-flanders-00513>.

Practices.¹²⁸ Sportimonium opened to the public as a museum in 2004. It is the result of a research project at KU Leuven in the 1970's, which sought to research sporting history in Belgium and collect and preserve sporting artifacts. The collection of the museum has expanded to include artifacts from sportspeople and athletes as well as documents from sports journalists and sport federations. In addition, it is one of the Olympic Museums.¹²⁹ Sportimonium has been utilized as the main repository for traditional sport knowledge by UNESCO through the Programme of Cultivating Ludodiversity. Since the basis of the program is to document and research traditional sports and games, Sportimonium has been involved in safeguarding practices, just as in Flanders, to ensure that information gathered on the traditional sports and games is documented and stored in a repository for research purposes.¹³⁰

A similar large scale safeguarding effort by UNESCO is that of the Associazione Giochi Antichi which launched Tocati (meaning “it’s your turn”), a shared program for the safeguarding of traditional games and sports in Italy, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, and France.¹³¹ Similar to the Ludodiversity safeguarding program in Belgium, Tocati seeks to safeguard traditional sports and games through engaging the local community. However, Tocati, uses a festival format which involves thousands of volunteers and players in urbanized and touristic areas how to play the traditional sports and games. The program aims to establish a common ground of exchange

¹²⁸UNESCO, “UNESCO - Programme of Cultivating Ludodiversity: Safeguarding Traditional Games in Flanders,” Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO), accessed March 19, 2023, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/BSP/programme-of-cultivating-ludodiversity-safeguarding-traditional-games-in-flanders-00513>.

¹²⁹ Sportimonium. “Sportimonium: Sports & Olympic Museum History.” Sportimonium. Accessed February 20, 2023. <https://www.sportimonium.be/en/about-us/history>.

¹³⁰UNESCO, “UNESCO - Programme of Cultivating Ludodiversity: Safeguarding Traditional Games in Flanders,” Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO), accessed March 19, 2023, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/BSP/programme-of-cultivating-ludodiversity-safeguarding-traditional-games-in-flanders-00513>.

¹³¹ UNESCO, “UNESCO - Tocati, a Shared Programme for the Safeguarding of Traditional Games and Pports,” Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO), accessed March 19, 2023, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/BSP/tocat-a-shared-programme-for-the-safeguarding-of-traditional-games-and-sports-01709>.

between practitioners and institutions, improve the transmission of traditional sports and games through formal and non-formal education, and to involve communities, groups, individuals, institutions, and other stakeholders in capacity-building initiatives.¹³²

Traditional v. Modern Sports

A distinction has been made between “modern” sports and “premodern” or “traditional sports” by scholars such as Alan Guttmann.¹³³ This distinction seems to be confirmed by UNESCO’s separation between the two types of sports. Specifically, this has been done through the initiative to protect “Traditional Sports and Games (TSG)”¹³⁴ and the general disregarding of modern sports.

In recognizing the importance of sport, UNESCO, through this program, is seeking to preserve traditional sports and games. The organization has compiled a list of currently listed examples of intangible cultural heritage that they consider to be TSG. UNESCO is looking to garner international recognition for the Declaration of Punta del Este (MINEPS III), which seeks to safeguard TSG through expanding the list, drafting additional international legal framework to protect TSG, publishing works that record TSG (such as the 2003 World Sports Encyclopedia), and create an international network that is focused on the preservation of TSG.¹³⁵ If SEC College football were to be considered by UNESCO as eligible for listing as ICH, it could very well be possible that the sport could benefit from the TSG programs developed by UNESCO.

¹³² UNESCO, “UNESCO - Tocati, a Shared Programme for the Safeguarding of Traditional Games and Pports,” Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO), accessed March 19, 2023, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/BSP/tocat-a-shared-programme-for-the-safeguarding-of-traditional-games-and-sports-01709>.,

¹³³ Allen Guttmann, “From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sports,” (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), p. 307-321.

