

## Soledade. Il primo cimitero dell'Amazzonia

## Soledade. The first cemetery of the Amazon

L'origine dei cimiteri si è verificata per un cambiamento di abitudini funerarie, quando le sepolture vennero trasferite dalla chiesa al campo santo. Nel 1850, il primo cimitero pubblico è stato inaugurato nella città di Belem, in Brasile. Il Cimitero Nossa Senhora da Soledade (CNSS) ha una forte caratterizzazione simbolica. Nonostante le sepolture abbiano cessato 30 anni dopo la sua apertura, il luogo è ancora visitato per motivi religiosi, espresso nel culto popolare delle anime dei defunti e in quello dei santi, che si tiene ogni Lunedì, quando il cimitero è aperto al pubblico. Centinaia di persone vengono al CNSS per pregare vicino alle tombe. Si depositano caramelle, bibite, fiori e alcune sculture ornate con maglie e nastri, come simboli di gratitudine per le grazie ricevute, attribuiti alle anime rappresentate dai santi. Alle offerte si sommano: le tombe abbandonate, la sporcizia e i graffiti. Il cimitero è in cattive condizioni.

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The origins of cemeteries occurred because of a change in funeral habits, when burials were transferred from the church to saint fields. In 1850, the first public cemetery was inaugurated in the city of Belem, Brazil. The Cemetery Nossa Senhora da Soledade (CNSS) has a strong symbolic representation. Although its burials have ceased 30 years after its opening, the place is still visited for religious purpose, expressed in the practice souls and popular saints cults, held every Monday when the cemetery is open to the public. Hundreds of people come to the CNSS for pray near the graves. They deposit candies, soft drinks, flowers, and some sculptures adorned with shirts and ribbons, as a signal of gratitude for the graces received, attributed to the souls represented by the saints. Summed to the offerings, the tombs abandon, dirty plus graffiti, the cemetery is in a bad condition.



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Parole chiave: **Brasile; Belem; Nossa Senhora da Soledade; Simbolismo; Metaprogetto**

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## Introduction

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The maintenance and preservation action of CNSS, in the past fifty years, is summarized to simply recognition as a Heritage Site by IPHAN. Thus, the property degradation process continues to occur without effective mitigation measure.

## History

In the cities of Pará State, Brazil, were built several saints fields throughout the nineteenth century. Based on the discussions in Ernesto Cruz<sup>1</sup> works, the population of Pará cities expanded in such a way that increased the need of building new resting places for the dead people. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, Pará received waves of both domestic and foreign immigrants. This fact enabled the construction of cemeteries for various religious orientations. Spaces for the corpses were transformed into funeral commerce: people start to buy their graves in advance, giving them very peculiar characteristics, according to their belief and devotion.

The Cemetery Nossa Senhora da Soledade (CNSS), as it was the first public cemetery of Belem, it has a great material and historical importance. It was built during a significant economic growth period of the region: the beginning of Latex (Hevea Brasilienses) extraction and its exportation, especially to European markets who experienced the technological advances of the Industrial Revolution and the development of automobile industry (DA SILVA, 2005). This fact greatly contributed to the Solitude acquired air of European necropolis. Therefore, the money raised from rubber economy reflected not only in the city's living houses, but also the house of the dead.

## Monuments

The cemetery looks as the large necropolis from the artistic period of Romanticism, adorned with rich deposits and sculptures by renowned artists, loaded with expressiveness. Also with mausoleums reminding chapels, in order to ease the frustration of not being able to be buried in churches. The location of the graves, its dimensions, sculptures, decorative elements and materials used, denoting the economic power and social position of the deceased.

The engineer and favorite architect of King Pedro I, the French Pierre Joseph Pezerat, designed the entrance porch. This work is considered high artistic and monumental value. According to Ernesto Cruz was "carved in stone ashlar limestone of better quality, drawn and tilled with the finest tool in embellishments and trims." (RODRIGUES, 2014)

In 1964, the Landscape Assembly of Cemetery Nossa Senhora da Soledade, consisting of the site, the chapel, the graves, mausoleums, integrated artistic elements, cross, entrance porch and iron railing, was listed at the National Heritage Historical Service — SPHAN (now the Institute of Historical and Artistic Heritage — IPHAN) as a national landscape heritage configured as an important symbol of the collective memory of Pará.



Fig. 1. The cemetery entrance porch



Fig. 2. Grave in limestone, eclectic style, belonging to the family of Ana Joaquina Pimenta de Magalhães (1850), located at the entrance of the necropolis.



