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Reviewed Article:

Current Trends in Annual Historical Re-Enactments Events in Catalonia. Uses of Cultural Heritage

Persistent Identifier: https://exarc.net/ark:/88735/10395

EXARC Journal Issue 2019/1 | **Publication Date:** 2019-02-20

Author(s): Antonio Rojas Rabaneda [1] ✉

[1] Catalan Institute For Cultural Heritage Research-University of Girona, Plaça Sant Domènec 3, 17004 Girona, Spain.

The project “Re-enactments events in Catalonia” seeks to identify and analyse annually occurring events that make use of cultural heritage and history for the purposes of tourism, economic promotion and dissemination, and for other festive, recreational or educational ends. The activity programmes of all active events currently held in Catalonia were analysed and quantitative data provided in order to facilitate evaluation of their role in tourism and in

promoting cultural heritage. The research was overseen by the Projects and Communication Unit of the Catalan Institute for Cultural Heritage Research (ICRPC) and performed within the framework of the Cultural Heritage of Catalonia research group. Preconsolidated Research Group (GRPRE) (2017 SGR 835).

> The reflection we have been sharing in recent years is whether the great capacity to attract public shown by all the events studied should be used to plan the dissemination of local cultural heritage, with the inclusion of strategies and tools with high educational value.

Origins of the project

This study was initiated in 2008 with a view to generating data on a type of event that appealed to visitors by offering a "journey to the past". The study initiative arose from the verification that every weekend, a market, fiesta or fair that re-enacted or recreated a historical period was being held somewhere in Catalonia. Events set in the medieval era were the most numerous. This format was growing quickly and although they all offered the same attraction –a journey to the past– the number and quality of the activities proposed varied greatly. The large numbers of visitors drawn to these events attracted the attention of many municipalities in Catalonia that could not resist the temptation of cloning small-format, low-budget models. Given the continual growth and lack of detailed data regarding these initiatives, we embarked upon a data collective process. The main objective was to obtain quantitative data and to organise the information about the events with a view to evaluating their features and rationale. In recent years, new research has been published on historical recreations in Spain (Barco 2010, pp.243254; Cabrera 2013; Cozar 2013). There is a growing interest in the academic world in these cultural manifestations, and the new research complements the contributions from other countries that have a longer track record in studying these events (Agnew and Lamb 2004; Agnew 2007; Daugbjerg, M., 2018).

Methodology

The project's first action was aimed at accurately defining the proposal typology of the study. The research was limited to short-duration annual events, mostly lasting two or three days, and always over a weekend. Another parameter included in the selection was the choice of proposals aimed at recreating, staging, reactivating, disseminating, presenting or emulating an event, period, context or historical figure.

The names given to events with these characteristics are diverse: re-enactment day, market, fair, fiesta, week or festival. Sometimes, different names refer to very similar or directly identical events, but there are also markedly different formats. The actions featured in our analysis therefore includes events ranging from the extremely superficial to others of high quality and with very complete activity programmes.

Some initial quandaries to be solved in the analysis process were then considered. The following questions were asked: At what time of year are they held? Where are they held? When were they first held? Who organise them? Who funds them? What is their main objective? How many visitors come to them? What historical periods are promoted? What educational activities are to be found associated with these events?

The main sources were information searches in websites and digital media such as websites or social media. All the activity programmes were analysed. The organisers and financial backers of the events were also consulted directly. The second phase of research involved fieldwork which focused on attendance at the identified events, with a view to yielding unique information and documentation, such as photographs, and other data associated with the organisation and management of the fairs. Analysing the data obtained made it possible to undertake a chiefly quantitative study.

A snapshot of the events

The answers obtained to the above questions outlined the events' main features and offered a first impression (Rojas 2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2011a, 2011b, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c). The initial inventory of events matching the above-mentioned criteria yielded a total of 62 in Catalonia in 2008. The most common events involved actions associated with the medieval period (51%). For many municipalities, holding small-format medieval fairs and markets generally provided an annual activity entailing a low economic cost and requiring little organisational effort, given that they outsourced the organisation to specialised companies which provide the events' activities (see figures 1 and 2). The events include the same activities, including the participation of handicraft stalls, as companies offer packs to the local councils or other bodies to fund the events. The number of activities varies at each event, due to the package selected by the organisers, and the products for sale range from culinary produce to a variety of handcrafted goods. These stalls provoke the most interest in visitors. At many events, visitors circulate around the handicraft stalls in a festive family atmosphere as dozens or hundreds of people congregate in confined spaces at smaller events and thousands at larger events. These stalls provide a focal point for organizing different activities, ranging from the child-friendly to the family-oriented to the adult-focused. The organisers valued large attendance numbers which has kept some events running and led to the appearance of other new events. Over the course of two decades, a low-cost model has become consolidated and has been blatantly cloned and replicated. This process accounts for the strong presence of the medieval fair and market format. The model which combines handicraft stalls as the core feature, and complementary activities, has been applied to events set in other historical periods. In parallel with small formats with few activities, festivals or larger-format proposals featuring more content and activities were also consolidated with objectives that place a greater focus on disseminating cultural heritage, albeit without renouncing their tourist appeal. The success of these large formats' model for disseminating heritage led to the

creation of others that, albeit with a lower budget and smaller size, also seek to activate and promote municipalities' cultural attractions (See Figures 1 and 2).

