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Museums and Zambras in the Sacromonte (Granada, Spain)

The neighborhood of the Sacromonte is one of the touristic icon of the Andalusian city of Granada (Spain). The travelers of the XIX century, as precursors of modern tourism, consolidated the Sacromonte as one of their favorite destinations. One may say that the typical cave-house, the exoticism attributed to its inhabitants (the Sacromonte has historically been uno of the most famous *gitanos'* neighborhood in Europe) and the *zambra*, singular flamenco shows, supposedly originated in the Sacromonte and, according to some historians and musicologists, composed by Morisco and Gitano elements, constitute the main elements of this neighborhood's attractiveness.

The today's tourist experience offer in the neighborhood revolves around on such components of the 'imagined Sacromonte'. It is structured, on the one hand, on the reconstruction of the past, with a foundational role, and, on the other hand, on a living present, as a continuation of the former.

The past of the Sacromonte materializes principally through the museums, dedicated to the reconstruction of the ancient daily and domestic life in the caves, where the historical accuracy often lives room to the rhetorical representation of the identity. Also the present of the Sacromonte is represented in the caves, but now as an experience that combine the artistic Flamenco performance, the 'ethnic category' of the 'Gitano' and, once again, the physical environment par excellence of the Sacromonte, the cave. In this text we will indicate some of these touristic infrastructures.

Museo Etnológico de la Mujer Gitana (Ethnological Museum of the *Gitano* Woman)

web page: <http://www.muieresgitanasromi.org/>

Located in several caves in a municipal land, this museum is managed by the Asociación de Mujeres Gitanas Romí. It represents the first museum of the city exclusively dedicated to the Gitano culture and to the Gitano woman. However, the topic of the Gitanos had been already included in other museums proposals of Granada since the first half of the XX century. In 1948, the then city mayor organized the I Exposición Gitana (1st Gitano Exposition) in which the most part of the materials were related with the Sacromonte. The Sala Gitana (Gitano Hall) of the Museum Casas de los Tiros, dedicated to the local history and culture, located in the center of the city, was also created with these resources.

The Museo Etnológico de la Mujer Gitana was founded in 2006 with the aim of divulging the Gitano culture and history, with special attention on the role of Gitano women.

The museum is installed in several caves, organized in three thematic halls: the Cave of History (that presents the history of the Romani people), the Cave of Arts and Culture (with a more local focus, this cave disposes of different rooms, dedicated to the Sacromonte and the to the flamenco art) and the Romí Cave (dedicated to the Gitano woman).

Museo Cuevas del Sacromonte (Museum of the Caves of the Sacromonte)

web page: <http://www.sacromontegrnada.com/>

This museum comprises a set of caves provided in 1998 by the City Council of Granada to the Asociación Cultural Valparaiso (Valparaiso Cultural Association), that installed and manages the permanente exposition. Formerly, these caves were houses, that abandoned and in state of dilapidation. It is defined as an ethnographic and environmental museum, focused around the cave the its uses through the history: as houses, places of work and stable of animals. It has also a botanic, horticultural and geologic collection, as well as a permanent exposition dedicated to the flamenco in the Sacromonte neighborhood.

Zambra Museo María la Canastera

web page: <http://www.marialacanastera.com/>

The Zambra María la Canastera is located in the Camino del Sacromonte, the main street in the neighborhood. It was opened in 1954 by María Cortés Heredia (La Canastera, ‘the basket maker’) and her husband, José Carmona. In 2010 a statue of María la Canastera was placed in a center boulevard of the city. Some years before a square of the Sacromonte also received the name of Plaza de María la Canastera.

Nowadays, this zambra keeps working under the management of the descendants of María and it is also publicized as a expositions place. Anthony Quinn, Ingrid Bergaman, Claudia Cardinale, Imperator of Argentina, and the Kings of Spain, Belgium and Jordania are remembered among others famous visitors who visited the cave.



Zambra María la Canastera. Source: <http://www.marialacanastera.com/>

Cueva la Rocío – Zambra Gitana

web page: <http://cuevalarocio.es/>

This Zambra opened in 1952 by Rocío Fernández and Andrés Maya. Today their descendants manage it and it is still used as a show-place and restaurant. Ava Gardner, Juan Carlos II the King and the Queen Sofía, Bill Clinton and, recently, Michelle Obama are some of its popular visitors.

Museo de la Zambra Cueva del Curro

This zambra museum is related with the figure of Curro Albaicín, a popular artist (reciter, dancer, singer, choreographer, writer, etc.) native of the Sacromonte, that has been depicted as one of the persons who most has contributed to the safeguard of the *zambras* and the Sacromonte's culture after the torrential rains that forced the major part of the Gitanos families to move out from the neighborhood (Cabrero Palomares, 2009). He wrote several works on the Sacromonte and the Zambra (Albaicín, 1991; 2011), that describe as a real local industry, that contributed not only to the development of musicians, but also to more professionals in the fields of the fashion, hairdressing, handicraft, among others.

Currently, this cave only occasionally offers shows. The intention of its owner is to improve its function as expositions place and progressively convert it in a documentation center on the history of the Sacromonte (see Machin-Autenrieth, 2013).

Debates on authenticity.

The museums and zambras that briefly described above are not the only places and structures for tourists in the Sacromonte neighborhood. There are many more caves with the same functions: Los Tarantos, La Venta del Gallo, La Bulería, La Faraona, and so on. This abundance of leisure venues, visited especially by tourists and located in a relatively reduced area (in the Sacromonte there are less than 500 officially registered inhabitants) has generated debates on their authenticity among local and other authors. Juan Bustos, for example, an official chronicler of the city, described the Sacromonte as a "picturesque and exotic theater" only directed to the touristic market (2001: 89).

We do not have space here to discuss the notion of 'authenticity', but it is important to note that most of the critiques proceed from the literary review and the journalistic opinion. Ethnographic works and anthropological analysis might positively complexify the debate.

References

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