

Tayabas City Colonial Era Cemeteries: A Local Cultural Heritage Site

Arvin B. YPIL

Southern Luzon State University

arvinypil@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/my-orcid?orcid=0009-0003-0042-1569>

ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study is to revisit the backgrounds and problems of the colonial-era cemeteries in Tayabas, Quezon, and analyze their potential as local cultural heritage sites. Data for this study was collected through walk surveys and documentation of the intended heritage sites. The findings of the study indicated the rich historical background as well as the existence of potential heritage structures in the cemeteries. Finally, it is deemed that these cemeteries and their adjoining colonial-era burial structures must also be regarded as cultural heritage sites alongside churches, bridges, and buildings and called for preserving these cemeteries for future generations to see for themselves.

Keywords: Heritage, colonial, cemetery.

Introduction

Try to ask a typical Filipino student to give examples of the different built and immovable historical and heritage sites in the Philippines; chances are high that they would proudly give places like the Rizal Park, Intramuros, and Vigan, both with their centuries-old churches and houses, and even seats of government like the Malacañan Palace as a response to your question. Some would even give an example of their local churches built during the Spanish era, which is technically correct. These are the most common answers to the question, while places like bridges, streets, dams, fortresses, and lighthouses are seldom given as examples. The common denominator of these included that they belong to the realm of the living and are used by the living. If people sometimes neglect these structures as a part of their history and heritage, what more for those places intended as the final resting places of the dead? These are the cemeteries and burial grounds. Though people may flock to cemeteries annually to visit their departed loved ones as an observation of All Soul's Day, cemeteries are almost forgotten for the rest of the year. They are left to be ill-maintained, with threats of vandalism and thievery.

This is a stark contrast to the other colonial structures in the Philippines. In line with the idea of UNESCO of cultural heritage as the legacy of physical artifacts and intangible attributes of a group or society that are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present, and bestowed for the benefit of future generations and the question of the inclusion and promotion of cemeteries as a part of the nation's roster of heritage sites, this research seeks to contribute to the growing list of studies on death, burial practices, and dark heritage. To be more specific, this research will cover the two different cemeteries in Tayabas, Quezon, that were built during the latter part of the Spanish colonial rule and early years of the American occupation: the Tayabas Roman Catholic Cemetery and the Old Municipal Cemetery. Furthermore, this research is focused on the discussion of the cemetery's role as a local heritage site and of their historical backgrounds and exploration of their physical location and layout as well as the notable burial structures in the area and the evaluation of their status and problems. The first part of the research reviews the different concepts of cultural heritage and functions of cemeteries from different cemetery-related research. The works and research are done on the Philippine colonial period cemeteries and the historical background of Tayabas, Quezon, during the Spanish colonial era.

The second part comprises the walk survey findings, archival research, and photo documentation. The compiled data was used to answer the research questions: What are the historical backgrounds of these colonial cemeteries? How were the cemeteries located, positioned, and laid out? Are there notable burial structures in the area? Finally, what is the current status of these colonial cemeteries? Answers to these served as the researcher's guide in recommending measures for the local cultural heritage conservation of the municipality of Tayabas.

Cultural Heritage

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), as agreed during the World Heritage Convention, adopted in 1972, defined cultural heritage as "the legacy of physical artifacts and intangible attributes of a group or society that are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present and bestowed for the benefit of future generations." Cultural heritage can either be tangible, which includes buildings and historic places, monuments, artifacts, etc., which are considered worthy of preservation for the future" and intangible heritage which includes "living expressions and the traditions that countless groups and communities worldwide have inherited from their ancestors and transmit to their

descendants, in most cases orally."¹ Based on these declarations, the Philippines, in order to protect its heritage, also enacted the Republic Act no. 10066, s. 2009, otherwise known as the National Cultural Heritage Act no. 2009. In the setting of the Philippines, Article II, Section 3, Paragraph L of the Republic Act no. 10066, s. 2009 defined cultural heritage as the "totality of cultural property preserved and developed through time and passed on to posterity." The cultural heritage would then be considered as cultural property of the Philippines, and it is stated that these must be protected and preserved as cultural properties. Article III, Section 4 of the said Act also categorized the cultural properties of the country as follows: (a) National cultural treasures, (b) Important cultural property, (c) World heritage sites, (d) National historical shrine, (e) National historical monument, and (f) National historical landmark.²

To protect cultural property against possible abuses such as demolition, unauthorized modifications, and even exportations, Section 5 also enumerated cultural properties that are considered Important Cultural Property. These are the following: (a) Works by a Manlilikha ng Bayan, (b) Works by a National Artist, (c) Archaeological and traditional ethnographic materials, (d) Works of national heroes, (e) Marked structures, (f) Structures dating at least fifty (50) years old, and (g) Archival material/document dating at least fifty (50) years old.