It is important to mention that for some municipalities; these events represent the year's main activity and are the main resource for drawing visitors to the town or village. For other municipalities, historical dissemination or re-enactment events complement a broad range of recreational, cultural and festive activities.

Aggregating the analysis of the activities proposed, the surveys performed, and the consultation of documentation, the project established a relationship between these events and tourism and economic development strategies (Rojas 2010b). Local councils have mainly sought to: provide support to commercial sectors, encourage municipal activity, and generate an influx of visitors (Rojas 2010a). They therefore targeted local visitors. In very few cases are the objectives to activate and disseminate cultural heritage. The project therefore analysed the role of the dissemination and socialisation of cultural heritage (Rojas 2011b) among the events' objectives. It concluded that there were few cultural heritage dissemination activities. This data indicated that history and cultural heritage are sometimes used as a marketing tool to attract visitors and pointed to a mismatch between the invitation to travel to the past and the activities actually proposed. History and cultural heritage are sometimes used as bait to "catch" visitors and to promote towns and villages, as well as to generate contexts in which local businesses can boost sales, particularly in the slow season. In short, for many events cultural heritage is the means and not the end. These conclusions emerged from the analysis of the activity programmes in which there were few actions designed to disseminate cultural heritage. The different activities selected to spread the History by the organizers, led us to establish categories of events based on the presence of historical re-enactment actions or informative and educational activities (Rojas 2011b, 2012c). The research also took into consideration some of the events' operational characteristics or the promotional tactics used to publicise them (Rojas 2012b).

Evolution over 10 years. Current trends

During 2017, we screened all the active events located in Catalonia. The initial starting dates for currently active events varied and cover a chronological period from 1980 to 2017.

This data update enables us to view the evolution over the last ten years and to establish current trends with regard to the most commonly represented historical periods. Some 115 events have now been documented, according to data obtained up until 2017 (inclusive). Data showed that 31% were initiated between 1980 and 1999 and a further 69% between 2000 and 2017. In fact, since the start of the 90's except for 1991, at least one event has been established every year. Analysing the creation dates has brought to light the evolution in the events' growth over a period of more than three decades, showing their behaviour in a context of economic crisis such as the recession that began in 2007-2008 (Rojas 2012a). The

results of our research showed the high number of events (11) created in 2008, at the start of the economic crisis when the culture sector was hard hit by a policy of financial cuts. The significant growth of these events at such a difficult time for local councils is very striking. The project has shown that 9% of currently active events started in 2008, and 38% were created between 2007 and 2017.

Thus, from 2009 to 2017, a total of 32 events were initiated, highlighting the municipalities' commitment to such initiatives, which are associated with tourism, promoting local commerce and disseminating and promoting cultural heritage.

The most commonly represented historical period is currently the medieval era, which accounts for 50% of all events (see figure 5), 23% are set in the contemporary era and 12% in the modern era, while 11% are set in ancient Rome (See Figure 3). Fewer than 4% feature in a group of proposals devoted to Prehistory, Ancient Greece or Iberian culture (See Figures 3, 4 and 5).

After the explosion of medieval markets, especially since 2008, in the last ten years different municipalities of Catalonia have inaugurated new media events. In ten years, there has only been a slight decrease in their percentage of the total. They accounted for 51% of the total number of events in 2008 and 50% at the start of 2018. However, if we analyse the percentage of medieval events counting only the proposals established from 2009 to 2017, the percentage is lower; 36% of the events initiated in this period are medieval fairs and markets. This lower percentage can be explained by the design of new proposals with diverse themes, historical periods and formats. Using the data obtained in the last 10 years, however, we have detected a change in trends. Contemporary era recreations and re-enactments have become more common in the last ten years and currently account for 43% of events. Initiatives linked to the Art Nouveau architectural movement in Catalonia have grown, drawing from the wealth of Art Nouveau heritage that has been preserved. There are also a large number of *Indiano* (returnees from the Americas) fairs, which emerged with a view to publicising the history of the "Indianos" or "Americanos" and of the heritage to which they gave rise (See Figure 6). Several municipalities have engaged with this proposal and created a network of *Indiano* municipalities. Lastly, there is a trickle of new initiatives. Some recall Catalonia's rural traditions in the 20th century, while others promote the Knights Templar (See Figure 7), the Cathars or the 17th century bandits (See Figure 8). Events that disseminate the industrial past and the industrial heritage that has been preserved have also been identified. Ancient history remains present with the establishment of initiatives associated with the Roman world (12%) or Iberian culture (3%). Lastly, events focused on the modern era account for 6% (See Figures 6, 7 and 8).