¹³⁴ UNESCO, “Traditional Sports and Games,” UNESCO.org, August 1, 2018, <https://www.unesco.org/en/sport-and-anti-doping/traditional-sports-and-games>.

¹³⁵ UNESCO, “Traditional Sports and Games,” UNESCO.org, August 1, 2018, <https://www.unesco.org/en/sport-and-anti-doping/traditional-sports-and-games>.

The Exclusion of Modern Sports...

However, while traditional sports and games such as hurling, Tahteeb (the Egyptian stick game), and Ssirum/Ssireum (traditional Korean wrestling) are safeguarded through UNESCO ICH programs, more popular modern sports such as English Premier League Football and American College Football have been generally excluded from talks of safeguarding or inscription as ICH despite their long histories and distinct cultural practices.

As Soccer is the most popular sport in the world, and American Football is the most popular sport in the United States, both with long histories that stem from the same root sport of English rugby, it is curious that these modern sports are not inscribed on the intangible cultural heritage list.¹³⁶ Much like SEC College Football, Premier League Football in England fits into many of the same cultural categories that have already been explored in this thesis including chants and songs specific to each team, mascots, post-game traditions, and tangible cultural heritage such as stadiums. There are current calls for Soccer to be inscribed as ICH. In 2021, Football World Heritage President HH Rani Vanoukska T. Modely, announced that Football World Heritage would begin collaboration with UNESCO to promote soccer being recognized as ICH by UNESCO.¹³⁷ Altay Cengizer, President of the General Conference of UNESCO has stated that,

"I think that football[soccer] inherently has the status of world heritage. After all, there seems to be nothing else that resembles its power of appeal and evident magnetism. As such, football has the power to inspire young lives everywhere and promote positive values. I very much encourage your foundation's efforts and your commitment to this

¹³⁶ Eric Dunning and Dominic Malcolm, eds., *Sport: Critical Concepts in Sociology*, vol. II (London, UK: Routledge, 2003), p. 346.

I will be referring to football as it is played anywhere but the United States as "soccer" and to SEC College Football as American Football to make the distinction between the sports and, hopefully, lessen any confusion due to the same name.

¹³⁷ "Football World Heritage and its President, HH Rani Vanoukska T. Modely, announces collaboration with the UNESCO Presidency to promote football recognized as Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO." *M2 Presswire (England)*, October 26, 2021. *NewsBank: Access World News – Historical and Current*. <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.us1.proxy.openathens.net/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/185E03F5EFBC17C0>.

important project. Football is much more than what it seems. I, therefore, wish to assure you of my support and commitment."¹³⁸

The public support in favor of inscribing soccer as ICH is a very hopeful prospect for other modern sports like SEC College Football. It is evident that these modern sports, while currently excluded by UNESCO for inclusion in the ICH list, do in fact fit a great number of the criteria that is laid out in the 2003 ICH Convention and should therefore be considered for inscription on the list.

UNESCO International Day of Sport for Development and Peace

More holistically, UNESCO is working to safeguard ICH through programs such as the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace (IDS DP), which is celebrated every April 6th.¹³⁹ UNESCO developed the day in order to recognize the “positive role of sport and physical activity play”¹⁴⁰ stating that,

*“The practice of sport is a recognized instrument for promoting peace, as it disregards both geographical borders and social classes. The very nature of sport is about participation and inclusion. Sport brings individuals and communities together and bridges cultural and ethnic divides.”*¹⁴¹

Through the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace, UNESCO makes the statement that sport serves an important role not only culturally, but also as a tool that can be used to facilitate sustainable development and peace. The advancement of this initiative could be

¹³⁸ "Football World Heritage and its President, HH Rani Vanouska T. Modely, announces collaboration with the UNESCO Presidency to promote football recognized as Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO." *M2 Presswire (England)*, October 26, 2021. *NewsBank: Access World News – Historical and Current*. <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.us1.proxy.openathens.net/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/185E03F5EFBC17C0>.

¹³⁹ UNESCO, “International Day of Sports and Physical Activity,” Unesdoc.unesco.org, August 16, 2013, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000222613.locale=en>.

