Mortality, Vol. 8, No. 2, 2003

BrunnerRoutledge Taylor & Francis healthsciences

The development of cemeteries in Portugal c.1755 – c.1870

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ABSTRACT *In many countries, the introduction of cemeteries constituted a radical change to existing burial traditions. A sporadic secondary literature indicates difficulties in some provincial areas, as reform—often dictated from above, through Royal Edict—became subject to delay and resistence. This paper charts the progress of cemetery establishment in Portugal during a turbulent phase in its history. Through its discussion of some of the obstacles to burial reform, the paper indicates that there may be particular prerequisites required to facilitate smoother and speedier transitions from traditional to newer types of burial provision in the nineteenth century.*

Introduction

The progress of cemetery development in Europe is often taken as an unproblematic given. Once France had established the famed Parisian cemetery of Père Lachaise in 1804, the assumption remains that other countries were eager to take the lead. According to Curl, cities 'developed cemeteries in conformity with the ideas of the times and for reasons that were universal', and he gives the example of cemeteries laid out in Venice, Vienna, Moscow and Berlin (Curl, 1993: 276). Yet the proliferation of studies of particular, architecturally distinguished, cemeteries of the nineteenth century has distracted attention from the need for more general histories tracing the broader patterns of the shift from churchyard to cemetery. Localized studies indicate that what might be termed 'the Necropolitan revolution' of the nineteenth century was by no means an easy progression from the traditional to a newer style of interment. Secondary material relating to the laying out of new cemeteries in provincial areas in Europe is sporadic, but indicates patterns of cemetery development that in some places were defined by controversy, procrastination and, occasionally, violent resistance.

This paper highlights this often overlooked aspect of cemetery development in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by considering in detail the history of cemetery establishment in Portugal. The Portuguese experience underlines two

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ISSN 1357-6275 (print) ISSN 1469-9885 (online)/03/020113-16
DOI: 10.1080/1357627031000087370

important features of burial reform: (1) there was no simple progression from the use of one type of burial space to another; and (2) that there was a markedly uneven chronological transition with respect to a growing acceptance of the need for cemeteries. In addition, the paper demonstrates the unique nature of Portuguese burial culture, in which deep religiosity defined a tradition in which the spacial separation of the dead from sacred locations meant that even extra-mural burial, outside the walls of the church building itself, was strongly resisted. Reis has concluded that 'it was in the Portuguese world that there occurred the most radical reaction to the closing of churches to the dead' (Reis, 1992: 35). This paper places resistance in Portugal in its wider context, and begins by briefly discussing localized material relating to cemetery development in other European provincial areas.

Burial reform and provincial resistance

Reis, in writing on the incidence of rebellion against the imposition of a private cemetery on the deeply religious Catholic and Portuguese-speaking community of Salvador in Brazil, commented that 'little opposition seems to have been raised against the transferral of cemeteries in Europe, except for delaying tactics and a few minor violent incidents' (Reis, 1992: 34). Extensive and much more detailed research on the local histories of cemetery establishment needs to take place before an accurate cemetery 'metahistory' can be drawn together. Certainly the passage of legislation on cemetery establishment did not necessarily mean that action followed. Examples given here indicate that change was by no means a straightforward process: objections from the Church and more practical considerations of cost and land availability all played a part in introducing extended delays to the implementation of burial legislation. In addition, the foundation and success of a particular site did not necessarily indicate local consensus on its acceptability.

Amongst the intelligentsia, criticism of traditional burial practice gathered pace in the eighteenth century, and certainly from around 1740 the accumulation of literature on the subject becomes marked. According to Ariès, an influential document subject to wide circulation in France and beyond was a work published in 1745 by the Abbé Charles-Gabriel Porée: *Lettres sur la Sépulture dans les Églises*. He proposed that cemeteries should be established outside towns, as 'the surest way to procure and preserve the freshness of the air, the cleanliness of the temples, and the health of the inhabitants, considerations of the utmost importance' (Ariès, 1983: 479; McManners, 1981; Riley, 1987). The influence of Porée's work no doubt increased pressure to take action, leading to an extended review of burial practices in Paris in 1763. In 1765, new regulation required closure of many of the inner city sites and the creation of eight parish groupings, each of which would have a cemetery on the outskirts of the city. The public health rationale behind the movement towards extra-mural burial and the increased involvement of municipal authorities were to remain constant features of future legislation. By Royal

Decree in 1776, the closure of inner-city burial sites and the recommendation that extra-mural cemeteries were to be laid out was extended to the whole of France (Ariès, 1983).