The data extraction performed also reveals how the presence of some historical periods have continued unchanged. Heritage originating from Iberian culture (6th to 1st centuries BC)

accounts for a very small part of the currently active total events. Although Catalonia has numerous archaeological sites from Iberian culture, these have given rise to virtually no events along the lines of Roman festivals such as Tarraco Viva, in Tarragona. In contrast, activities associated with Iberian culture are very present throughout the year in the educational activities offered by museums, interpretation centres or archaeological sites, among other locations. Annually held events include the "Iberian weekends" organised by the Museu d'Arqueologia de Catalunya (MAC), which partly make up for the scant presence of festivals or markets focused on this proto-historic culture. The Roman world-based events remain stable with festivals and fiestas that already existed in 2008 and new events that have been established over the last ten years. Lastly, the data obtained reveal a lack of annually-held markets, fairs or festivals set in the prehistoric period.

In general terms, in recent years, the number of themes and historical periods of the events under study have grown. In 2008, events were already distributed over an extensive territorial area and 7% of Catalan municipalities were recorded to have at least one such event. Data collected up until 2017 show that the number of municipalities engaging in such activities has increased to 11%. The months in which most of these events are held are still May (15%), June (16%) and September (16%), as was the case in 2008. The decision to hold annual historical recreation or re-enactment events came directly from town councils in 70% of the cases analysed and therefore the main funding for events as a whole comes from municipal councils. In 18% of cases, coordination is assumed by local cultural associations. With knowledge of the operating structures, the research sought to analyse the quantitative information from different perspectives. The sum of all the budgets amounts to an annual investment figure of around 3 million euros. Given that the formats are very different, the budgets are too.

As regards dissemination tactics, 20% of events currently have their own website. Examples are the Tarraco Viva Festival, the *Festa del Renaixement* in Tortosa (see figure 9), and the Alcover Bandits Fair, whose websites offer extensive information to visitors. The pervasiveness of the social media in today's society has also had an incipient impact on communication strategies,18% have a specific page for the event on Facebook and 9% have a Twitter account. Other actions such as marketing emails and the use of corporate or institutional websites to view the events are more common. Traditional advertising in the written press and the printing of diptychs and posters continue. In light of the current availability of communication tools to enhance the promotion of major events, it seems necessary to balance what is being proposed with what visitors really encounter when they travel to the site where the event is being held (See Figure 9).

The project also analysed the involvement of cultural amenities such as museums (Rojas 2018, pp.929-936) in the organisation or design of activities. Museums play an interesting role in the recreation events held in Catalonia and the dissemination strategies they use should be

highlighted. The need to reach varied audiences has led several Catalan museums to perceive recreation events as an opportunity to promote their collections and the local cultural heritage. The research we performed identifies a group of museums that directly organise re-enactment events as a tool for communicating their collections (See Figure 10) however, few museums actually take part in re-enactment events in Catalonia. Nevertheless, the analysis shows that in those cases where these cultural amenities are the main organisers, actions with considerable informative and educational potential are generated. The cases identified (Rojas 2018, 929-936) reveal proposals featuring activity programmes with a high educational value that are presented as a useful tool for publicising museums and cultural heritage. The involvement of museums in historical recreations increases the presence of cultural heritage-related educational activities in event programmes. Our project established that 18% of the events examined are performed with the direct or indirect collaboration of a local museum. Three categories of museum participation in Catalan recreation events were identified. First, in 6% of the 115 events, the museum is the main organiser. Second, there are few cases where museums act as co-organisers (Rojas 2018, 931). One of the few exceptions is the Mediterranean Triumvirate (See Figure 11), which is held in the municipality of L'Escala and focuses on Greek and Roman cultures based on the archaeological site of Empúries. It is one of the few cases in which a museum co-organises an event with the town council. The Museu d'Arqueologia de Catalunya in Empúries coordinates the activities that take place at the archaeological site, which are combined with actions performed in the town centre. Lastly, in 13% of the events, museums take part with different activities, without forming part of the organisation (See Figures 10 and 11).

Another point worth highlighting is the fact that, in the last ten years, events have been organised in locations that are not the physical location of the cultural heritage they are based on. In any case, they are proposals organised by economic and commercial sectors and therefore have no association with culture. One significant example is Barcino Colonia Romae. Roman Barcelona Days (see figure 12), which is held in a Barcelona shopping street. The event was the outcome of the collaboration among the Creu Coberta Traders' Association, the Barcino Oriens Historical Recreation and Reconstruction Group and the Hostafrancs Foundation. Since it was held for the first time, this event has stood out for the fact that its programme distinguishes between actions that are historical recreations and those that are not. Thus, attendees of the event obtain more information about the journey to the past, to which they feel invited in the promotional advertisements. Accordingly, although the main objective is to boost and support local commerce in the district where the event is being held, historical dissemination and recreation play a key role (See Figure 12).

