RESISTANCE, FREEDOM AND HERITAGE IN THE CARIBBEAN

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Resistance, freedom and heritage

Background

After UNESCO established the International *Slave Route Project* in 1994, the Cuban Committee was created in the same year, and steps were taken to conduct a census of heritage places and sites related to the African heritage in Cuban culture. The results were published, in a timely manner and in a summarized version, in the *Catauro* review[1]. There were 705 places with very different characteristics, including names, conservation status, integrity, classification, declaration and typology, which provided initial reference for more ambitious purposes.

Previously, the Fernando Ortiz Foundation, which headed and coordinated the Cuban Committee, had started publishing a series of mapping leaflets precisely with *The Slave Route,*[2] which also summarizes key aspects of the legacy of Africans and their descendants in national culture. This leaflet was presented by the then Director-General of UNESCO, Federico Mayor Zaragoza, to the Executive Board in Paris to promote the international implementation of the project.

With the support of UNESCO, preparations started at the Castle of San Severino in the city of Matanzas to establish a National Slave Route Museum in Cuba. The third issue of *Catauro* review was also published. It was entirely dedicated to this topic, with significant contributions by authorities of UNESCO and of the first International Scientific Committee, such as Federico Mayor Zaragoza himself, Doudou Diène, Elikia M'bokolo, Howard Dodson, Luz María Martínez Montiel, Hugo Tolentino Dipp, Claude Meillassoux, Louis Sala-Moulins, and Luis Beltrán Repetto. Some of the activities of the Cuban Committee were made public.[3]

Based on the proposals of the International Scientific Committee, the Cuban Committee set up six working groups to interactively undertake the following tasks:

1. furthering scientific research on the slave trade and slavery;
2. developing curricular and instructional materials to encourage teaching about this tragedy at all levels of education;
3. promoting the contribution of Africa and its Diaspora;
4. fostering living cultures and artistic and spiritual expressions resulting from the interactions generated by the slave trade and slavery;
5. preserving oral traditions and records related to the slave trade and slavery; and
6. inventorying and conserving the tangible cultural heritage and places of memory linked to the slave trade and slavery, and promoting memory tourism based on this heritage.

La Isabelica Coffee Plantation, Santiago de Cuba © Urano net 0

The links between these fields, through institutions and specialists, have made it possible to adopt a more holistic view of places of memory, especially with one of the main objectives of the project: to promote the potential of cultural tourism related to the communities where they are located.

At the meeting of experts and officials from Aruba, Cuba, Haiti and the Dominican Republic held in 2006, the pilot project Places of Memory of the Slave Route started to be implemented in the Caribbean. The initiative was developed under the new strategy of the UNESCO Slave Route Project that had been adopted that year with the aim of highlighting and making the cultural and natural heritage related to the slave trade visible.

In March 2008, the multimedia Places of Memory of the Slave Route was published in the Latin Caribbean, available in Spanish, English and French on the Portal of Culture of Latin America and the Caribbean.[5] This experience served as a precedent for the publication of The Slave Route in Río de La Plata: Contributions to intercultural dialogue,[4] which enabled to assess the results of the work in Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay, as a consequence of two major events: the International Seminar The Slave Route in Río de la Plata: Contributions to intercultural dialogue, organized by the UNESCO Chair on Cultural Tourism Untref/AAMNBA, Buenos Aires, on 26-27 October 2009; and the Workshop Places of Memory of the Slave Route in Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay, organized by the UNESCO Regional Office for Science in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the UNESCO Office of the MERCOSUR Cluster, on 28-29 October 2009.

Years later, in 2012, there were two milestones for the project. The first one came at an international seminar held in Brasilia: the proposal to establish a Global Network of Places of Memory. And the second one involved the development of a Methodological Guide to Places of Memory with the participation of authors from several continents, including the island Caribbean.[6]

The Places of Memory of the Slave Route in the Island Caribbean focuses on the notion of historical-cultural memory and establishes a strong link between the present and the past. Its scope goes far beyond a strict historical dimension to address issues as fundamental today as cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue, and development.

Having an interdisciplinary character, the project combines biodiversity, anthropological and economic approaches, while integrating concepts related to cultural diversity, dialogue, development and heritage in their broadest sense.

PLACES OF MEMORY IN ARUBA, CUBA, HAITI, AND THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC NOT INCLUDED IN THE MULTIMEDIA

Aruba[7] *(Other places not included in the multimedia)*
The Carnival of Aruba.