The implementation of the Royal Decree at a local level was highly variable. New cemeteries were laid out outside the city boundaries in Marseilles in 1777 and in Arles in 1786, although in Aix the establishment of the new cemetery did not curtail continued use of the parish graveyard (Lassere, 1991). In other towns, the edict was simply ignored. The new cemeteries were an expense that few municipalities welcomed, and various excuses were put forward to explain why a particular town should be excepted from the regulation—for example, that the rate of decomposition in the local soil was remarkably swift (McManners, 1981). The response of the citizens of Lille to the Decree is indicated in a study by Tamason (1980). Three years after the publishing of the Royal Decree, the magistrates of the city produced a report detailing proposed burial in the city. The reforms followed a protracted period of negotiation between the Bishop of Tournai, the city's administrators and Royal authorities. It was planned to establish a common cemetery outside the town, and to cease interments in the city's churchyards. Just five days after the city ordinance was published there was a violent popular reaction. A coffin had been buried in the parish churchyard in defiance of the order, but the magistrates ordered its exhumation and removal to the new municipal cemetery. Crowds attacked and destroyed the municipal hearse, which in its use of horses also offended traditional sensibilities with respect to the manual carrying of the coffin to the grave (Tamason, 1980). Statistics do not exist on the number of cemeteries opened in the years immediately following the issue of the Decree, but certainly by the time of the French Revolution in 1789, it appeared that action had been largely sporadic.

French influence on the progress of European burial law was enhanced substantially by the passage of a key piece of legislation that combined and superseded earlier enactments in the comprehensive law of 23 Prairial, in the Revolutionary year XII (June 12 1804). This law—which will be referred to simply as 'Prairial'—adopted many of the recommendations made by burial reformers during the latter half of the eighteenth century. According to Prairial, cemeteries were to be established 40–50 yards away from the nearest habitation; there was a prohibition against interments in churches and urban churchyards; burials were to be juxtaposed, so preventing the fatal accumulation of gases below ground; and reuse would be restricted until a time period of five years had elapsed—enough time, scientists concluded, for full decomposition to have taken place (Ariès, 1983). The Napoleonic Empire was the means by which a number of new civic and legislative practices were promoted in the subjugated states, albeit with variable results. In particular, much has been written on the Napoleonic Code, a system that attempted to bring order and equity to aspects of civil and criminal law and establish principles for local political administration in countries occupied by the French (Holtman, 1967). Perhaps less well known were attempts to implement Prairial in the many European countries that were subjugated under the French Empire from 1804 to 1814: secondary sources

dealing with this history are at best patchy, and again further and more detailed study is required.

Extant material indicates a variable success rate. For example, in Hamburg in October 1812 the French occupation government introduced legislation prohibiting intramural interment from 1st January 1813, a law that was retained even after the French withdrew (Whaley, 1981). In Bologna in 1801 the French opened what was to be the city's largest cemetery and established burial regulations in accordance with Prairial: the cemetery is still in use (Goody and Poppi, 1994). By contrast, French attempts to establish a new cemetery in Rome, a much more conservative city, were strongly resisted (Nylander, 1989). Similarly, in the Italian–French border town of Pinerolo, the requirements of Prairial were conveyed by means of an official circular of July 1805. However, despite detailed recommendations being produced guiding local action on the issue, nothing happened. Twenty years later, in 1824/5, the council revisited the issue of burial reform and considered transferring the cemetery away from the city. In 1825 the Bishop of Pinerolo formally intervened. He claimed that the 'faithful' would object since they would not be able to rest with their ancestors and pray in the cemetery chapel, and a threat was made to refuse to consecrate the new cemetery. The controversy was resolved only after a legal review had taken place, and intervention had taken place by King Carlo Felice who by royal order confirmed that the city authorities were able to proceed with the laying out of a new cemetery (Cozzo, 1998).

A final example of an extended response to legislation on cemeteries is detailed by Lassere (1991). The French town of Tours had responded speedily to the 1776 edict. Two cemeteries were proposed, to the east and the west of the town, representing land of a similar size to that used by the existing parish graveyards. However, the new ground that were laid out did not meet the more stringent sanitary requirements of Prairial, not least because of their inner-city location. Establishing a new site introduced substantial problems relating to the practicalities of finding and purchasing appropriate ground. Even when floods in 1856 rendered the old cemeteries unusable, the council was still unable to act. Finally, a court case led to the council successfully compulsorily purchasing land, which was laid out and opened in 1858 (Lassere, 1991).