Opportunities for disseminating cultural heritage in an ideal context

Of the great range of informative proposals available (guided visits, workshops, talks, demonstrations, etc.), those associated directly with experimental archaeology are virtually

non-existent (under 5%). As we have already seen, there are few annual festivals, fiestas or fairs with Prehistory as a theme, and this is precisely the discipline in which there are most experimental archaeology professionals. A greater presence of events focused on Prehistory would give more visibility to experimental archaeology and would complement the proposals for schools or for family groups run throughout the year in museums, cultural amenities, and at archaeological sites. The same could be argued for the Iberian world or the Classical period. The events that are more focussed on disseminating history and cultural heritage are the ones that offer activities in which historical recreation or experimental archaeology has a strong presence. The above-mentioned Tarraco Viva or Magna Celebratio (Badalona) (See Figure 13) festivals offer activities that involve historical recreation groups and some of the demonstrations include information involving knowledge generated by experimental archaeology, especially linked to the technique of making ancient or prehistoric tools. This contrasts with the high number of fiestas, fairs or festivals focused on the medieval period that do not have activities associated with experimental archaeology, despite the growing number of medievalists who have contributed to this discipline (See Figure 13).

Conclusions

The analysis of the 115 activity programmes proposed at the events studied shows a predominance of festive actions or initiatives that are not directly associated with the message offered on the advertising posters and diptychs. In other words, for many of the events, the journey to the past that appears in the organisers' advertising contrasts with the type of activities the visitor attends once he or she is at the event. For other events, however, like some of those mentioned in the article, local heritage is clearly disseminated, and visitors are invited to discover a period of history through historical recreations, dramatizations, guided visits, exhibitions and lectures, or trips to local museums. It is precisely these latter events that include the dissemination of cultural heritage as a primary objective, albeit without renouncing other ends such as tourism. Indeed, some events use historical recreation events as a tool for showcasing the cultural heritage of their towns. To achieve this objective, they design heritage dissemination activities.

The reflection we have been sharing in recent years is whether the great capacity to attract public shown by all the events studied –from the smallest to the largest-scale events– should be used to plan the dissemination of local cultural heritage, with the inclusion of strategies and tools with high educational value. One example is the potential of experimental archaeology as part of these events. Many of the demonstrations that are currently performed within the context of historical re-enactment or recreation events are, in fact, based on knowledge that comes from experimental archaeology, which means that the discipline is already represented indirectly. There are, however, virtually no workshops, demonstrations or other activities or actions to increase awareness of the features, functions and objectives of experimental archaeology. It is timely to highlight Experimental Archaeology

has become a valued discipline in the field of research and its results have yielded an enormous number of informative activities that are enriched from the knowledge acquired. The same can be said for the techniques used in interpreting cultural heritage. In designing the events' activity programmes, it is worth exploring the potential for collaborations and synergies with research centres, cultural amenities and companies that specialise in cultural dissemination. The increased educational content in activity programmes should help redefine a significant percentage of the events. The good results achieved in cases involving primary and secondary schools show the path to follow to teach younger audiences about the local cultural heritage. Our study shows the need to enrich the programmes of historical recreation and dissemination events that are held in Catalonia with the potential of disciplines that highlight the educational role and create a broader awareness of research in archaeology and cultural heritage.

Future lines of research

As forthcoming objectives, the project will continue monitoring the evolution of the events analysed in the coming years and probe into the actions proposed in the activity programmes. The specific objectives considered include complementing the quantitative data with other qualitative data. In this respect, it is planned to carry out studies of the visiting publics, participant typologies and comparisons with other national and international cases.

Acknowledgements

This article and the project presented have received the support of the CERCA Programme/Government of Catalonia and the Cultural Heritage of Catalonia Research Group. Preconsolidated Research Group (GRPRE) (2017 SGR 835).

Keywords event
public
teaching
history
heritage
living history

Country Spain

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Corresponding Author

Antonio Rojas Rabaneda
Catalan Institute For Cultural Heritage Research-University of Girona
Plaça Sant Domènec 3
17004 Girona
Spain
E-mail Contact

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FIG 1. MONACALIA. MEDIEVAL EVENT.

FIG 2. CASTELL D'ARO MEDIEVAL MARKET.

FIG 3. IESSO-GUISSONA ROMAN MARKET.

FIG 4. TYRIKA. ALCANAR IBERIAN FESTIVAL.

