DEFENSIVE ARCHITECTURE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN
XV to XVIII Centuries

Ángel Benigno GONZÁLEZ AVILÉS (Ed.)
DEFENSIVE ARCHITECTURE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN
XV TO XVIII CENTURIES
Vol. VI
DEFENSIVE ARCHITECTURE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN
XV TO XVIII CENTURIES
Vol. VI

Editor
Ángel Benigno González Avilés
Universidad de Alicante. Spain
FORTMED 2017

Colección Congresos UA

Los contenidos de esta publicación han sido evaluados por el Comité Científico que en ella se relaciona y según el procedimiento de la `revisión por pares`.

© editor
Ángel Benigno González Avilés

© de los textos: los autores

www.publicaciones.ua.es/

Imprime:


Depósito legal: A 494-2017

FORTMED – Modern Age Fortifications of the Mediterranean Coast, Alicante, October 26th, 27th, 28th 2017
Cervantes and Shakespeare and their impact on the Conservation of two Mediterranean Fortifications

Rand Eppich, José Luís García Grinda

Abstract

When popular literature, based upon fact, fiction or somewhere in between, prominently features fortifications it can have a dramatic impact on values, significance and thus conservation. Literature exposes people to places they would not otherwise know and encourages attention, visitation and education. This article describes an investigation into the intersection of literature, history and fortifications. It compares and contrasts the authors Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra and William Shakespeare and their master works *The Life and Exploits of the Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote de la Mancha*, 1605 and *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice*, 1603. Both of these masterpieces include the centuries-long conflict between Europe and the Ottoman Empire and fortifications. Cervantes wrote from first-hand experiences and mentions the specific fortifications of la Goleta in Tunis while Shakespeare found inspiration in other sources and only used general place names. Cervantes’ view is from within the conflict while in service to the Spanish Crown while Shakespeare’s view is distant and uses only the Venetian fortifications of Cyprus as a backdrop. Cervantes is widely regarded as the father of the modern novel while Shakespeare is known as the master of theatre. Upon the 400th anniversary of the death of two of literature’s most renowned authors it is fitting to examine one aspect of their literary legacy – fortifications. The objective of this investigation is to understand the long term impact that early literature has had upon the significance of these fortifications and their subsequent conservation.

Keywords: Cervantes, Shakespeare, conservation of fortifications, la Goleta, Othello, Tunisia, Cyprus

1. Introduction

There are many thousands of fortifications located throughout the Mediterranean. They are testaments to the history of humanity and conflict. Many are in poor condition and they, along with their stories, are likely succumb to the passage of time. A few fortifications are significant internationally and deserve attention and conservation due to their unique architectural form, advancements in defensive technology, role in important battles or their association with historic figures. But a very small number of fortifications were made famous through literature. These fortresses were featured in poems, songs, novels or plays that have remained popular and influential. This article will investigate the impact of literature on the conservation of two such fortresses – The small fortress of Santiago on Chikly Island outside of la Goleta and Tunis, Tunisia written about by Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra and Othello’s Tower in Famagusta, Cyprus, tenuously connected with William Shakespeare.
The methodology used to investigate this topic was study of the authors’ works with numerous visits to Cyprus and Tunisia while working toward the conservation of these two fortifications. Other sources included research into contemporary accounts of the same locations, past and current scholarly theories of these masters and their works along with investigations within the fortifications themselves. The objective of this investigation was to begin to understand the long term impacts that early literature had upon the significance of fortifications, visitation and subsequent conservation.

2. Othello’s Tower and La Goleta
2.1. Othello’s Tower

Othello’s Tower (or Citadel) guards the port of Famagusta and was part of the extensive fortifications constructed over many centuries by various city-states that wished to control this key port on the trading and pilgrimage routes east to the Levant. The Venetian period (1489-1571) witnessed the greatest additions and amplifications to the fortifications given the close proximity, impending threat and rapid expansion of the Ottoman Empire. For over 80 years the Venetians enlarged the surrounding city walls creating bastions, counter scarp revetments, palisades, and cavaliers with a deepened fosse (Green, 1915).

One major element of these fortifications was the citadel that protected the entry to the natural port. Originally built in an earlier Lusignan period it consisted of high square towers and walls and a tall corner donjon. Venetian modifications were necessary due to the evolution of cannon warfare (Dreghorn, 2012). They cut the height of the tall square towers, widened the walls, created four squat round towers and enhanced the mole extension that controlled a chain slung across the mouth of the harbor – all encasing the original earlier citadel (Jeffery, 1918). It was this citadel that eventually became known as Othello’s Tower.