It is clear, therefore, that legislation prohibiting intramural interment and requiring the establishment of new cemeteries did not necessarily lead in a straightforward fashion, to the foundation of new sites. Even where local authorities sought to act, their ability to reform existing practices could be subject to delays caused by clerical opposition and practical considerations. Many of the themes established here are reflected in the history of Portuguese burial reform.

The Portuguese burial tradition

The history of Portugal is not widely known, and a brief summary of the period in question is a useful context. During the second half of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth, the history of Portugal was characterized by

turbulent changes in monarchy, in political constitution and with respect to the influence of external powers (Payne, 1973; Gallagher, 1983, Saraiva, 1997). From 1750 to 1777, Portugal was under the rule of José I, whose largely ineffectual monarchy was offset by the energy of his chief minister, the Marquês de Pombal. Defined as either 'a great figure of Enlightened absolutism . . .[or] not more than a half-baked philosopher and full-blown tyrant' (Maxwell, 1990: 77 and 79), Pombal was responsible for such substantial reforms that he is commonly discussed alongside the other 'Enlightened' despots of the eighteenth century such as Catherine the Great and Joseph II. In common with some of these 'Enlightened despots', Pombal sought to reduce the hold of the Roman Catholic Church on his country; he expelled the Jesuits and broke off relations with Rome, effectively becoming the head of the Catholic Church in Portugal for a period of 10 years. In addition, he attempted to introduce reforms that would encourage the growth of a mercantile middle-class in what was a largely feudal society. Pombal's powers ceased immediately on the death of José I, although the tenor of his reforms was kept mostly intact throughout the reign of Maria and Pedro which lasted until 1799.

Portugal was invaded by Napoleonic troops in 1808. The royal family withdrew to Brazil, and the French declared that the royal house of Bragança was no longer in power. The Portuguese court remained in Brazil until 1821, although the French occupation had finally come to an end by 1811. Revolution broke out in under the imposed rule of the English autocrat William Beresford and the head of the royal family, John VI, was forced to return from Brazil and accept the introduction of a Liberal constitution. The death of John precipitated a period of confusion. Between 1832 and 1834, civil war broke out as his two sons, Pedro and Miguel, contested the concession. Pedro, champion of the Liberal cause, succeeded but both brothers died within months of each other in 1834, in which year Maria, Pedro's daughter, took the throne. For the most part, Liberalism dominated Portuguese politics in the nineteenth century and despite periodic rebellion and revolt, constitutional monarchy was retained.

In very broad terms, this history presents a number of propitious contexts for the introduction of cemeteries: the influence of an Enlightened despot, with an interest in burial reform; a period during which Napoleonic influence was exerted in the country; and the ascendency of Liberal interests. The period under question began with the devastating earthquake in Lisbon in 1755, which also presented an opportunity to reform existing burial practices. The earthquake struck in the morning in three distinct bursts; its aftershocks, the breaking of a series of seismic waves on the dock area, and a fire which raged for much of the following week multiplied the death toll. It was estimated that around 10 000 to 15 000 lost their lives (Kendrick, 1956). The wider scientific context for reform was favourable. As has been seen, the public health hazards from 'miasmas' had already been the subject of discussion throughout Europe. Ribeiro Sanches, a Portuguese doctor fully aware of the pioneering French works pointed out the need for new burial solutions for Lisbon. However, his campaign attracted the support only of a few

doctors and a limited number of progressive politicians, and the chance to improve conditions was lost.

Instead, Lisbon built new churches to receive the dead, in continuation of the dominant practice of intramural interment (França, 1977). Statistics are not available on the proportion of burials taking place in churches around this time, but a likely estimate at the middle of the eighteenth century is some 70% of all interments. Places for burial included all types of religious buildings including convents and their cloisters, chapels including the private chapels of manor houses, and even hermitages. In rural areas, it was probable that the rate of interment in churches was higher, at 90% of all deaths (Queiroz, 2002). The provision of burial space also rested in part with a multitude of Catholic lay brotherhoods: interment was available in their chapels. The principal purpose of the brotherhoods was the organization of religious festivals associated with particular saints, but the brotherhoods also functioned along the same lines as mutual-aid societies and one of their key purposes for members was their provision of funerals (Reis, 1992).Very few burials took place outside the church precincts, and even use of the *adros*—the space outside the church—was limited.

