




Dolores Rondón en el concierto de las leyendas y tradiciones funerarias.

Dolores Rondón at the concert of funerary legends and traditions.

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Palabras claves:

Cementerios,
turismo de
cementerios,
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Resumen

Los cementerios decimonónicos forman parte del imaginario de la fundación de las primeras siete villas en la Isla de Cuba, los que se han dado en llamar Cementerios Patrimoniales, es cada vez más el núcleo del turismo de cementerios. El texto que se presenta, aborda el patrimonio funerario en relación a las leyendas y tradiciones que en estos sitios se entretajan. Señala la posible relación incómoda entre el turismo de cementerios y patrimonio funerario, en parte debido a la falta de voluntad de asociar directamente las visitas a los cementerios con la muerte. Un turismo de cementerios mal planteado puede socavar el patrimonio tangible e intangible de los cementerios. Muchos cementerios siguen en uso y, por lo tanto, deben considerarse como 'patrimonio vivo', y museos al aire libre. Por lo que se entiende que los sistemas de interpretación deben comunicar los diversos aspectos de la mortalidad, como elemento del desarrollo sociocultural de una comunidad. Poner de relieve las dinámicas de leyendas y tradiciones funerarias en un marco narrativo poco explorado pero necesario ponerlo en valor. Resguardando valores éticos toda vez que, en el caso de Cuba, muchos de nuestros primeros cementerios reciben los restos humanos de sus ciudadanos. Este texto propone una mirada desde las leyendas funerarias que se entretajan en el imaginario popular y que resultan un atractivo para el Turismo.

Keywords:

Cemeteries,
cemetery tourism,
funerary heritage.

Abstract

The nineteenth-century cemeteries are part of the imaginary of the foundation of the first seven villas in the Island of Cuba, those that have been called Patrimonial Cemeteries, is more and more the nucleus of the tourism of cemeteries. The text that is presented, approaches the funerary heritage in relation to the legends and traditions that are interwoven in these sites. It points out the possible uneasy relationship between cemetery tourism and funerary heritage, partly due to the unwillingness to directly associate visits to cemeteries with death. Poorly thought out cemetery tourism can undermine the tangible and intangible heritage of cemeteries. Many cemeteries are still in use and should therefore be considered as 'living heritage', and open-air museums. It is therefore understood that interpretation systems should communicate the various aspects of mortality as an element of the

socio-cultural development of a community. Highlighting the dynamics of funerary legends and traditions in a narrative framework that is little explored but must be highlighted. Safeguarding ethical values since, in the case of Cuba, many of our first cemeteries receive the human remains of its citizens. This text proposes a look from the funerary legends that are interwoven in the popular imagination and that are an attraction for Tourism.

Introduction

In the world's large and small cities, the first cemeteries were born from the 15th and 16th centuries, as a need to deposit the remains of loved ones, first, there were the Churches¹, then when spaces were scarce, these sites that we know today as Cemeteries emerged². Containers of works of art, legends, traditions related to death and eternal rest, with diverse readings from the polyphonies of cultures; it is also an expression of Heritage, Funerary Heritage.

Funerary heritage is possibly one of the least explored concepts in the field of specialised studies on heritage and tourism. This object of research reflects a complex relationship between religion, funeral traditions, architecture and other elements of social and cultural development. The fusion of funeral practices is reflected in the material and immaterial expressions of heritage – tombstones, coffins, caskets, wreaths, rituals, laments, wakes, requiem music, processions and food, funeral feasts and legends.

Today, visits to cemeteries are not only associated with necrological events; today, people visit cemeteries with historical, research, academic and tourist interests, attracted by the funerary heritage in question. A poorly planned study of Funerary Heritage can undermine the tangible and intangible heritage of cemeteries. There are cemeteries that are no longer in use and others that are still in use and, therefore, should be considered as 'living heritage'. In these circumstances, the interpretation must recognise and respect the distinctive elements of the funerary culture of each community. The cemetery is,

¹It was research related to health and hygiene that put an end to burials in churches and convents, a practice that was carried out until the 16th century, approximately in the Spanish colonies in Latin America.

²These in turn would influence the regulations and registries to which the new cemeteries that would be built on the outskirts of cities and towns on the Island of Cuba would be subject. Such is the case of the excellent text Legislation on cemeteries with the memory, regulations and tariff of Columbus, written in 1893 by the outstanding Doctor Ambrosio G. del Valle. The text addresses theoretical, cultural and technical aspects in relation to these places.

according to Angela Roja, "a special area", referring to the place it occupies within the city as an urban space; in this case we define it as "The city of silence".