Cuba[8] *(Other places not included in the multimedia)*
• Urban Historic Centre of Havana and its Fortification System, Havana (Declared World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1982);
• Urban Historic Centre of Cienfuegos (Declared World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2005);
• Urban Historic Centre of Camagüey (Declared World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2008);
• Alejandro de Humboldt National Park, Holguín and Guantánamo (Declared World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2001);
• San Pedro de La Roca Castle in Santiago de Cuba (Declared World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1997), Santiago de Cuba;
• La Rumba (Cultural Heritage of the Cuban Nation).

Haiti[9] *(Other places not included in the multimedia)*
• The National Pantheon Museum, Port-au-Prince;
• Môle Saint Nicolas – Fortresses of La Vallière and Saint Charles.

Dominican Republic[10] *(Other places not included in the multimedia).*
• Colonial City of Santo Domingo (Declared World Cultural Site by UNESCO in 1985);
• Cocolo danced theatre tradition (Inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of UNESCO in 2005);
• Museum of the Dominican Man (Santo Domingo);
• Port of Boca de Yuma; and
• Sugar Mill of Sanate.

Other Caribbean countries and territories with representative places of memory

Antigua and Barbuda
• Sugar Mill of Betty's Hope;
• Rock Dungeon; and
• Torturer Dungeon.

Bahamas
• Junkanoo.

Barbados
• Historic Bridgetown and its Garrison (Declared World Cultural Site by UNESCO in 2011); and
• Congaline Festival and Crop Over Festival.

Bermuda (United Kingdom)
• Historic Town of St. George and Related Fortifications (Declared World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2000).

Dominica
• Morne Trois Pitons National Park (Declared World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1995);
• Fort Shirley Ruins; and
• The Dominica Carnival.

Grenada
• Antoine River Estate;
• Mardi Gras Annual Festival (Carnival); and
• The Big Drum, the Gangs and String Bands of Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

Guadeloupe (France)[11]
• Estate of Beausoleil, Saint-Claude;
• Louis Delgrés Fortress, Bass-Terre;
• Vanivel Estate, Viens-habitants;
• La Grivelière Estate, Viens-habitants;
• Let's Throw the Boat Indigoterie, Viens-habitants;
• Slave Prison at Belmont Estate, Trois-Riviers;
• Victor Schoelcher Departmental Museum, Pointe-à-Pitre;
• Fleur d'Épée Fortress, Bas-du-Fort, Gosier;
• Monument on the Abolition of Slavery, Petit-Canal;
• Rotours Canal, Morne-à-l´Eau;
• Mahaudière Estate, Anse-Bertrand;
• Slave Cemetery in L'Anse Sainte-Marguerite, Le Moule;
• Néron Estate, Le Moule;
• Murat Estate, Grand-Borg, Marie-Galante;
• Roussel–Trianon Estate, Grand-Bourg, Marie-Galante;
• La Mare au Punch, Grand-Bourg, Marie-Galante;
• Indigoteries on the Eastern Coast of Marie-Galante, Capresterre, Marie-Galante;
• Fidelin Pottery, Terre de Bas, Les Saintes; and
• The Guadeloupe Carnival.

Turks and Caicos
• The Trouvadore Shipwreck.

British Virgin Islands (United Kingdom)
• The Cultural Space of «Quimbombó»: Festival, Music and Dance.

Jamaica
• Moore Town Maroon Traditions (Inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of UNESCO in 2003);
• The Blue Mountains or John Crow National Park (Nominated for the Tentative List of the World Heritage); and
• House of Bob Marley and the Reggae (National Monument).

Martinique (France)[12]
• Cane House, Trois-Ilets;
• Ecomuseum of Martinique, Rivière-Pilote;
• Regional Museum of History and Ethnography, Fort-de-France;
• Museum of Folk Arts and Traditions, Saint-Esprit;
• The Saint-Jacques Fund;
• Martinique Slave Memorial; and
• The Carnival of Martinique, Fort de France.

Puerto Rico (USA)
• National Historic Site and Fortress of San Juan in Puerto Rico (Declared World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1983).[13]

Saint Kitts and Nevis
• Brimstone Hill Fortress National Park (Declared World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1999); and
• The Bassetterre Carnival.

Saint Lucia
• The Pitons Management Area (Declared World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2004); and
• The Saint Lucia Carnival.