The role of the *adro* has an important place in Portuguese burial culture, and explanation of its functions is necessary.[1] The word *adro* derives from the Latin *atrium*, which means open space before the entrance to a major building. Although the *adro* is a yard around the church, it does not equate to a British churchyard. Today, *adros* are used as places of meeting and attendance during religious services, where annual religious feasts take place. In previous centuries its role as a meeting place was heightened since it was often the only kind of public square in almost all small Portuguese villages. Some parts of the *adro* could also have an interment function as an extension to the church interior, particularly in places immediately adjacent to the church wall. However, use of the *adro* for burial was by no means commonplace, and even in cases where interments did take place there, corpses were interred only in special circumstances.[2] Indeed, use could be sporadic, and decades could elapse between burials. Aside from religious convictions, the adro was simply not regarded as a practical place for interment, since it was vulnerable to wild animals disturbing the graves.

As has been noted, the vast majority of people were buried inside churches. Despite criticism of this practice since the Middle Ages, burial inside the church for Portuguese Christians retained its strong spiritual overtones: physical proximity between dead and the images of saints represented a spiritual proximity between the soul and heaven (Reis, 1992). The location of burial within the church also carried social significance, as was the case in the England where the chancel and chapels were high-price, desirable burial spaces (Harding, 1998). Similarly in Portugal only richer people could be buried in church apses, and those with lower incomes were generally buried closer to the church door. Burial in the *adro* would generally take place only if a person was very poor, and had no family to ensure burial inside the church. Financial incentives accrued to the clergy with regard to burial inside the church, who charged according to proximity to the

images or relics of saints. From the fifteenth century, wealthy patrons established chapels within convents in order to ensure for themselves a privileged burial position in the apse. Similarly in Italy, the famous Pavia *certosa* was established at the end of the fourteenth century by the Visconti family with the specific purpose of building a private pantheon (*Itinerari*, 1998).

The fact that considerable indignity was attached to burial in the open air was reflected in the burial practices attached to charitable hospitals or *misericòrdias*. The burial of the poor who had died within the precinct of the *misericòrdias* was overseen by the institution itself, and was considered to be degrading.[3] Burial took place in the open air and in the grounds of the institution where there were no religious associations. Public health concerns led in some cases to the relocation of these burials to sites outside the city walls and although these spaces may be regarded as the first Portuguese Catholic burial grounds separated from the church and with public health motivation, they cannot be considered a precursor to the later establishment of cemeteries because their use was restricted to the poor.

Although burial in the *adro* was in some instances the fate of the very poor, interments in the *adro* could also follow excessive deaths during an epidemic. Practices varied. Recourse to the *adro* in these circumstances was not universal: where spaces remained in the church, then burial might continue to take place there.[4] In some cases, all epidemic victims were buried in the *adro*.[5] Consensus on the right course of action was not well established. As the eighteenth century progressed and consensus grew on the ability of miasmas from corpses to carry disease, communities sometimes took the safeguard of removing burials to hermitages that were more distant from the villages when epidemics struck (Nunes & Góis, 1992). After the crisis passed, however, burials in the church were resumed. Pressure on space in the church intensified as population grew during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In Pòvoa de Varzim it was decided in 1790 to keep the church door open, because the smell inside was insupportable (Barbosa, 1971: 152). However, the proportion of burials in the *adro* remained small. For many people, no real alternative to church burial was possible because of the strength of religious belief.

A further element of the Portuguese burial tradition was the interment of the non-Catholic communities, which were often excluded from burial in churches. Sometimes, burial of Protestants took place at the sea shore, as happened in Oporto with British subjects at the beginning of the eighteenth century (Delaforce, 1982). The growing strength of the British community in Lisbon and Oporto through the eighteenth century led to treaties that overcame religious prejudice. The first British burial ground was laid out in Lisbon at the beginning of the eighteenth century. It had substantial walls and was not allowed to include a religious building. As the century progressed, other burial grounds for British people were established in Oporto and other ports, and their use was extended to other Protestant nationalities. It is this element of the Portuguese burial tradition that carried most impact on the aesthetic of later cemetery developments. The sites were located outside the city walls and offered similar protection against

animals as had the churches. The British burial grounds also had trees, which gave the sites a picturesque atmosphere. Most importantly, the sites allowed the preservation of memory since they contained, for the first time, open air mausolea. In the British burial ground in Lisbon, headstones survive from the 1730s. The only other open-air location for burial—the *adro*—has no monumentation dating from that time (although some very rare examples from the middle ages exist) largely because *adro* burial tended to be restricted to the poor; indeed, even within the church itself death also tended to be anonymous with only the rich having epitaphs on their tombs. Thus in Portugal, the British burial grounds can be considered as close to cemeteries, in being independent from religious buildings and offering a place where everyone could have a headstone and an epitaph.

