

ABSTRACT

Attitudes to Death in Trinidad 1800 to 2000- A Case Study of the Roman Catholic and Anglican Cemeteries

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This thesis compares the different reactions to death between the Roman Catholic and Anglican faiths in Trinidad from 1800 to 2000. Death is analyzed from three points of view. Firstly, the physiological changes that accompany death are highlighted. Secondly, the emotional reaction to death is discussed and thirdly, the aesthetic response to death, which focuses on post-death practices and mortuary paraphernalia. To determine the emotional reaction to death, obituaries and memorials from the 19th and 20th centuries were analyzed, in addition to poems and newspaper articles in order to determine the sentiment of the time. The aesthetic reaction to death was determined through field surveys, conducted by the author, which documented the gravestone iconography and mortuary infrastructure in the different cemeteries. This primary data helped to establish trends and disparities in the use of symbols and architectural design in mortuary studies between the Roman Catholic and Anglican denominations. Furthermore, interviews with religious personalities helped to provide information on the evolution of funerals to the 20th century. To compliment the research, previous studies and theoretical approaches to death were discussed, in addition to case studies documenting the mortuary practices of different civilizations/groups. These secondary sources were necessary to compare global and local perspectives of mortuary practices, and further discuss the influence of external and internal factors on funerary rituals.

The information obtained, mainly the primary sources, was represented by tables, charts, graphs and maps. This assisted in formulating conclusions on the responses to death in the Roman Catholic and Anglican faiths. In essence, much of the traditional European cultural traits remain intact in Trinidadian society. However, especially in the case of post-death practices, there is a merging of global and local habits to form a unique version of attitudes to death in Trinidad.

Keywords: Kheera Victoria Daly; Attitudes to Death; Mortuary Paraphernalia; Mortuary Infrastructure; Roman Catholic; Anglican; Cemetery; Trinidad.