¹⁴⁰ UNESCO, “International Day of Sport for Development and Peace,” UNESCO, April 6, 2018, <https://en.unesco.org/events/international-day-sport-development-and-peace-0#:~:text=In%202013%2C%20the%20United%20Nations,lifestyles%20and%20a%20peaceful%20world>.

¹⁴¹ UNESCO, “International Day of Sport for Development and Peace,” UNESCO, April 6, 2018, <https://en.unesco.org/events/international-day-sport-development-and-peace-0#:~:text=In%202013%2C%20the%20United%20Nations,lifestyles%20and%20a%20peaceful%20world>.

a way in which modern sports such as Premier League Soccer and SEC College Football could be brought into the fold of ICH. The recognition of the importance of sport by UNESCO through the establishment of the IDSDP, further helps to safeguard sports such as SEC College Football by acknowledging the useful aspects of sport for development, and peace in a broad sense.

The Safeguarding of College Football

Safeguarding Through the Media...

Perhaps the most significant way that SEC College Football is identified, documented, promoted, and transmitted is through the media; specifically, through the broadcasting the football games. Every Saturday, and some Thursdays depending on schedule, for fifteen weeks, approximately eight SEC football games are played. These games reach millions of viewers each week and is the largest way in which SEC College Football is practiced and consumed by practitioners. Through the weekly showings of SEC College Football on television each week in the fall, fans of the sport and those who participate in the culture of SEC College Football can engage with the cultural traditions of the sport while not being physically present where the game is being played. This has allowed for fans who are across the country or even across the globe to maintain a connection to their chosen SEC College Football team and continue to carry out practices of SEC College Football such as chants, songs, and the like from wherever they are and has become an extension of the cultural practice.

However, the permeation of media, especially that of television, into SEC College Football may be a hindrance to the cultural practice as much as it helps to safeguard as it has turned SEC College Football into a spectacle on screen. The introduction of television broadcasting to SEC College Football has led to changes in the game, most obviously through “television time outs” where play is suspended on the field in order to make time for

advertisements. While this can be considered as working in contrast to preserving the cultural practice, it speaks to the living aspect of ICH, where culture adapts to the environment and is practiced in conjunction with what technology is available and what the practitioners wish to do.

The SEC Network

Media permeation into SEC College Football is perhaps best exemplified through the creation of the SEC Network. This television network, which was launched in 2014 as a subsidiary to ESPN, airs SEC sporting events as well as a news program called SEC Now (which functions as an analysis program), along with replaying famous SEC games and reruns of games played that season.¹⁴² Additionally, the SEC Network hosts a traveling pregame show called “SEC Nation.” The pregame show functions in the same way as ESPN’s “College Game Day” where the network hosts will travel to various universities within the SEC where a league game is taking place. Analysts will discuss the analytics of the game, make predictions for the outcome of the game, and talk about the history of the matchup between the universities. The SEC Network also hosts a non-sports series called “True South,” which focuses on the food, history, and culture of the cities in which a SEC university is located.¹⁴³ Additionally, the SEC Network frequently reshows what it dubs to be “classic games.”¹⁴⁴ These games are often bowl games like the 2018 Rose Bowl game or high-stakes rivalry games between SEC Universities such as Auburn University and the University of Alabama or the University of Georgia and the

¹⁴² Steven Muma, “SEC Network Announced: Launching in 2014, AT&T Already on Board,” SBNation.com (SBNation.com, May 2, 2013), <https://www.sbnation.com/college-football/2013/5/2/4293400/sec-network-tv-espn-announcement-details>. & SEC Network, “About SEC Network/SEC Network+,” The Official Website of the Southeastern Conference, August 25, 2015, <https://www.secsports.com/article/11130708/about-the-sec-network>.

¹⁴³ SEC Network, “About SEC Network/SEC Network+,” The Official Website of the Southeastern Conference, August 25, 2015, <https://www.secsports.com/article/11130708/about-the-sec-network>.