An uneasy progression

The progression of Enlightenment thinking in Portugal presents a 'complex and contradictory case'. Certainly this period presented a likely context within which burial reform might begin its progress in Portugal, through the instigation of the Prime Minister, the Marquês de Pombal. The Prime Minister was probably responsible for the establishment of the first new Catholic cemetery located away from a church in Portugal. The cemetery was laid out in the Vila Real de Santo António on the Algarve in the last quarter of the eighteenth century (Correia, 1997). Another key Enlightenment figure, the Superintendent of Police Pina Manique, also attempted to establish new parish cemeteries separate from churches in Lisbon later in the eighteenth century and was successful in laying out one site in Campo de Ourique.[6] Although the specific local context in which these two men took action is not certain, and merits further research, both were certainly following a well-worn Enlightened pathway in seeking to reform burial practice (Rugg, 1998). However, in neither case did the new site prove to be a decisive break with the established tradition of burial. Pombal's cemetery at Vila Real de Santo António contained a chapel which was designed to receive the burials of the wealthy. The site had simply relocated the old practices to a place where no settlement had yet taken place, and so objections to the opening of the cemetery could not be lodged. The construction of the cemetery in Campo de Ourique was never fully completed and since burials continued to take place in neighbouring churches was successful only in attracting the interments of the very poor (Vieira, 1999).

The Portuguese Catholic Church was not wholly impervious to the need to improve burial practices for public health reasons, and the eighteenth century also saw some attempts to marry sanitary requirements with traditional practices. For example, some *misericòrdias* tried to remove some of the stigma attached to open air burials by building altars in their burial grounds, and so introduce religious symbolism. In the 1770s, the cemetery of the *Misericòrdia* de Setúbal was decorated with an altar with polychrome tiles representing the process of interment and piety symbols. Much more significantly, in 1798, a cemetery was attached to the cathedral at Leiria on the initiative of the Bishop D. Manuel de

Aguiar. This cemetery became immediately popular, in large part because despite the fact that it operated on sanitary principles its principal features were in accord with existing traditions.[7] The site was consecrated, and the Bishop was the first to build a vault for himself, two practical indications that the clergy condoned the new development. The strong religious connection offset the fact that burials were to take place in the open air. However, the dominant practice of not erecting memorials continued at the site for some decades (Portela & Queiroz, 2003).

Legislative failure

During the first half of the nineteenth century, attempts to legislate for a universal improvement in burial facilities became subject to successive waves of radical political change and unrest, underlying which was a demonstrable lack of commitment from the general population to burial reform. The success of the cemetery at Leiria's cathedral did not translate to full acceptance of legislation that was passed in 1805 and 1806, curtailing burials in churches. These edicts were passed under the influence of the Napoleonic Empire and were almost entirely ignored. The monarchy relocated itself to Brazil in 1809 and in the context of major political upheaval there was little hope that burial laws would be implemented consistently if at all. The Church continued to improve its provision, as some edicts encouraged the Lay brotherhoods to lay out new burial grounds in the larger towns [8] but these developments were largely haphazard (Silva & Meneses, 1946). The liberal revolution of 1820 provided a further context in which burial reform was briefly discussed. In this instance, the British burial grounds were proposed as the guiding aesthetic for new burial places, with the addition of Catholic chapels. Although this plan was proposed by a Catholic archbishop, no further action was taken as counter-revolution took hold. However, it was clear that a new type of cemetery landscape—including trees and individual memorials—was beginning to dominate discussion of the need for improvements (Vaz, 1835).