Fig. 3. Mausoleum in Carrara marble, neoclassical style, the C.A.J. family



## Location and particularities

The Cemetery of Solitude is inserted in the Batista Campos district, at the confluence with the Nazare district, through Serzedelo Corrêa Avenue. It occupies an entire block, in the perimeter formed by the Gentil Bittencourt Avenue, Conselheiro Furtado Avenue and Doctor Moraes Street. With a more modern urban layout than the past one, the district represented distinct time of urban space production; it is characterized as a central neighborhood, with broad accessibility.

Nowadays, it lies with a great urban infrastructure, public facilities, recreational areas, afforestation, institutional and private services, and diversified commerce, which make it attractive for real estate speculation. Thus, Batista Campos district has suffered over the years, changes in its urban fabric, raised with rememberment and dismemberment consented by municipal legislation. Its surroundings developed an intense occupation; its population density is high, becoming more vulnerable to accelerated vertical integration process of Belém.

The immediate surroundings of the Cemetery da Soledade currently have heavy traffic of cars and buses, due to the area's

central position. It is present a wide range of commerce and services, institutional, educational, religious and leisure facilities, plus a grocery public market that works on weekends, leaning against the back wall and the left side of the ancient necropolis.

The CNSS is considered a strong symbolic representation object. Although its burials have been terminated, the place is still visited for religious devotion purposes, expressed in practice of cults to souls and popular saints, held every Monday, when the cemetery is open to the public. Hundreds of people come to the CNSS for conducting prays in the surroundings of the graves. They deposit candies, soft drinks, flowers, and some sculptures adorned with shirts and ribbons as a signal of gratitude for the graces received, attributed the saints' souls (RODRIGUES, 2014). The cemetery also attracts other users, such as tourists and young people considered as "Gothic". Over the years, through various types of use, various relationships have been developed and form part of the own assigned and recognized identity of Soledade.

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Fig. 4 Aerial view of the cemetery location point in the city of Belém. (Photo by Carlos Macapuna)

Fig. 5 Aerial view of the cemetery of Solitude, Building jack located on the corner of avenues Serzedelo Corrêa and Councillor Furtado. Note the arrangement of the mausoleums mostly in limestone rock, the big green cover on the enclosure and the pressure exerted by the verticalization of its surroundings. Source: CARDOSO, Octavio.

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### Final ideas

Nowadays, to get an open spot for burial in public cemeteries in the State's capital has been a chore. The drama, compounded by nearly two decades without any investment from Municipality of Belém in new spaces or alternatives for burials, has already made thousands of families search for contracts from private spaces. It tends to get worse and worse, as is indicated by studies from the Federal University of Pará (UFPA). Between the five public cemeteries, today Belém has only three active. Of these, only one is effectively open for public burials.

Among the two inactive cemeteries, there is the cemetery of Soledade, recognize as a



Fig. 6, 7 Market that takes place during the weekends bordering the cemetery walls.



Fig. 8 Map of the equipment present in the vicinity of the cemetery.



Heritage Site and it has been closed to the public for long time, and Bengui cemetery, closed in 1997 because of overcrowding and after findings of necrochorume contamination in the ground and surface waters, water that partially supplies its neighborhood. The cemeteries of Santa Izabel, in the district of Guamá, and São Jorge, in Marambaia district, both perform burials, but only for people whose family has the perpetuity grave title. Another part of the vacancies are reserved for municipal employees, which is provided by law. In other words, despite being public, they are no longer open to the public.

The architectural design has a strong identity and create a contemporary space in contrast to the original cemetery typology. The venture should continue with its secular use as a place of cult of the dead and "souls" by the community. The spaces for these uses, such as cross and the chapel, should be adapted to preserve user's comfort and the patrimony's integrity. In addition, a new function as a deposit of ash will be integrated, thereby contributing to cover periodic maintenance expenses of the present physical material. The assembly should be open to the public daily, with the aim of creating a new contemplative recreation area for the city of Belem: a place of artwork exhibition in open air and an authentic memory zone.