¹⁴⁴ SEC Network, “About SEC Network/SEC Network+,” The Official Website of the Southeastern Conference, August 25, 2015, <https://www.secsports.com/article/11130708/about-the-sec-network>.

University of Florida. The reshowing of games such as these allow for fans to reminisce on when the game took place and perhaps share the experience of viewing the game for a second time with younger fans who were not born yet.

However, the type of regional network like the SEC Network is also present for other power five conferences such as the Big 10 Conference, Big 12 Conference, PAC-12 Conference, and the Atlantic Coast Conference. Regional networks such as these show the crossover between the monetary gains that are generated from American College Football and the latent safeguarding that occurs through the perpetuation of the showing of games.

The Media as a Double-edged Sword: The Influence of Money

As discussed in *Football U: Spectator Sports in the Life of the American University*, J. Douglas Toma recognizes that football and sport is the main way that many interact with universities as opposed to interacting academically.¹⁴⁵ However, it is undeniable that making money has become entwined with SEC College Football. With the relationship between football success and monetary gains, it makes sense that universities are directly interested in fostering a winning football program. This can include actions such as upgrading their football facilities like the stadium, practice fields, and gyms. In 2023, Greg Sankey, the SEC Commissioner reported that each of the 14 SEC universities received nearly \$50 million in revenue distribution from the league which stems from TV agreements, bowl games, the College Football Playoff, the SEC football title game, and “supplemental surplus distribution.”¹⁴⁶ Schools that participated in

¹⁴⁵ J. Douglas Toma, *Football U.: Spectator Sports and Building the American University* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), p. 18.

¹⁴⁶ Brent Zwerneman, 2023. “Texas A&M, Fellow SEC Members Receive Nearly \$50 Million in Revenue Distribution.” *Houston Chronicle* (TX), February 9.

the 2021-2022 bowl games received an additional \$23.3 million dollars to “offset travel and other bowl expenses”¹⁴⁷

This staggering amount does not include the money made by the individual universities through ticket sales, concession revenue, merchandise revenue, or donations.

Through the sheer amount of money that can be made by universities, media companies, and the SEC, SEC College Football has become a staple of popular culture and a spectacle for viewers. Each university has become deeply invested in promoting their football team, standing out from other schools through win percentage and superior football facilities, and creating the most lucrative advertisement slots. Because of this universities, media companies, and the SEC have a vested interest in continuing SEC College Football as a cultural practice. While the influx of money has influenced the current iteration of SEC College Football, it fits that as a living cultural practice, the practice has developed in tandem with a growing fan base and support from the universities. Cultural practices do not exist outside market forces. We should not expect the intangible culture of sport to do so.

Museums & Heritage Halls

A further way that SEC College Football is safeguarded is through museums, “heritage halls,” and traveling exhibits which are sponsored by the SEC and the individual universities. Located within Atlanta, the College Football Hall of Fame serves as both a museum and as a promotional space for college football in the United States. The Hall of Fame states that its mission is to “use [their] position as a trusted authority within college football to educate,

¹⁴⁷ Brent Zwerneman, 2023. “Texas A&M, Fellow SEC Members Receive Nearly \$50 Million in Revenue Distribution.” Houston Chronicle (TX), February 9.

inspire, entertain, and connect audiences while honoring the people, traditions and passion of the game.”¹⁴⁸ The main exhibit of the Hall of Fame is centered around players and coaches that were inducted within the past year and tells the story of their athleticism and impact on the sport of college football in the United States. While the Hall of Fame is focused on college football in the United States as a whole and not on the SEC specifically, SEC College Football is still safeguarded through exhibit discussion about inter-conference play and statistics that reflect SEC University teams specifically. Further, the Hall of Fame serves as a place in which fans of SEC College Football, and American College Football in general, can gather to celebrate and collectively remember the sport through the honoring of past players and coaches.