As with many other countries in Europe, the cholera epidemic of the 1830s provided a pressing context for a break with traditional practices. In towns and cities, churches closed for burial, and as the epidemic spread beyond the towns into the villages, increasing use was made of *adros* for interment. Two new sites were established for burial in Lisbon—Prazeres and Alto de S. João. These sites were to gain significance as the liberal faction regained power in the mid-1830s, and new legislation was passed to reduce the powers of the Church. Again, in 1835 the Liberals attempted to institute legislated burial reform. The new regulations were couched in terms that aimed to appease religious imperatives: intramural interment was 'offensive to the respect and veneration due in holy places'[9], and it was noted that a number of religious councils had condemned the practice. However, the desire to bury within the church was 'superstitious' and a 'shameful abuse' (de Pina-Cabral & Feijó, 1983). Interment in church buildings was officially restricted, and priests allowing such interments would be

deprived of their benefits. New cemeteries were to be laid out away from the centre of towns and villages. Although these new sites were to be under the control of local authorities, under surveillance of district governors, Catholic consecration would take place. Symbolic of a renewed attempt to secularize burial, the two Lisbon cemeteries became the legal responsibility of the local authority. Their landscaping became subject to the influence of French and British cemeteries, as liberals returning from exile brought news of the newly laid-out London cemeteries and the impressive monumentation of Père Lachaise (Vaz, 1835).

The fading of the cholera epidemic in 1834 and its concomitant wave of panic meant that the legislation of September 1835 was a failure even before it was passed. The epidemic had shifted the locale of the dead outside the church, and the new legislation aimed to keep them there. However, relocation back inside the walls took place quickly after the crisis ended. Obstacles to the foundation of new cemeteries were quickly thrown up by local authorities.[10] New cemeteries were expensive, and could only be funded through special taxes. How could these be imposed if new cemeteries were not wanted? The development of cemeteries remained patchy, despite new edicts and penalties charged against local authorities failing to take action. Responses included public inquiries and riots (Catroga, 1999).[11] Some cemeteries were laid out to comply with the law, but were badly constructed in the hope that a change of political will would mean that the sites would never have to be used. Where the willingness to build was evident, progress was slow, due to lack of funds.

It remains the case that many of the cemeteries established between 1835 and 1839 had little dignity, and were surrounded by weak wooden fences that offered no protection against foraging animals in search of badly interred corpses. Almost all these cemeteries were abandoned, and others were destroyed before consecration could take place (Capela, 1997). It was clear that these sites had not been able to counter the deeply-help prejudice against open-air burial as a recourse only for the extremely destitute, and the action of consecration obviously offered little consolation. In some areas the government attempted to compromise. Between 1835 and 1840 in Santarém, Évora and Aveiro public cemeteries were established inside the gardens attached to convents which had been closed down by the State in 1834. For the most part, however, burial legislation led to the laying out of cemeteries that were actively loathed by the local population, and the apprehension of enforced use of such sites gathered pace.

The Romantic aesthetic takes hold

The essentially secular nature of new cemeteries had ensured widespread popular opposition particularly in the more strongly religious north of Portugal, and in the smaller towns and villages. However, in the mid-1830s a fresh ideology was becoming attached to cemeteries, forging a connection between these new sites and the largely urban bourgeoisie who had become influenced by the Romantic

notion of permanently memorialising the dead (Ariès, 1983). To some degree these Romantic ideals became more important than religious prejudices in defining the aesthetic of cemeteries in the wealthier rural areas. The shift in attitude had its principal exponent in a doctor named Francisco de Assis Sousa Vaz, who had studied for his doctorate in Paris (Vaz, 1835). Sousa Vaz, like Strang in Britain (Strang, 1831) and Bigelow in the US (Bigelow, 1860) defined wider uses for the cemetery. He conceived cemeteries as galleries of remarkable men, family pantheons, and archives made of masonry and ironwork. Elaborate mausolea should reflect a particular attitude towards death: the preservation of memory and the celebration of death as an allegory of loss and melancholy. Each new cemetery should become a place of memory and a 'city of the dead' (Vaz, 1835). Parisian cemeteries were described as models, each with a fine monumental entrance, solid walls, a landscape with trees and internal streets along which tombs could be placed.

