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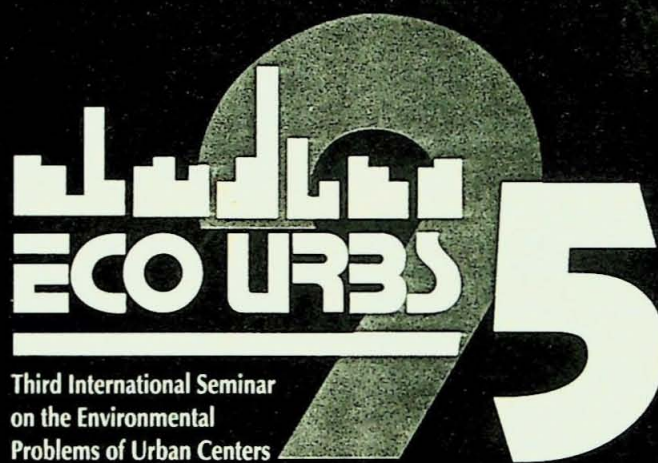
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# Abstracts Volume

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## CEMETERIES IN URBAN AREAS

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The word cemetery (from the Greek Koumetèrian, of Kcmão, I sleep) was meant, in principle, the place where one sleeps, the bedroom, the dormitory. It was under the influence of christianity that the word got the meaning of resting field after death.

The word can only be used correctly for sites where corpses are buried in gaves, that is, buried directly into the ground. This way, one can only speak of cemeteries after the Middle Ages, when the dead were buried in churches or in the vicinity of churches (i.e. in churchyards).

Earlier, for psychological reasons and because of hygiene, the burial-places were constructed outside the urban areas.

The historian Philippe Ariès presents in his work - O Homen Perante a Morte (Man Before Death) Volume I, Publicações Europa/America Ltd., Lisbon 1977 - the reasons why in Ancient Cultures one did not want the presence of the dead in the city. The home of the living should be separated from the domain of the dead, so as to prevent any contact, except at the proper days. According to the author it was an absolute rule, prescribed by the law of the Twelve Tablets: "That no dead man will be buried nor cremated in the city". The Code of Teodosio orders that all funeral remains were brought out of Constantinople: "That all entombed bodies in urns or sarcophagus, and bodies buried in soil, will be removed and placed outside the city".

The same author quotes the comment of the "jurisconsul" Paul: "No corpse shall be placed in the city, for the sacredness of the city shall not be marked". Concluding, the burial-places in ancient times were located outside the cities alongside the roads, like the Via Appia in Rome.

The Barbarian or Merovingian (oldest royal dynasty of the French, founded by Meroveu in approx. 450 A.D.) cemeteries were discovered at some distance from the villages, always in the middle of the fields.

Since the VIIth century in Europe, the burial-places in the fields were abandoned and cemeteries were located near the churches again. The aversion for the proximity of the dead and the requirement to bury in the outskirts of the city were disappearing, permitting burying in the churches and in walled cemeteries until the XVIIIth century. It was only from this century onwards that the word cemetery began to have its actual meaning. For reasons of public health it became again forbidden to bury in churches and it was recommended to place the dead bodies in adequate places, as far away as possible from the urban areas. Again the cemeteries were located in the fields, the dead were buried far away from the living.

In Brazil, the burying in the churches took place until the middle of the XIX century. On October 25, 1836, there was an uprising in Bahia known as "Cemiterada". The revolt was against a provincial law, that would become into force the next day, which prohibited the burying in churches and urban centers for sanitary reasons. Corresponding the law and



regarding the hygiene of the cities, the cemeteries should be placed outside the city-walls.

In Paris (France), the transfer of cemeteries to the country side began at the end of the XVI century, although it was only carried out effectively in the XVII and XVIII century, in the light of a policy of increasing public hygiene (Philippe Ariès, *op. cit.*). This happened to the Cemetery of the Innocent Saints, a cemetery situated in the heart of Paris, where the houses of the living almost touched the tombs of the dead (João Jose Reis - *A Morte É Uma Festa* (The death is a celebration) - *Ritos Fúnebres e Revolta Popular no Brasil do Século XIX*, Companhia das Letras, 1991. In view of its sanitary problems the cemetery was closed in 1780 and disappeared on the eve of the French Revolution.