Funerary Heritage is an attraction for tourism, which is gaining strength and importance as a form of tourism, and it is our responsibility to conserve, promote and properly interpret Funerary Heritage. The Morelia Charter, promulgated in that Mexican city in 2005, recognizes the multiple threats that weigh on cemeteries, including reurbanization and insufficient regulatory protection, management, safeguarding and financial support (2005). The effort to conserve cemeteries has expanded thanks to academic interest in the historical value of large cemeteries, which in turn reflects a renewed interest in 19th century aesthetics. The imperative to protect major cemeteries entails an enormous economic burden and it has always been the case that investment in conservation has been justified, and partly financed, by the influx of visitors.³

Multiple studies have been carried out on the funerary heritage from the architectural elements, from the history of art itself (combination of landscape design, variety of sculptures, sculptural groups of different styles, commemorative monuments that turn the cemetery into a historical site) by the codes, signs, which give a reading of the positions of man before death since ancient times, in this case we will delve into the legends that emerged from the earthly life of the souls that rest, and the miracles they perform after death, according to popular imagination, the preservation processes as Rugg suggests. J. In the case of monuments, they are very expensive, but the intangible elements of the funerary heritage are at greater risk, since the sociocultural development of humanity imposes new practices, and many mortal remains are not deposited in the holy fields, fulfilling the last will of the deceased, even when the rituals defined by theology since ancient times, with a marked religious character, are practiced as elements of each culture, due to the elements of spirituality that they contain. Respect for death, its meanings in the sense of loss remain intact from the funerary culture.

Rugg, J. argues that: Cemetery tourism has a role to play in the protection and interpretation of funerary heritage, but current academic debate points to an ambivalent attitude towards the willingness to assume that role. When ambivalence translates into a lack of concern for funerary heritage, there is a real danger that cemetery tourism can damage and distort the stories that cemeteries tell about how different societies come to terms with death. (Rugg, J. 2021. P. 31)

Highlighting the dynamics of how the cemetery 'works' is a little-explored narrative framework and it is necessary to be aware that forms of interpretation can bias the conservation effort. Ethical questions can also be raised. In the text we suggest that, at the

³Rugg, J. (2021). FUNERAL HERITAGE TOURISM: DEFINITIONS AND PRINCIPLES. MURCIAN JOURNAL OF ANTHROPOLOGY. No. 28.P. 39

very least, such interpretation should demonstrate how humanity, in all times and cultures, has strived to accept death as the end of the cycle of life, but with different visions.

Cemeteries awaken a double feeling: on the one hand, we cultivate a denial around them, but on the other, the historical contribution they provide to those who immerse themselves in the past to learn about and spread what happened even before our arrival in this world.

For this reason, tourist visits allow us to see how, from such a unique site, values of local history can be recovered and why the place deserves the greatest care and respect for those who rest here in peace. Cemeteries are in all cases an invaluable source when it comes to finding testimonies that make up the history of the towns, where many of those who were outstanding figures of our country are buried throughout its history.

This article addresses the Funerary Heritage focusing specifically on the importance of cemeteries as a place and expression of that heritage, while considering some of the associated elements, in order to value the intangible Funerary Heritage, in this case from the Intangible Heritage, as we have explained, in the opinion of the authors, the expressions of heritage are closely linked, the material and the immaterial, because any element that we evaluate of the Heritage in these two globalizing classifications, the decorative arts, the buildings, the documents are represented through legends and traditions, customs, in this case in the Cemetery of the City of Camagüey, Cuba, where many tourists are attracted by the legend of Dolores Rondón.

The Cemetery of Puerto Príncipe. Today Camagüey.

The Christ of the Good Voyage.

The town of Santa María del Puerto del Príncipe did not consecrate its cemetery so early. Founded in 1514, it is now celebrating its 510th anniversary, and this article serves as a celebration and tribute. (García, A. 2010). The first reference to the steps taken to create the General Cemetery dates back to October 15, 1790, when Don José de Villavicencio Varona, the Town Council's general attorney, requested that the Santo Cristo del Buen Viaje church be used as the only cemetery on the outskirts of the town. This request was denied, as it seems that the members of the Town Council were unaware of or ignored the Royal Decree issued by Charles III in 1787. The process took several years and no construction was carried out, but the cemetery belonging to the Santo Cristo church was adapted as the Town Council's General Cemetery. Only a square of 95 yards was closed, later known as the First Section. The inauguration and blessing took place on May 3, 1814, by the oldest priest in the city, Juan Nepomuceno Arango y Cisneros.

This is the Cristo del Buen Viaje Cemetery, the oldest cemetery in use in the country, and like all cemeteries it is a place to worship the souls that rest there, but also surprising legends are born within its walls, attracting national and foreign visitors.

Figure 1

Port-au-Prince. (1832). Map drawn up by Francisco Lavallée. The cemetery area is highlighted in the red circle.



The first expansion of the cemetery of El Cristo del Buen Viaje was between 1835 and 1839, providing this first space with two more blocks; thus the walled section was completed, in addition to adding part of the second section of the main avenue. Between the years 1859 and 1861, the expansion of the space was needed again, so until it became as we know it today, the cemetery grew, as did the Villa de Santa María del Puerto del Príncipe, until it became the city of Camagüey, an urban space that has distinguished itself among Cuban cities for its legends. (Gómez, Lourdes, comp. 2009. P. 15).