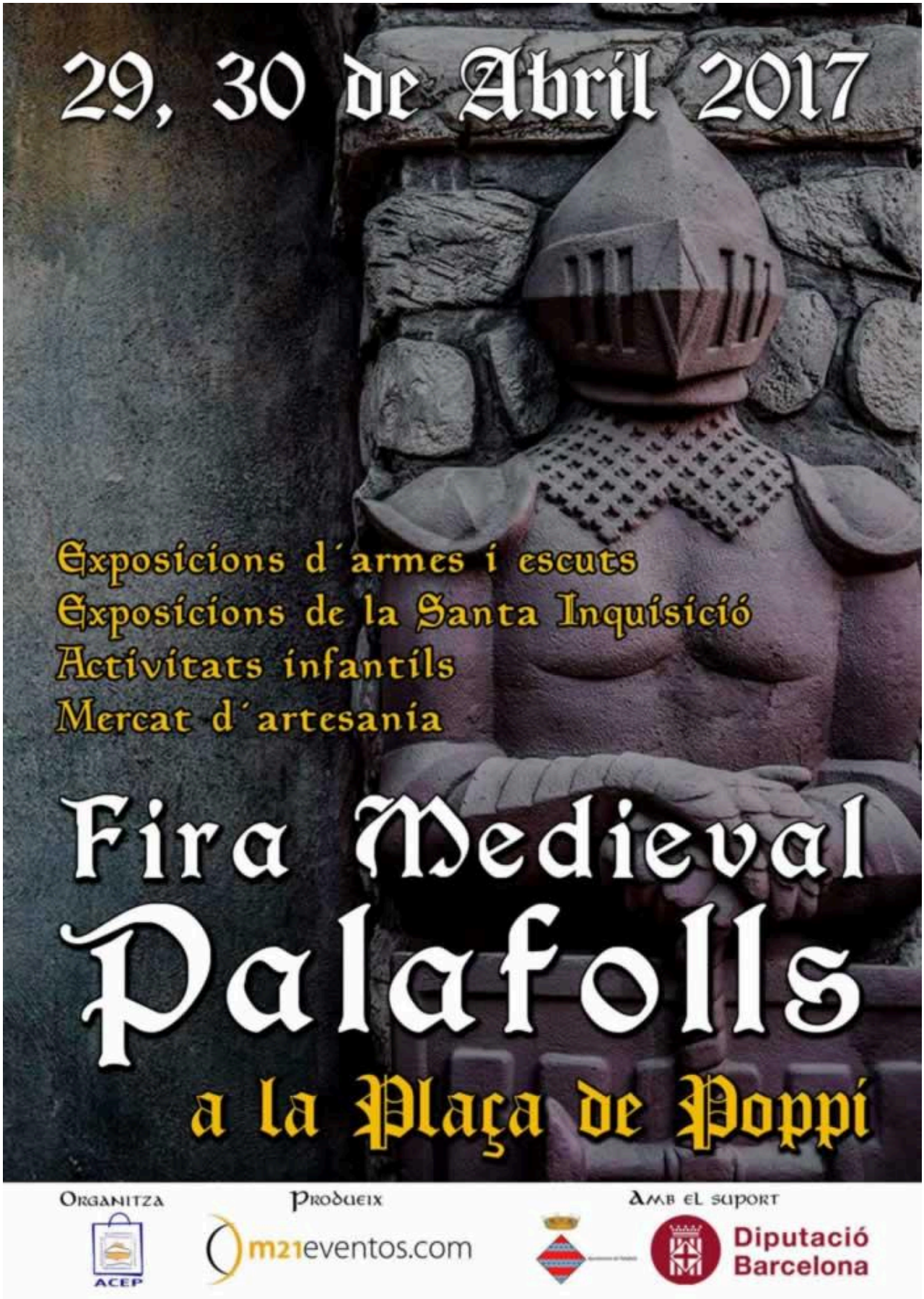

FIG 5. PALAFOLLS MEDIEVAL FAIR.