Museums, such as the one created by Sportimonium, are one of the ways that UNESCO has sought to help safeguard intangible cultural heritage.¹⁴⁹ While some argue that museums are suited only for the preservation of tangible cultural heritage, museums serve to aid in safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage practices through education and introducing the practices to those who visit the museum.¹⁵⁰ Others, such as Richard Kurin and Marilena Alivizatou, have argued that ICH can only be safeguarded by the relevant cultural practitioners and that outside institutions such as museums should not be seen as a viable way to safeguard ICH as it removes the practitioners from safeguarding their ICH.¹⁵¹ However, though examples

¹⁴⁸ College Football Hall of Fame, “More Than a Game. More Than a Museum,” College Football Hall of Fame, accessed January 23, 2023, <https://www.cfbhall.com/>.

¹⁴⁹Sportimonium. “Sportimonium: Sports & Olympic Museum History.” Sportimonium. Accessed February 20, 2023. <https://www.sportimonium.be/en/about-us/history>.

¹⁵⁰Marilena Alivizatou, “Contextualising Intangible Cultural Heritage in Heritage Studies and Museology,” *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* 3 (2008): pp. 44-54.& Richard Kurin, “Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in the 2003 UNESCO Convention: A Critical Appraisal,” *Museum International* 56, no. 1-2 (2004): pp. 66-77, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1350-0775.2004.00459.x>. & R. Kurin, “Museums and Intangible Heritage: Culture Dead or Alive,” *ICOM News* 4 (2004): p. 7, 12.& Eileen Hooper Greenhill, “Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge,” 1992, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203415825>.

¹⁵¹R. Kurin, “Museums and Intangible Heritage: Culture Dead or Alive,” *ICOM News* 4 (2004): p. 7, 12. & Marilena Alivizatou, “Contextualising Intangible Cultural Heritage in Heritage Studies and Museology,” *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* 3 (2008): pp. 44-54.

such as Sportimonium and other local museums which feature exhibits on ICH practices like the Hurling Bar Museum in Kilkenny, Ireland that teaches those who visit how to play the sport, it is demonstrated that education and participation in ICH practices helps to safeguard the practices.¹⁵² As there are museums dedicated to ICH practices that are run by practitioners of ICH, museums can, under the right circumstances and direction, be useful tools for safeguarding ICH.

Individual universities also have “sport heritage halls” and museum exhibits which are dedicated to the history and traditions of college football at their school. These halls primarily serve as trophy cases and small museums which celebrate the history of football and sport at the university. These “sport heritage halls” within the SEC include institutions such as the Paul W. Bryant Museum at the University of Alabama, the Louisiana State University Jack and Priscilla Andoinie Museum, the Auburn University Hall of Honor, and the University of Georgia Butts-Mehre Heritage Hall.¹⁵³ These heritage halls and museums, except for that of UGA’s Butts-Mehre Heritage Hall, all have mission statements and stated goals which include sentiments such as “educating and inspiring a universal audience about the significant contributions and accomplishments of the University of Alabama collegiate athletes... fostering a sense of history,

¹⁵²The Kilkenny Way, “Legends Hurling Bar,” The Kilkenny Way Hurling Experience | Group Activities Kilkenny | Kilkenny Group Attractions | Family Attractions Kilkenny, accessed February 19, 2023, <https://www.thekilkennyway.com/kilkenny-hurling-legends-bar.php>.

¹⁵³ University of Alabama, “Paul W. Bryant Museum,” Paul W Bryant Museum, accessed January 23, 2023, <https://bryantmuseum.com/>; Louisiana State University, “Jack and Priscilla Andoinie Museum,” LSU (<https://lsusports.net/>, September 17, 2019), <https://lsusports.net/news/2019/09/17/204987342/>; Auburn University, “Jonathan B. Lovelace Hall of Honor,” Auburn University, accessed January 23, 2023, <https://auburn.edu/about/visitorsguide/hallofhonor.php>; University of Georgia, “Butts Mehre Heritage Hall,” University of Georgia Athletics, accessed January 23, 2023, <https://georgiadogs.com/sports/2017/6/16/butts-team>.

tradition, and excellence,”¹⁵⁴ “to honor the past, define the present, and inspire the future,”¹⁵⁵ and “to be the home to LSU’s athletic history”¹⁵⁶, all of which are similar to the mission of UNESCO utilized museums like Sportimonium. While these museums are focused on promoting their own history and rallying school spirit, they also serve the purpose of documenting the history of the collegiate football programs within the context of the university.