Famagusta, being well defended with its walls and citadel, withstood a siege of 11 months eventually surrendering to the Ottomans on August 1, 1571. This, in part, led to a coalition of Mediterranean maritime states including the Holy Roman Empire to form an armada led by Don Juan of Austria to confront the Ottomans. With Don Juan was a young Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra. The two navies met in 1571 off the Gulf of Lepanto in Western Greece and this led to a major naval defeat for the Ottoman fleet and arguably prevented their complete domination of the Mediterranean. Although very ill during the battle Cervantes actively participated and was wounded taking three bullets, one of which cost him the use of his left arm (Konstam, 2003). Much later after the success of Don Quixote he wrote that “he had lost the movement of the left hand for the glory of the right” (Cervantes, 1614).

These events had a profound impact on Europe with the 16th century conflict between the Muslim Ottoman Empire and Christian Europe occupying the thoughts of many European rulers. This included the pious King James I of Scotland and England, a keen patron of the literary arts. It was this setting and the possible sponsorship of the King that could have provided the motivation for Shakespeare to set his play Othello in Cyprus.
Several years after the defeat of the Ottoman fleet at Lepanto, Emperor Selim II, wishing redemption, sent an armada of approximately 300 warships and over 75,000 soldiers to reconquer Tunis. La Goleta, defended by approximately 7000 soldiers, was eventually overwhelmed and fell in August of 1574. The last of the soldiers were surrounded and surrendered from the small fortress on Chikly Island. The conquest of Tunis and la Goleta was the deciding battle which determined that this region of North Africa would be controlled by the Ottomans (Grinda, 2003).

Cervantes also participated in these battles as part of the failed relief effort within the fleet of the very same Don Juan of Austria and witnessed the fall of la Goleta and Santiago de Chikly. The valent defense of the soldiers against overwhelming odds made a deep impact on him and these events were to feature in his literary masterpiece Don Quixote in the narrative of the Captive’s Soliloquy (Cervantes, 1605; Garcés, 2002).

Both Cervantes and Shakespeare were masters at blending fact with fiction. Cervantes was able to enhance his fiction while imbedding his own experiences of places, events and important figures in an autobiographical form in order to transport the reader into the tale. While Shakespeare created a fictitious tragedy made real by recent well-known world events.
Salman Rushdie wrote: “Shakespeare takes people on fantasies while Cervantes sets people in the real world with his fantasy characters. Cervantes and Shakespeare both focus on the discrepancy between reality and imagination. They both give the conflict between ideals and reality center stage” (Rushdie, 2006).

Cervantes wrote from his experiences and mentions in detail specific fortifications such as la Goleta, the successful trench warfare of the Ottomans and key individuals while lamenting the loss of the soldiers’ lives. Shakespeare found inspiration in secondary sources and well published events with no mention of specific place names choosing to delve instead into the more interpersonal relationships and psychology of his protagonists. Both authors prominently feature the ever present danger and threat of the Ottoman Empire. Cervantes’ view is to highlight the plight and gallantry of the soldiers within the fortifications while Shakespeare’s approach is to use the conflict to set the stage and control his characters with the fortifications as backdrop.

Cervantes dedicates two sonnets to the fall of la Goleta at the beginning of Chapter 1, 40 in Don Quijote: la historia del cautivo (the captive’s tale). The fictitious Pedro de Aguilar is given authorship of this dedication and eulogy to the soldiers that died defending la Goleta. “Death in these scenes is stressed in the narrative and the sonnets praise the valor of the soldiers who gave their lives for God and king in Tunis.” (Induráin, 2007). “Interrupting the Captive’s soliloquy, the allusion to soldier-poet Pedro de Aguilar leads to the intrusion of another voice that effects a break in the narrative sequence”. This break represents the break between reality and fiction (Garcés, 2002). Garcés, in his analysis of la historia del cautivo has noted that the poems mourn the fall of Tunis and the fortress of la Goleta and blend the border between autobiography and fiction: “a frontier highlighted by a structural break in the narrative.” (Garcés, 2002).