Trinidad and Tobago
• Trinidad and Tobago Carnival, and
• Callypso and Steel Bands.

Conclusions

Significant Actions and Positive Factors

Participatory spaces related to events like carnivals, festivals, religious and academic meetings, cultural promotion, community work, etc. play an important role, along with the places of memory.

Man-made and natural heritage are linked with social-participation spaces. Places of memory are thus part of daily life and collective relevance; they are not stuck in the past but given new interpretations without ignoring their historical significance.

An equally important role is played by museums and other cultural institutions that not only exhibit collections, but also organize attractive activities for a wide range of audiences. They include live performances by traditional and contemporary groups, as well as visits to other places of memory related to their areas of interest.

In the case of World Heritage Sites and cities, the identification of places of memory can pave the way for guided cultural tours and cultural tourism programmes.

Lessons learned and recommendations

The main obstacle is the limited capacity of institutions and management agencies in the tourist sector to maximize the potential for promoting cultural, sustainable tourism linked with places of memory. This is compounded by inappropriate guide training and little motivation to encourage this type of tourist modality. There is an urgent need to coordinate cultural and tourist policies.

If there is no regular intention to make visible and enhance existing places of memory, they will be doomed to failure and oblivion. This situation is also related to the prioritization of sites by country and territory: world, national and local declarations; protected areas; research activities, etc.

Mention should be made of the degree of deterioration of historic places and the need to have them incorporated into conservation programmes.

In general, there is no political will to involve communities in heritage management. This would facilitate economic sustainability and improve standards of living.

Recommendations

- Integrating the Places of Memory of the Slave Route into agendas, agreements and decisions adopted at meetings of ministers of Culture and Tourism of CELAC, CARICOM, ALBA, etc.
- Increasing promotion, monitoring and visibility of memory tourism in the island Caribean by UNESCO and its field offices.
- Signing agreements between countries and territories of the area to implement a Network of Places of Memory on Slavery, Abolition and Cultural Legacy of Africa for multi-destination packages and country- or territory-specific memory-related cultural tourism offers.
- Strengthening this tourist offer vis-à-vis the so-called sun and sand modality.
- Linking social-participation spaces for tourist purposes with previously identified places of memory.
- Implementing local development projects through the management of places of memory and the promotion of community-based cultural tourism with the support of tourist agencies and cultural institutions at the national, regional and local levels. C&D

Notes

[1] See Nilson Acosta Reyes. «Heritage sites of "The Slave Route" in Cuba» in Catauro, a Cuban anthropology review, Year 2, Issue 3, Fernando Ortiz Foundation, Havana, 2001:81–90.
[2] See Fernando Ortiz Foundation and GEO publishing, Havana, 1998. Two bilingual editions sponsored by UNESCO: Spanish-English and Spanish-French.
[3] See Catauro, a Cuban anthropology review, Year 2, Issue 3, Fernando Ortiz Foundation, Havana, 2001:6–52.
[4] See Marisa Pineau (compiler), Editor of the Tres de Febrero National University, Buenos Aires, 2011:443.
[5] http://www.unesco.lacult.org/sitios_memoria
[6] Meeting Development of a training guide and modules on memory tourism, UNESCO Paris, 10–13 December 2012.
[7] Coordinated by Luc Alofs.
[8] Out of 700 sites, nine were selected for inclusion in the UNESCO multimedia. The selection process was supported by national experts like Nilson Acosta, Miguel Barnet, and Jesús Guanche.
[9] Headed by Dr. Laennec Hurbon, the Haitian Committee was represented by Michel-Philippe Lerebourg and Michel Hector in the site selection process.
[10] Coordinated by Omar Rancier and supported by the UNESCO Antenna Office in Santo Domingo..
[11] See Dussauge, Matthieu, et al. La Route de L´esclave. Traces-Mémoires en Guadeloupe. Conseil Général de la Guadeloupe, Basse-Terre, s/f.
[12] See Chivallon, Christine. Visibilizar la esclavitud. Museografía y memoria en las Antillas francesas, in http://revista.ecaminos.org/article/visibilizar-la-esclavitud-museografia-y-memoria-en/, and N. Schmidt: "Commémoration, histoire et historiographie. À propos du 150e anniversaire de l'abolition de l'esclavage dans les colonies françaises," Ethnologie Française, XXIX (3), 1999, page 457.
[13] The Museum of African Roots – Casa de los Contrafuertes, one of the oldest buildings in Old San Juan, is located in this area.