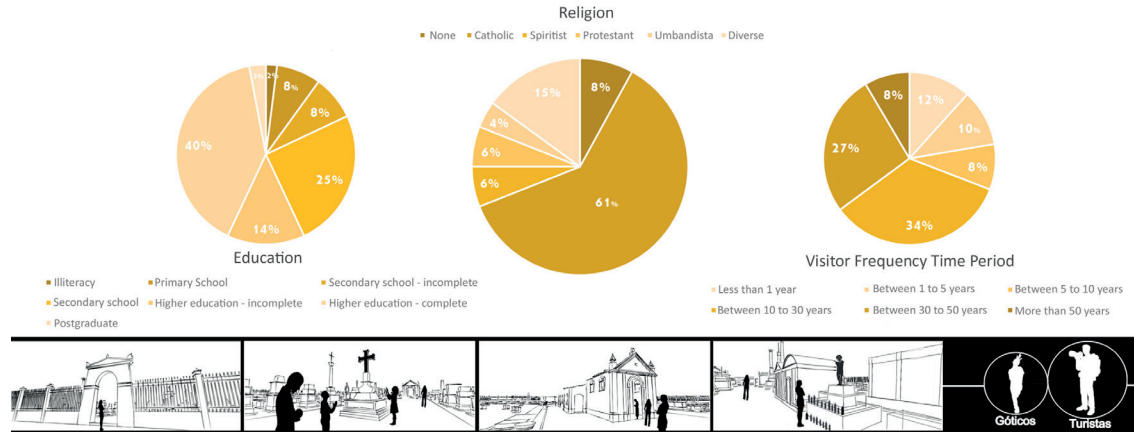


Fig. 9 The cemetery goes data (RODRIGUES, 2014) and illustrations demonstrating their customary rites.

Fig. 10 Sculpture that decorates the tomb (1881), in neoclassical style, executed in limestone rock. This tomb had been erected in honor of a boy - José, "O menino Zezinho" - died at the age of seven. Currently this sculpture has been worshiped by popular that there put toys, flowers, ribbons and even clothes, with that "dress" the boy.

Fig. 11 Taken from offerings like water and candy

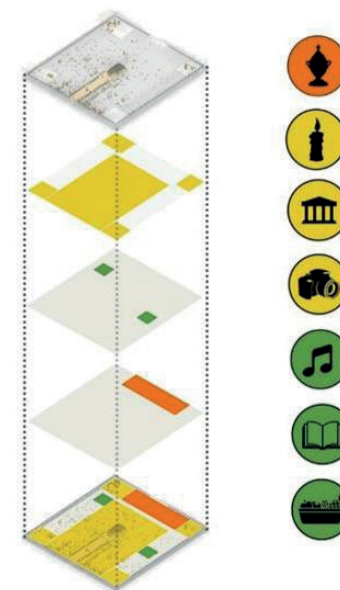
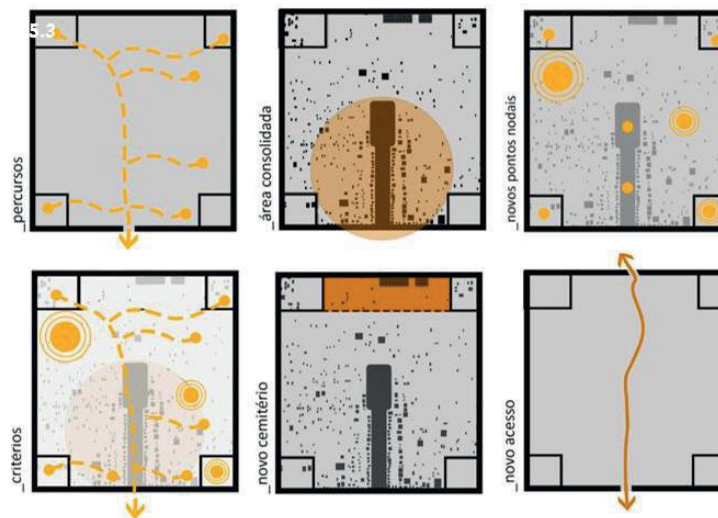


Fig. 12 Tomb of the "boy Cicero" with some deposited offerings

Fig. 13 Graphic scheme of the criteria adopted in the elaboration of meta-project

Considering the frequent rainy season and the intense sunny days of Belem, technologies for the reuse of rain water and solar capitation were integrated into the architectural design.

The incentive to cremation would also be one appropriate solution for the preservation of the physical environment. This is because during its process, the gases produced are treated and do not pollute the air. Besides that, scatter ashes does not offer the risk of contaminating the water table, as it happens with the burial of corpses. Another aspect that counts in favor of cremation is that it does not occupy new lands - in some cities, there are already crowded cemeteries.

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Fig. 14 Aerial view of the inserted meta-project.

Fig. 15 Illustrative perspective of meta-project.

Fig. 16 Illustrative perspective of meta-project.