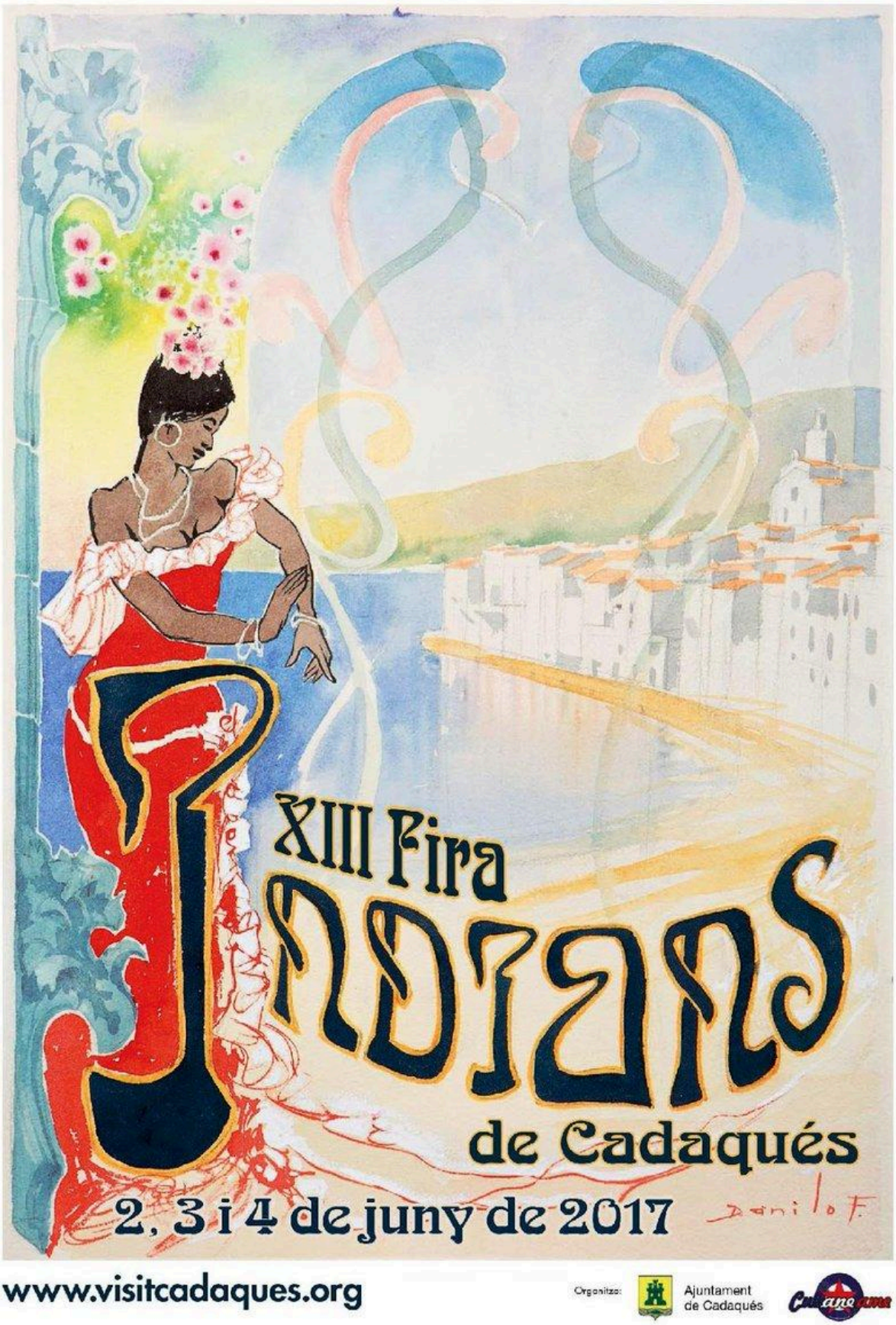

FIG 6. CADAQUÉS INDIANOS EVENT.