In contrast, Shakespeare makes no mention at all of Famagusta but locates the play somewhere in a “Seaport in Cyprus” yet frequently mentions a castle and citadel (Shakespeare, 1604). The citadel is merely a scene and method for Shakespeare to constantly remind the audience of recent history and greater threat looming over his characters. The fortification in Famagusta only later become known as Othello’s Citadel in the late 19th and early 20th century when visitors sought to locate a place that Shakespeare could have written about (Eppich, 2014).

Shakespeare mostly ignores history, only mentioning it because he needed an external threat to move his characters of Othello away from Venice. But once they were in Cyprus, there is less of a need for historic events and the story focuses more on the inter-personal themes of love, betrayal, supposed infidelity, race relations, murder and suicide. “The Spanish writer has not Shakespeare’s depth of searching reflection and splendor of contrapuntal diction but neither has the Englishman Cervantes’s wealth of varied first-hand experience, his magnanimous charity and inimitable serenity. The English play is richer in psychological subtlety, the Spanish story in texture and in breath of its effects”. (Kelly, 1916). Historian George Meredith wrote of Cervantes “his characters have in them more 'blood-life' than can be found out of Shakespeare” (Meredith, 1915). While Shakespeare’s characters are possessive, jealous, violent and often afflicted with melancholy.

“The methods of Cervantes and Shakespeare often differed, but their interest in the manifestations of human nature connects them. They were both at work on very similar problems at about the same time” (Kelly, 1916). Figure 5 Performance of Shakespeare’s Othello in Othello’s Tower after conservation by UNDP PFF (UNDP PFF, 2015)
4. Conclusions

“There is a fascination about places associated with authors that has often prompted their readers to become pilgrims: to visit a birthplace or settings to see with fresh eyes places that inspired poems or books, to pay homage at a grave side or public memorial.” (Eagle and Carnell, 1977). The immortalization and glorification of places through literary works enthrall visitors and enriches such places. (Pocock, 1987, James, 2013). James continues: “Tourists are drawn to literary places that form the settings of their novels or works of literature. Works of literature may be set in locations that are known to the writers and through their dexterity, make it merge with the imagined locations, thus manifesting special significance and existence of its own” (James, 2013).

This is true of la Goleta including the Fortress of Santiago de Chikly and Othello’s Tower. They have become sites of pilgrimage for admirers of the works of Cervantes and Shakespeare as well as those interested in fortifications. The blending of fact and fiction, merging of real and the imagined that gives such places even greater meaning (Herbert, 2001). In the case of Cervantes the fortifications are real in contrast with Shakespeare where early visitors needed to search for a place that could be recognized Othello’s Tower.

Real or imagined the connection with both famous authors and their works gives these fortification an additional set of values that justifies special consideration. Santiago de Chikly and Othello’s Tower have recently received this attention. Fort Santiago Chikly was declared a national cultural heritage monument in 1993 and is managed by the Ministry of Culture of Tunisia. The small fort was restored as part of a Tunisian - Spanish cooperation project involving the National Heritage Institute, The Polytechnic University of Madrid and Polytechnic University of Valencia. Archaeological excavations took place in 1994 and 1995 followed later by lengthy project of consolidation and conservation (Grinda, 2012).

Othello’s Tower received significant excavation and conservation attention in the 1950s while Cyprus was still a British colony. Following Cypriot independence the civil unrest and complete division of the island in 1974 led to isolation, insufficient resources and attention for Othello’s Tower. Recently a four year project funded by the European Union was begun in 2012 to conserve the fortress. The project was initiated by the United Nations Development Programme and the Technical Committee for Cultural Heritage - a committee made up of concerned leaders from both communities of Cyprus. Othello’s Tower was reopened in the summer of 2015 with a performance of Othello by a bi-communal troupe; the first such performance since 1964. This project has become the catalysis for continuing conservation works on the extensive fortifications of Famagusta including portions of the walls near the port, Martinengo Bastion and the Ravelin / Land Gate (Eppich, 2014).

Both fortifications are interesting, historically significant and located in beautiful settings. However there are many other such fortifications scattered throughout the Mediterranean that have similar attributes. Assuredly it is the connections with two famous authors that strongly influenced decisions to begin conservation. The literarily connection tipped the balance and drew attention to the fortifications and their state of conservation. Public and professional attention leading up to these projects prominently featured the connections to Cervantes and Shakespeare (Kambas, 2014; Viñals, 2014). These projects have set an example that could inspire other known or unknown literary connections with fortifications in the Mediterranean. Connections that once discovered could be reinforced and used to promote conservation.