¹⁵⁴ University of Alabama, “Paul W. Bryant Museum,” Paul W Bryant Museum, accessed January 23, 2023, <https://bryantmuseum.com/>;

¹⁵⁵ Auburn University, “Jonathan B. Lovelace Hall of Honor,” Auburn University, accessed January 23, 2023, <https://auburn.edu/about/visitorsguide/hallofhonor.php>.

¹⁵⁶ Louisiana State University, “Jack and Priscilla Andonie Museum,” LSU (<https://lsusports.net/>, September 17, 2019), <https://lsusports.net/news/2019/09/17/204987342/>.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

This thesis has sought to answer the question as to whether or not American College Football, as seen through the example of SEC College Football, can be considered intangible cultural heritage per the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. When compared against the definition of intangible cultural heritage and the requirements for listing a cultural practice as intangible cultural heritage, it appears that American College Football seems to meet many of the elements of the definition and requirements.

Many examples of cultural expressions of American College Football have similar practices that are already listed as intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO. Tailgating is much like the listed practice of the Grass Mowing Competition and Custom in Kupres, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Both practices involve the social gathering of practitioners before a sporting event in order to celebrate the sporting event despite different backgrounds, either cultural or team allegiance.¹⁵⁷ College football team walks are similar to the Marches of Entre-Sambre-et-Meuse in Belgium where processions with an accompanying marching band march through crowds of spectators and promotes social cohesion.¹⁵⁸ Post-game traditions such as the ringing of the Chapel Bell at the University of Georgia and the rolling of Toomer's Corner at Auburn

¹⁵⁷ UNESCO, "Grass Mowing Competition Custom in Kupres," UNESCO, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/grass-mowing-competition-custom-in-kupres-01512>.

¹⁵⁸ UNESCO, "UNESCO - Marches of Entre-Sambre-Et-Meuse," Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO), accessed April 12, 2023, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/marches-of-entre-sambre-et-meuse-00670>.

University are like the Annual Carnival Bell Ringers Pageant in Croatia, where bells are rung in celebration and the Czechia Tradition of Handmade Production of Christmas Tree Decorations from Blown Glass Beads where generations come together in order to decorate trees as a form of celebration.¹⁵⁹ Fight songs and chants in college football are like the practice of Al-Taghrooda where practitioners engage in social involvement through the ritualistic chanting of short poems that is sometimes done in a call and response manner.¹⁶⁰ Cheerleaders at college football games are similar to the Frevo dancers at the Carnival of Recife in Brazil. In this practice, the performers, usually women, dance to marching music, wear colors that signify their allegiance to either a religious devotion (in the case of the Carnival) or team (in the case of American College Football), and the performance is seen as a smaller portion of a larger festival.¹⁶¹

College football mascots are much like the listed practice of the Processional of Giants and Dragons in Belgium and France where the effigies of dragons and giants represent emblems of identity for certain towns in Belgium and France much like how mascots represents certain football teams.¹⁶² Marching bands for college football are similar to the listed practices of the Carnival of Granville in France and the Valencia Falls Festivity where marching bands bring

¹⁵⁹ UNESCO, “Handmade Production of Christmas Tree Decorations from Blown Glass Beads,” UNESCO, accessed June 5, 2021, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/handmade-production-of-christmas-tree-decorations-from-blown-glass-beads-01559>. & UNESCO, “Annual Carnival Bell Ringers' Pageant from the Kastav Area,” UNESCO, accessed June 6, 2021, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/annual-carnival-bell-ringers-pageant-from-the-kastav-area-00243>.