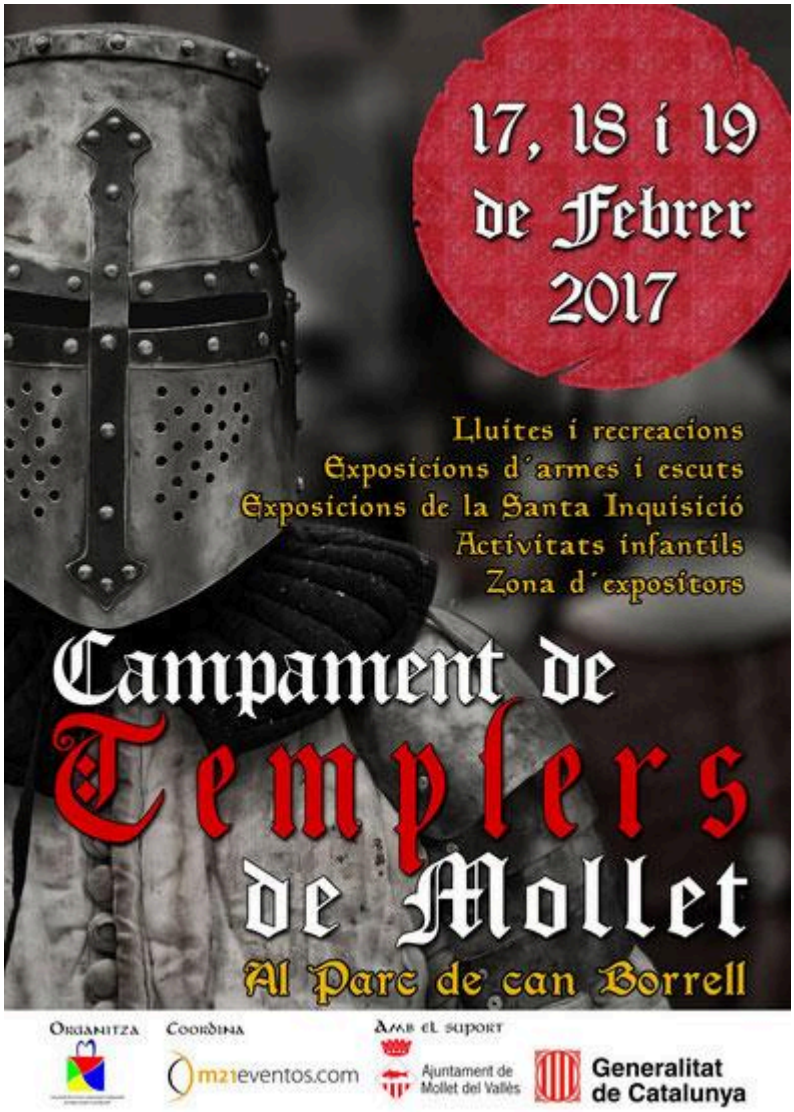

FIG 7. TEMPLAR EVENT.

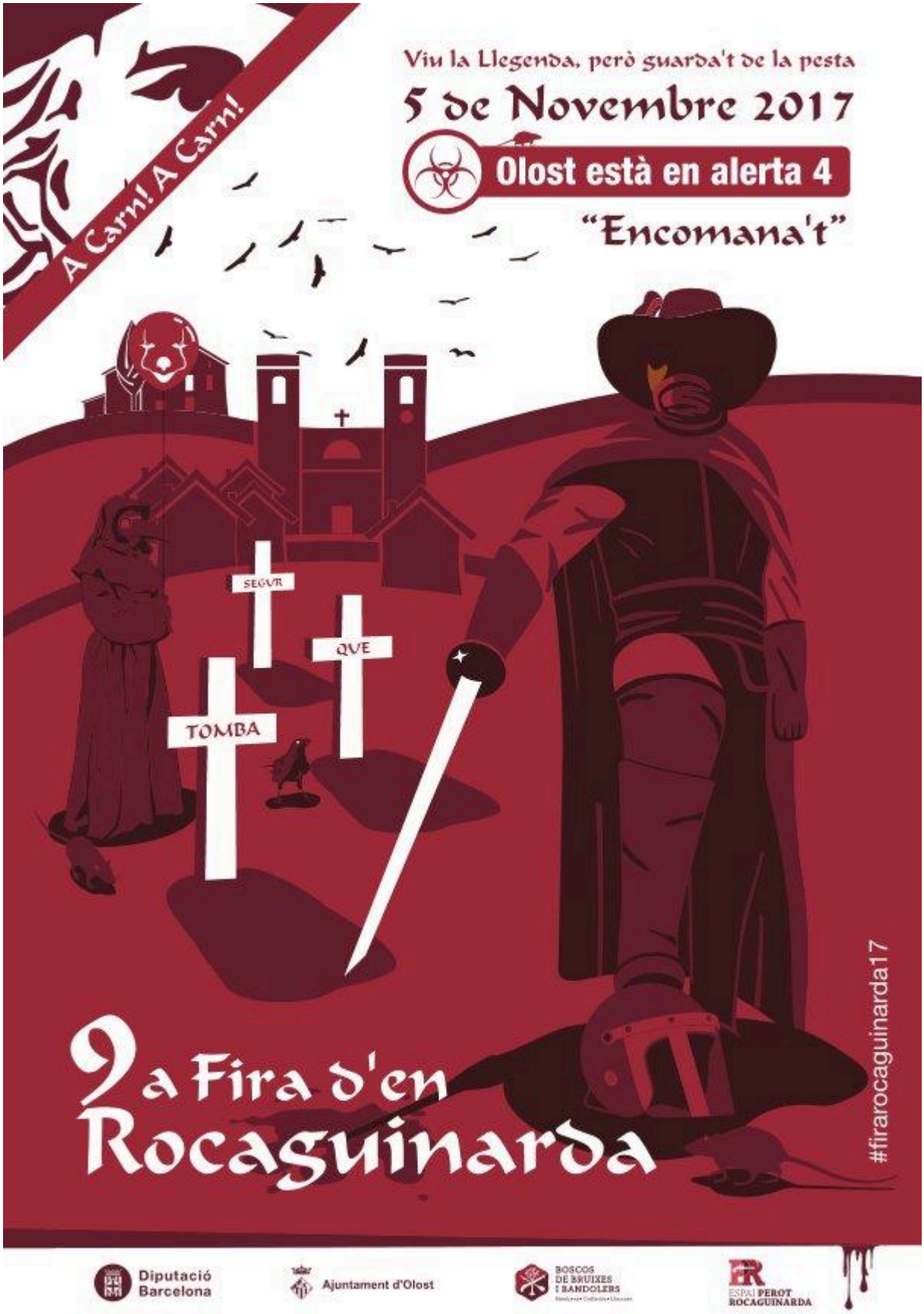

FIG 8. BANDITS FAIR.