The cases of Cervantes and Shakespeare are the exceptions. This interconnection between literature, tourism, and the conservation of fortifications has not been thoroughly studied. More in depth research is necessary to understand the role and significance that literature endows to fortifications and their
conservation, otherwise the connection may be undervalued and forgotten. The literature can be used to enhance the values of fortifications while the fortifications can further enrich knowledge of literature. Recognizing that they work together can ensure that these important places can be understood at a deeper level.

“Places acquire meanings from imaginative worlds, but these meanings and the emotions they engender are real to the beholder. Stories excite interest, feelings and involvement, and landscapes can be related to their narratives. Literary places can be “created” with these fictional worlds in mind and tourists may be less concerned with distinctions between fiction and reality than with what stirs their imaginations and raises their interests” (Herbert, 2001).

Legacies

Cervantes is widely regarded as the father of the modern novel while Shakespeare is known as the master of theatre. As Shakespeare wrote plays it was an easy transition to the modern media of movies and television thus into a heightened consciousness within today’s popular culture. Although it remains popular and numerous films have been made of Don Quixote its complexity and nuances are harder to transfer to new media and it is more appreciated in its written form. Shakespeare was also in a steady state of production constantly and consistently producing excellent works while Cervantes was acting out his own life dramas. In addition there still exists a strong connection between the ex-colony of Cyprus and the United Kingdom with existing military bases and as a vacation destination with its warm beaches. Even with the current division of Cyprus more people visit the imagined site of Othello’s Tower than the very real fortress of la Goleta or Santiago de Chikly. The tenuous connection between Spain and Tunisia was lost when the fortress fell in the 16th century. The island of Chikly is also much more remote with only a single long causeway connecting it to the mainland and it is currently protected as a nature reserve. There are sustainable tourism plans in development (Principe, 2013).

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), the Embassy of Spain in Tunis as well as the Government of Tunisia for their work in conserving the fortress of Santiago de Chikly. For their work on conserving and opening Othello’s Tower the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) - Partnership for the Future, European Union and the Technical Committee for Cultural Heritage, Cyprus must be congratulated and thanked for their continuing efforts to conserve and open Othello’s Tower and other fortifications.

References


Cervantes, Miguel Saavedra de, (1603), The Life and Exploits of the Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote de la Mancha, The Project Gutenberg Etext (translated by John Ormsby)

Cervantes, Miguel Saavedra de, (1614), Journey to Parnassus


Garcés, María Antonia, (2002), Cervantes in Algiers A Captive’s Tale, Vanderbilt University Press, Nashville, USA

Green, A.O., (1915): Cyprus, a Short History to 1915, Royal Colonial Institute, Cyprus (1896-1915)


Grinda, José Luis García, (2012), El Centro de estudios del Lago de Túnez, Una Experiencia de Cooperación en Materia de Patrimonio, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid. Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura


Hughes, G., (1992), Tourism and the geographical imagination, Leisure Studies 11-42

James, Benny, (2013) Role of Literature in the Sustainability of Tourism


Johnsen-Neshati, K., (2005): A Cultural Context for Othello, Shakespeare Studies, George Mason University, Shakespeare Studies

Induráin, Carlos Mata, (2007), Two Sonnets about the Loss of La Goleta (Don Quixote, 1, 40), in the Context of the Tale of the Captive Captain' University of Navarre Centro Virtual Cervantes


Meredith, George (1915) Proceedings of the British Academy, Vol. 7 page 314


Príncipe, Alberto Darias, (2013), El Castillo de la Isla de Chikly: Una Propuesta para el Turismo Cultural Sostenible, Universidad de La Laguna


Shakespeare, William, (1604): The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice, Act II Scene I, A Sea-port Town in Cyprus

Viñals, María José; Martínez-Sanchis, Imma (2015) Proceso de puesta en valor para la reutilización del Fuerte de Santiago (Isla de Chikly, Túnez) Universitat Politècnica de València, València, España, Defensive Architecture of the Mediterranean XV to XVIII centuries Vol 1

Viñals, M.J.; Martínez, I; Abdennadher, A; Teruel, L. (2014) A recreational carrying capacity assessment of the 16th century Spanish Fort of Santiago on the Island of Chikly, Tunisia, University Politécnica de València, Spain, Université de Carthage, Tunísia, Defensive Sites II Heritage and the Future WIT Press Editors C.A. Bebbia & C. Clark