In the city of São Paulo (Brazil), the first traditional cemetery ordered to be built and opened by the Câmara Municipal, was the one of Consolação, which was founded in 1856. Many protested against the localization of this cemetery, so close to the city. According to a document from this period the cemetery was located "at the end of the world, at the edge of the road to Sorocaba, flanked by grass and meadows". As a consequence of the urban expansion, the cemetery today is situated in the heart of the city. This cemetery and other traditional ones, like the one of Araçá and São Paulo, are examples of cemeteries which were absorbed by urban growth and where the living and the dead "live" together normally.

The introduction of cemeteries, mainly in cities with the capacity of São Paulo, should receive special attention of urban planners, as this type of construction maintains close relations with natural environment and public health. Studies carried out by the Centre of Ground Water Research (CEPAS), of the Institute of Geosciences of the University of São Paulo, shown serious environmental problems around various cemeteries located in the urban area of São Paulo, problems like soil erosion, bad smell and ground water pollution by micro-organisms originating from decomposition bodies. This situation occurs at the cemetery of Vila Formosa, the biggest in Latin America, situated in the south of the city of São Paulo.

Another problem, very serious from a social and sanitary viewpoint, is the concentration of impoverished communities in terrain beside the cemeteries, as it the case at the cemetery of Vila Nova Cachoeirinha.

This cemetery is located in the north of São Paulo, in a densely populated area, eight kilometers from the centre of the city on a hill, in a transition zone of the sedimentary basin to the plateau. It is the second largest cemetery of the city and in view of its precarious conditions of maintenance, the people who live in the vicinity are exposed to earth (land-) slides, bad smell, superficial water drain off, rise of water table and to contact with insects and arthropods originating from the interior of the cemetery. This situation affects in particular the slum "Morro da Esperança" (Hill of Hope), at Vila Espanhola. Part of this slum is virtually inside the cemetery, an unacceptable situation in terms of public health.

The main problem of the city's cemeteries is the little importance that is given to maintenance and operation by the responsible authorities. Because of

this, this type of construction is turned into a risk of contamination to the environmental health.

Cemeteries localized in densely populated urban areas like the city of São Paulo, should pass for periodical sanitary assessment, especially those which are under administration of the City Hall. In the case of São Paulo, where a large part of the population use shallow wells, the installation of a shallow ground water collector near a cemetery can, eventually, cause health problems to those who consumes water from these collectors. Registered historical cases in Europe, especially in the cities of Berlin and Paris, show a contamination of water in wells which are situated near cemeteries. The people who made use of this water caught typhoid fever.

To minimize the environmental and psychological impacts that traditional cemeteries produced, mainly in urban areas, park-cemeteries or garden-cemeteries were established, which had abundant green, lawns and trees. At these cemeteries the graves are marked only by a bronze plaque. Resulting in a type of cemetery which suits vigorously into the urban clothes, and more so than the traditional cemeteries. This way funeral art was changed for parks, essential in the large metropolis, which is shady and unesthetic already. It has to be said, however, that some traditional cemeteries contain real works of funeral art and others are tourist attractions because of the celebrities who are buried there. This is the case in the Parisian cemetery of Pere la Chaise.

With respect to the legal situation, we do not know the existence of laws concerning cemeteries in Brazil at federal level. In the state of São Paulo the Sanitary Code of 1978 exists, which regulates the quality of water, and falls under the competence of the State Secretary of Health. The code meets the question of cemeteries in a confusing way.

The Act no. 326, of March 21, 1932, regulates issues with respect to vertical structured cemeteries in the São Paulo municipality, without any concern for the physical impact.

Within its environmental policy and the limits of its authority, the Company of Environmental Sanitation Technology (CETESB) of the State of São Paulo, drafted the L1.040.

NORM, dez/93, which secures the requirements and the conditions for the installation and operation of cemeteries. In the light of growing problems of space for the installation of cemeteries in urban areas, it provides guidelines to protect and preserve the environmental health.

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