Cemeteries as pilgrimage destination

Dr. Darius LIUTIKAS
Lithuanian Social Research Centre

2017 10 20, Malta
Geographic researches of cemeteries

The geographic surveys of the Lithuanian cemeteries are just beginning. Important research topics in geography are cemetery distribution in space and features of cemetery landscape and architecture.

The cemetery becomes part of the everyday landscape, integrating the past and the present, the different generations of society.

The earlier tradition to bury the dead in the churchyards, rituals of cemetery sanctification, rites of a giving honor to the dead and personal prayers and meditation confirms the sacred status of a cemetery. Societies treat cemetery as a place where the dead bodies are buried. This function ensures the public interest.
Burying traditions through ages

• Ancient pre-Christian buryings (in mounds, forests, etc.)

• Various Christian cemeteries until the XIX century (mainly in churchyards)

• Modern cemeteries (from the beginning of the XIX century, mostly in the outskirts of cities)
  • with wood crosses (sustainable approach)
  • with tombstones of stone, granite or other solid materials (however, can not protect from destruction as showed history of XX century),

• Columbariums (demand for the columbarium is increasing; about 10 percent of dead bodies are cremated in Lithuania)
Classification of burial places in Lithuania

1. **The old graves** (burial mounds, ancient cemeteries, etc.);
2. **Cemeteries** (in a churchyard and at the outskirts of the city or village; graves in a soil, in a chapels, in a cellars, in a columbarium, etc.);
3. **Church** (graves in the floor, walls, crypts and chapels);
4. **Individual graves** (near roadside, in a forests, etc.);
5. **Mass graves** (Memorials of a War Victims, Memorials of the Holocaust).

The geographic nature of burial is determined both by the century or family traditions and historical events. In this context, the mass graves, especially Jewish people, are differ, having the bodies of deliberately murdered people.
Number and area of cemeteries in Lithuania

• At the beginning of the 2017, most of Lithuanian municipalities published data on the inventory of cemeteries in their territory. Based on these data, an analysis of the quantity and area of Lithuanian cemeteries was carried out.

• Analysis shows that a total 7835 cemeteries exist in Lithuania (March, 2017), which area can reach about 3830 hectares. This accounts for 38.25 sq. km, or 0.06 percent the total country's land area.

• The majority of Lithuanians cemetery are non functional (5282), but the largest area occupied by functional cemeteries (2200 ha). The largest area of the cemeteries is in the major cities and surrounding municipalities. Apart from the city municipalities, the average area of the cemeteries in the municipality is 60 hectares, the number – 148.
Paberžės Cemetery in Kėdainiai region
All Soul’s Day
Cemetery tourism

- Cemetery tourism (pilgrimages or valuistic journeys) can be linked with the visit of graves of relatives, friends or famous people.
- Pilgrimage to pray at the holy relics of the dead was already popular during the Middle Ages.
- Cemetery tourism is one of the form of dark tourism, it is developing form of tourism and usually combines several motives.
- Motives of cemetery visits have associations with various socio-cultural, religious, personal attitudes and values. The cemetery is considered as socio-cultural space, which visiting depends on a variety of personal and collective, ideological and spiritual factors.
Motives of cemetery visits

1) Funeral;
2) Memorial;
3) Historical (cultural);
4) Artistic, architectural;
5) Recreational;
6) Receiving favours;
7) Statement of respect;
8) Vandalism;
9) Job.
Thank you for your attention

darius.liutikas@gmail.com