One of these legends and one of the best known is that of Dolores Rondón.

Who was Dolores Rondón? Born at the beginning of the 19th century, on Hospital Street, in the El Cristo neighborhood, she was the illegitimate daughter of Vicente Rams, a prosperous Catalan merchant who settled in Puerto Príncipe, owner of the Versailles store, on Candelaria Street. Vicente, secretly had an extramarital relationship with a mulatto

woman with whom he had an exceptionally beautiful daughter. He gave his mother all the resources necessary for raising her daughter, but refused to give her his surname. She was then baptized with her mother's surname, Over time, Dolores became the most beautiful mulatto woman in the humble neighborhood, a dark-skinned pearl with a graceful walk. (Mendez Martínez. R. 2010. P. 98).

The girl grew up and was beautiful, refined, proud and unattainable for the men of the humble neighborhood where she grew up. It was then that Agustín de Moya, a humble man whose profession was that of a barber and who was also a poet by vocation and fond of improvising popular verses, captivated by the beauty of the young woman, dedicated numerous poems to her. She may not have disliked him, but she had greater ambitions, because her greatest desire was to have an affair with a man with better financial means.

She, apparently, did not reciprocate the love of the mulatto poet, however... Some time later, she married a Spanish officer. She had achieved her dream, as popular opinion has it, of living in a house in a noble neighborhood. As the fate of these regiments was not to settle permanently in the city, not long afterward the couple left it, who knows where.

Days went by and the barber heard no more from Dolores, whom he gradually forgot as time passed between his small business, his literary hobbies and the obligations that his job as a barber imposed on him in the city's hospitals, which at that time also had to serve as tooth pullers and bloodletting machines.

In 1863 the smallpox They besieged the town and Moya dedicated all her effort and time to providing her services at the Women's Hospital, The Carmen, where those who were most short of resources and could not afford a private doctor were crowded together. The appearance of a hospital like this in times of epidemic was horrifying. There, while attending to a sick woman, she thought she recognized that face disfigured by the traces of the disease, who was already stalking death. It was Dolores Rondón, poor, sick, abandoned to public charity, who perhaps had returned as a widow and without savings to live an anonymous life in the city where she was born. According to the legend She did not recognize him. He helped her as much as he could, but there was neither time nor resources. It is said that late at night he left the hospital in anguish and returned early in the morning with some resources to relieve her, but it was too late: the legendary Dolores had died during the night and her body had left in a cart for the cemetery general. Their fate was the mass grave.

Moya put the instructive epitaph over the grave where his former beloved lay on the aforementioned tablet that he himself restored every year as long as life allowed him. The poem appeared around 1883. It was written in black letters on a small piece of cedar painted white. A hard wooden stake fixed it into the ground of a grave. The text was

known to everyone and in 1935, on the initiative of the de facto mayor, Pedro García Agrenot, a tomb was built on which the epitaph is engraved. This was placed in the most aristocratic area of the cemetery, as an irony of fate or, perhaps, as a way of fulfilling the dreams of the deceased in her final resting place. No one knows of her remains, perhaps lost, but the tomb is still there, and its text is known by heart by the people of Camagüey who created the character and her legend.

Here Dolores Rodon
finished his career
Come mortal and consider
What are the greatnesses?
pride and presumption
opulence and power,
everything comes to an end
Well, it only becomes immortalized
the evil that is saved
and the good that can be done.

Since then, anyone who comes to the place where Dolores' remains are said to rest will be enveloped by the mystery of the legend and the fragrance of the small bouquet of flowers that accompany the cross and the epitaph.

It is the story of an impossible love, her disdain and the qualities he esteemed were her defects. This is the legend, immortalized in books and even in plays and, consequently, enriched. Historians have found the real existence of a parda, María Dolores Aguilera, an illegitimate daughter, which is why she also appears as Dolores Rondón. She was born in 1811. She died of tuberculosis in 1863, unmarried and without descendants. She was buried for charity.

Conclusions:

- In general, cemetery tourism is attracting interested international clients and tourist visits to Funerary Heritage, in the field of Tourism, have begun to consider visits to cemeteries as a particular model of tourist experience where visitors enjoy the artistic, architectural, historical, landscape heritage and traditions and legends.
- We can say that Funerary Heritage is a relatively new option, which is gaining ground within the cultural tourism modality, where Europe is a pioneer with a route that integrates 60 heritage cemeteries.
- The interpretation of funerary heritage has its own characteristics, since it must be taken into account that it is a place of mourning, communicating the message with solemnity from the various elements of mortality; misuse of interpretation can

undermine the material and immaterial heritage of these spaces, recognized as open-air or open museums.

Conflict of interest

There is no conflict of interest in relation to the submitted article.

ANNEXES



Cristo del Buen Viaje Cemetery. Main Avenue and Perimeter Wall.



Church of Christ, main entrance to the Campo Santo.



Epitaph of Dolores Rondón, General Cemetery of Camagüey.

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