The first cemeteries in Portugal to accomplish this pattern fully were the Lapa Cemetery in Oporto and the Prazeres Cemetery in Lisbon. The success of the Lapa Cemetery owed much to the fact that it was established by the religious brotherhood Irmandade da Lapa next to its church, an act which required special permission from the then future king D.Pedro IV in 1833.[12] The brotherhood contained many of the liberals that had been exiled during the civil unrest, and was popular with the Oporto citizens. The Lapa Cemetery was built as a modern *campo santo*, and formed a rectangle with eight sections. There was a fine entrance and a small chapel; expenditure on the architecture was high and building the site took five years. Consecrated in 1838, the centrality of the site to local history was assured by its promoter, João da Silva Ribeiro. He encouraged Oporto citizens to subscribe to the erection of two monuments dedicated to the great Liberal figures José Ferreira Borges who had authored the first Portuguese commercial code of law, and the Bishop D. Manuel de Santa Inês who was a religious hero of the Oporto siege which had taken place during the civil unrest. The monuments were completed by 1841. Burials in the Lapa Cemetery also took place in determined resistence to use of the cemetery that the municipality had opened in the city in 1839.[13] The municipality had attempted to introduce a 'Romantic' spirit in naming this site the Prado do Repouso or meadow of rest. The site was established in a bishop's farm in which an unfinished church was adapted to form a mortuary chapel. For a while the Oporto local authority raised more money through selling pasture rights on the farm than through burials [14], although by the end of the 1850s a number of tombs began to be erected there.

The Lapa Cemetery remains the principal nineteenth-century cemetery of northern Portugal, and contains the graves of many important figures from that period. Vaults erected in the site were widely copied in other cemeteries. The Prazeres Cemetery in Lisbon was a larger site, serving a metropolitan area where most of the wealthy people of Portugal lived. This site fulfilled a similar role for the south of the country, although there was long long delay in the establishment of the practice of erecting memorials there.

Halting progress

Despite the marked success attached to both the Lapa and the Prazeres Cemeteries, it remained the case that popular use of cemeteries was exceptional, particularly outside the larger towns. The legislative requirement to lay out new sites for burial had made uneven progress. By 1844 some of the larger towns had gained cemeteries but many of these were partially build, or been superimposed on extinct convents with no further works.[15] The individualized monumentation that characterized the use of the Lapa and Prazeres Cemeteries had made little headway with regard to attracting immediate imitation. Again, an attempt was made to enforce reform though the passage of legislation. In this case the Minister Costa Cabral introduced new regulations as part of the 'Health Laws' of 1844. A network of health authorities would be set up, and their duties would include enforcing the cessation of intramural interment. In addition, each municipality had to have at least one public cemetery within the municipal boundary, and severe penalties were to be imposed where burial continued inside churches (de Pina-Cabral & Feijó, 1983). Attempts to impose these regulations were said to have led to the Maria da Fonte Revolution in 1846. Originating in the Minho, the rebellion, supposedly led by a village woman, sought to resist the imposition of the new burial regulations (Livermore, 1947). The longevity of this myth, current a century later, indicates the strength of feeling that could be attached to resistence to the legislation.

In a pattern that was repeated from the 1830s, popular support for burial reform revived during the succeeding cholera epidemic of the mid-1850s. Local authorities suddenly began re-evaluating their cemetery projects which in some cases had been held in abeyance since the previous epidemic.[16] As the cholera took hold in 1855/6, new cemeteries were established in many of the more vulnerable areas, particularly ports and trading towns including Matosinhos, Arcos de Valdevez, Caminha, Valença, and Viana do Castelo. In Oporto, a second municipal cemetery was laid out in 1855. Some existing private cemeteries that were deemed insanitary were closed. However, as with the flurry of activity evident in the 1830s, the interest in burial reform waned as the epidemic subsided. For almost 15 years the second Oporto municipal cemetery was only used for the interment of the poorest people, and many of the closed sites reopened just months after the epidemic passed (Queiroz, 2002).[17]

Imposition of the new legislation continued fitfully. In the study completed by De Pina-Cabral and Feijó, it was found that by 1862, an average of 31% of the population was still being buried in churches, although this figure hides substantial variation. For example, in the districts of Viseu, Vila Real, and Viana do Castelo, the proportion of burials in churches was 55%, 52% and 82% respectively (de Pina-Cabral & Feijó, 1983: 34). Although these figures are not entirely reliable, the pattern they convey of regional variation is accurate. By 1875, most of the major towns in Portugal had a public cemetery. In many instances, the new sites flouted sanitary requirements to maintain a healthy distance between the places of burial and habitation, and the cemeteries were built just metres from the church

(de Pina-Cabral & Feijó, 1983). In some instances, increased impetus for local action came with the involvement of *nouveau riche* emigrés from Brazil, who sought sites suitable for the erection impressive monuments deemed to be the 'civilized' way of remembering the dead (Queiroz, 2002). It is notable that the last major city in which the municipality took action was the deeply religious, conservative city of Braga, where the new cemetery was consecrated in 1870.

Conclusion: essential prerequisites for change?