FIG 9. FESTA DEL RENAIXEMENT WEBSITE.

FIG 10. LUDI RUBRICATI EVENT.

FIG 11. MEDITERRANEAN TRIUMVIRATE. GREEK AND ROMAN EVENT.

FIG 12. BARCINO COLONIA ROMAE EVENT.

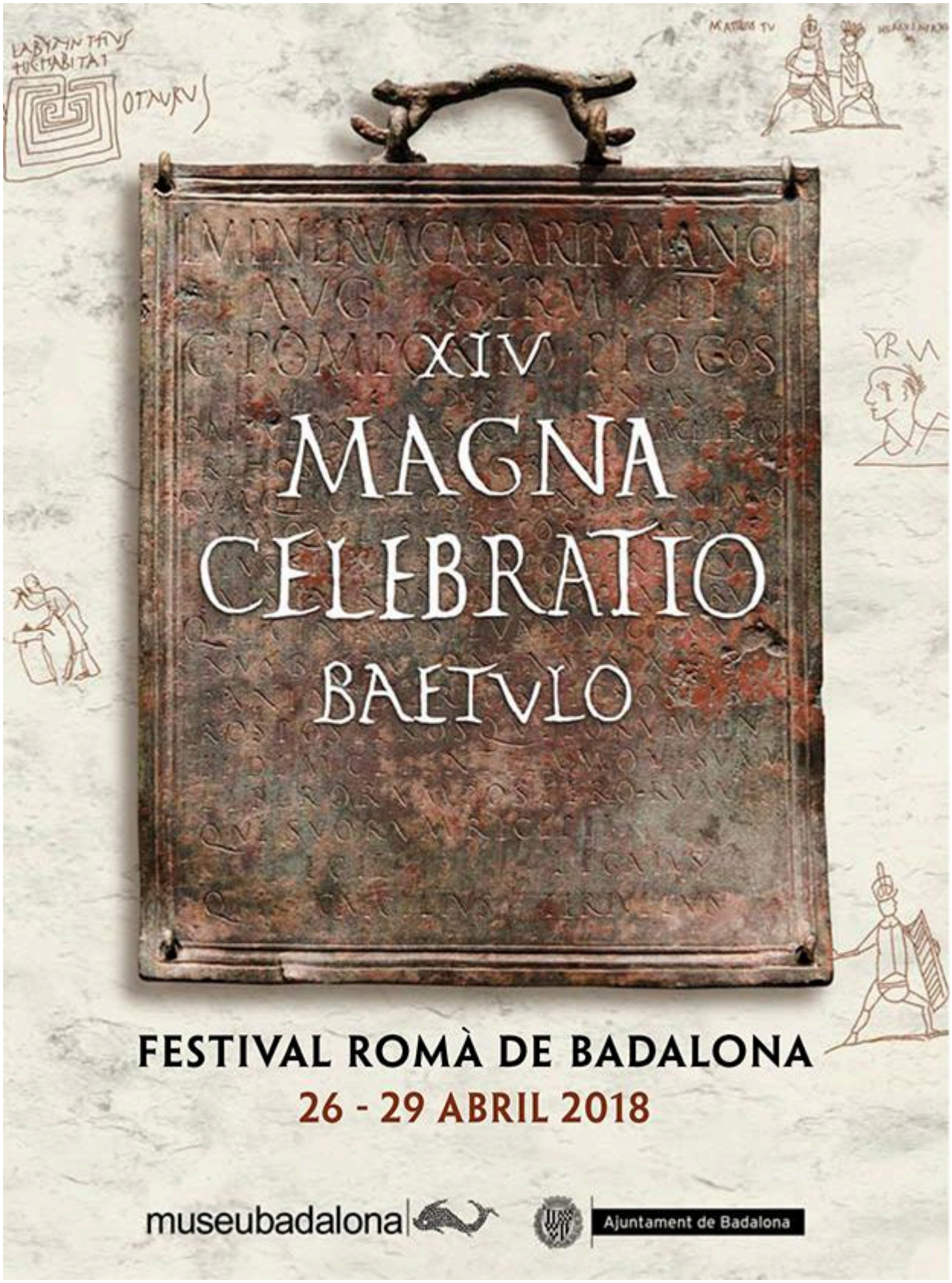

FIG 13. MAGNA CELEBRATIO BAETULO. BADALONA ROMAN FESTIVAL.