¹⁶⁰ UNESCO, “UNESCO - Al-Taghrooda, Traditional Bedouin Chanted Poetry in the United Arab Emirates and the Sultanate of Oman,” Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO), accessed February 8, 2023, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/al-taghrooda-traditional-bedouin-chanted-poetry-in-the-united-arab-emirates-and-the-sultanate-of-oman-00744>.

¹⁶¹ UNESCO, “UNESCO - Frevo, Performing Arts of the Carnival of Recife,” Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO), accessed February 8, 2023, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/frevo-performing-arts-of-the-carnival-of-recife-00603>.

¹⁶² UNESCO, “Processional Giants and Dragons in Belgium and France,” UNESCO, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/processional-giants-and-dragons-in-belgium-and-france-00153>.

communities together through music in order to celebrate their cultural cohesion.¹⁶³ Football stadiums as a cultural space is similar to the listed ICH practice of the Kirkpinar Oil Wrestling Festival in Edima, Turkey, where a “Men’s Field,” which is shaped similarly to a football stadium, are the designated spaces for participants to watch the sporting event and cheer on their chosen team or sportsman.¹⁶⁴

As part of the definition of ICH in the 2003 Convention, intangible cultural heritage is “constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment.” American College Football has exemplified this through the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the adaptation of practices such as tailgating to “homegating.” The 2003 Convention also stipulates that intangible cultural heritage “provides a sense of identity and community.” This is seen in American College Football through team allegiance which practitioners show through clothing, home décor, and involvement in organizations such as alumni associations. A further stipulation is that intangible cultural heritage is “transmitted from generation to generation.” Within American College Football this is easily seen through the passing of family team allegiance in examples such as families and friends tailgating in the same spot on campus for more than 25 years, the “bulldawg head painting” father and son, and mascot use for religious purpose such as “Aubie Claus.”

Finally, in order to be inscribed as intangible cultural heritage, a cultural practice must “promote respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.” American College Football does exhibit elements of sexism, racism, and classism. These include the problems with integration of

¹⁶³ UNESCO, “Valencia Fallas Festivity,” UNESCO, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/valencia-fallas-festivity-00859>. & UNESCO, “Carnival of Granville,” UNESCO, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/carnival-of-granville-01077>.

¹⁶⁴ UNESCO, “UNESCO - Kirkpinar Oil Wrestling Festival,” Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2010, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/krkpinar-oil-wrestling-festival-00386>.

teams, marching bands, and cheerleaders as well as music and fight songs that evoke historical racism, the latent classism of the stadium structure that is reinforced through the influence of capitalism on American College Football, and the general sexism that surrounds cheerleaders. While these elements are not as disturbing as other practices that are barred from inscription such as female genital mutilation, they still remain as topics of concern.

The 2003 ICH Convention also emphasizes the necessity of safeguarding practices that are listed as ICH. The safeguarding of American College Football is currently done through practices such as active showings of games, both modern and historic, through the media and the establishment of museums such as the College Football Hall of Fame and Heritage Halls and Museums at individual colleges and universities.

Based on the information presented, it can be concluded that American College Football seems to meet many of the requirements to be considered intangible cultural heritage per the 2003 UNESCO Convention. However, there are outstanding issues which may hinder the inscription of the cultural practice such as UNESCO's division between traditional and modern sports and the effects of capitalism on American College Football. Existing tension within UNESCO between traditional sports and games and modern sports and games where UNESCO currently excludes modern sports such as Soccer from being listed as a further aspect that should be considered. Though, there are current calls for the listing of Soccer by the president of Football World Heritage, it remains to be seen if it will be considered for listing by UNESCO. Additionally, the relationship between American College Football and capitalism is a point of contention. On one hand, universities are invested in continuing American College Football due to monetary returns which could potentially diminish the perceived cultural value of American College Football. Conversely, this popularity of American College Football which has led to

monetary returns for universities and teams, has resulted in the safeguarding of the practice since colleges and universities have a vested interest in continuing the practice for monetary gain.

In sum, American College Football, as seen through examples in the SEC, seems to meet many of the requirements of the 2003 UNESCO Convention to be considered intangible cultural heritage.

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