Thus in Portugal the progress of burial reform and recourse to new cemeteries was by no means assured despite the passage of a whole series of regulations. The deeply religious Roman Catholic population, particularly in the more rural areas, successfully resisted changes to long-standing burial practices. The expansion of the urban population, creating problems with accommodating the growing mass of dead in major towns and cities, was not a feature of Portugal in the nineteenth century. Indeed, Lisbon grew just 22% in the period 1750–1850 and was overtaken in growth by Porto (59%). No other Portuguese town had a population in excess of 20 000 people, and the country has remained markedly rural (Bairoch *et al*., 1988; Hohenberg & Lees, 1985). Certainly the recurrent cholera epidemics spurred some communities to act, but usage of the newly established sites did not often continue after the crises passed.

One essential element that Portugal lacked in forging a strong consensus on burial reform was a growing and wealthy middle-class. By the 1820s, the middle class comprised just 9% of the population (Payne, 1973: 518). In an industrializing Europe, this group more than any other constituted a powerful instigator of change, and can be seen as the principal force underlying local acceptance of new cemeteries in France (Tamason, 1980; Kselman, 1993) and the proliferation of cemetery companies in Britain (Rugg, 1992). Furthermore, the Portuguese tradition of limited use of headstones and other more elaborate grave markers in open air burial spaces ill-served a class that sought to use monumentation to express its Romantic sensibilities. Certainly from the 1840s, as the middle classes in the major cities grew in size, the Lisbon cemeteries borrowed their developing aesthetic from the tradition of British burial in the city, and the influence of ideas travelling to Portugal via political refugees returning from France and England. The complete secularization of burial space in Portugal took time to spread beyond Lisbon and Oporto, and municipalities had to ensure that their sites were strongly religious in nature. The complete secularization of burial space has never been truly accomplished in Portugal, in contrast to many other European countries in which municipalities took over this function and the Church lost principal control (Dowd, 1921).

In conclusion, the example of Portugal indicates that, despite a number of propitious contexts, the transition from traditional to newer burial practices was by no means smooth. Recurrent legislation, attempting to enforce change from above, did not prove effective in a nation characterized by religious conservatism. The recurrent cholera epidemics carried short-term responses, but Portugal

lacked the chronic crisis situation that was engendered in many other urban centres by the rapid rise of population. In addition, a slow economy, hampered by long-term trading agreements with Britain, did not lead to the creation of a wealthy urban middle class, for which the cemetery as an institution was so well suited.

Notes

[1] Information on the *adro* is sketchy in primary documentation, and inferences have been drawn from a range of sources. Fuller explanation is available in Queiroz, 2002.
[2] CUNHA, X. da (1878) *O cemiterio de Villa Nova da Barquinha e as modificações que urgentemente cumpre imprimir-lhe*. Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional.
[3] *Próprias*, L.° 77, fl. 167. Arquivo Histórico Municipal do Porto.
[4] Fundo Paroquial, *Sé de Portalegre: Óbitos, 1802–1840*. Arquivo Distrital de Portalegre.
[5] *Governo Civil*, maço 233, carta de 23 de Janeiro de 1858. Arquivo Distrital do Porto.
[6] Ministério do Reino, *Colecção de plantas e outros documentos iconográficos,* cx. 5260, doc IV/C/104 (27). Torre do Tombo Nacional Archive, Lisbon.
[7] Paróquia de Leiria, *Óbitos,* 1810–1819. Arquivo Distrital de Leiria.
[8] Governo Civil, Acórdãos da Junta Geral do Distrito (1840) L.° 501 Arquivo Distrital do Porto.
[9] *Diário do Governo*, 226, 24 Set. 1835.
[10] Governo Civil, *Obras públicas*, 1836–1897. Arquivo Distrital de Leiria.
[11] *Diário do Governo*, 5 Jun. 1835.
[12] *Chronica Constitucional do Porto*, 175, 26 Jul. 1833.
[13] *Vereações,* L° 108 (1838–1839). Arquivo Histórico Municipal do Porto.
[14] *O Ecco Popular*, 114, 20 Mai. 1856.
[15] Governo Civil, Correspondência vária sobre cemitérios de Viana do Castelo, Valença e Caminha. Arquivo Distrital de Viana do Castelo.
[16] *Periódico dos Pobres no Porto*, 117, 18 Mai. 1854.
[17] *Periódico dos Pobres no Porto*, Set. and Out. 1851.

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