There are six values of heritage, which are spiritual, social, historical, symbolic, aesthetic, and authenticity, and all of these values benefit the individual and their community, which people can appreciate. These cultural heritage values play an essential role in providing people living in a society with their sense of identity: the sense of who they are, the significance and meaning of their lives, and where they came from.³

Cemeteries and their functions

A cemetery, in the broadest definition, is a place where dead people's bodies or their [ashes](#) are buried.⁴ It is where the remains of people, either intact or cremated, are interred in a grave, mausoleum, niche, or other edifice for the dead, either below or above ground. How the dead are buried reflects the

¹ UNESCO, "Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage," World Heritage Convention, accessed on October 4, 2021, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/>.

² Official Gazette, "Republic Act no. 10066," Gov.PH, accessed on October 4, 2021, <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2010/03/26/republic-act-no-10066/>.

³ David Throsby, *Economics and Culture* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 75.

⁴ "Cemetery," Collins Dictionary, Accessed on October 4, 2021, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/cemetery>.

geography, religious beliefs, social attitudes, and aesthetic and sanitary considerations of the community in which they are located.⁵

However, as the list of studies on burial practices and cemeteries increased as time passed by, so did the listing of other cemetery functions. Cemeteries also have other functions besides the disposal of human remains, for they also connect the world of the living with the world of life after death. For mourners, cemeteries serve as a unique and sacred place of personal, emotional, and spiritual acclamation.⁶ Aside from being a place of emotional attachment for mourners, cemeteries can also be reservoirs of history.⁷ It can also serve as an archive of tombstones, which can be used as secondary sources if paper sources in the traditional archives cease to exist.⁸

Cemeteries, particularly the oldest ones, can be used to study history, particularly the history of the specific community.⁹ People visit cemeteries to be reminded of their significant past, show their interest in or respect for the heroic, famous, or notorious dead buried in the cemeteries, and demonstrate their allegiance to an idea or value espoused by the dead.¹⁰ Cemeteries as historical sites are also being promoted since they serve as mute witnesses to historical events.¹¹ Some cemeteries also serve as burial places of notable historical figures, such as the Pere Lachaise Cemetery in Paris, France; hence, they draw a constant flow of visitors.¹²

These are the different functions of cemeteries and their role in history as potential training grounds for conducting research within the community. Other potential uses of cemeteries include being used as an open space and recreation area for maintaining social order, improving sanitation, and even

⁵ Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopedia. "cemetery." Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed on October 4, 2021 <https://www.britannica.com/topic/cemetery>.

⁶ Doris Francis, Leonie Kellaher, and Georgina Neophytou, *The Secret Cemetery* (London: Taylor and Francis Group, 2005), 3, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003103202>

⁷ Harold Mytum, *Mortuary Monuments and Burial Grounds of the Historic Period* (New York City: Springer New York, 2004), 137, <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-1-4419-9038-9>.

⁸ Andrea Chaddock, "Cemeteries as Archives: Who Says Dead Men Tells No Tales?" (Master's Thesis., Western Washington University, 2011), p. 66. WWU Graduate School Collection

⁹ Savannah L. Darr, "Discovering Domestic Cemeteries: History, Preservation and Education" (Master's Thesis, University of Louisville, 2013), p. 39. ThinkIR: University of Louisville's Institutional Repository

¹⁰ Michelle S. Eusebio, *Colonial Period Cemeteries as Filipino Heritage* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2016), 169.

¹¹ Queenie Ann J. Palafox, "Cemeteries of Memories: Where the Journey to Eternity Begins," National Historical Commission of the Philippines, accessed on December 4, 2021, <https://nhcp.gov.ph/cemeteriesof-memories-where-journey-to-eternity-begins/>.

¹² Graeme Aplin, *Heritage: Identification, Conservation and Management*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 48, <https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/27071>.

developing burial practices.¹³ Finally, and for a more scientific note, cemeteries can also be used to learn about the nature and quality of materials used for coffins, tombstones or markers, and burial structures, particularly the physical composition of the stones used to create them.¹⁴

Cemeteries as Cultural Heritage Sites

Cemeteries are sites of personal consciousness and repositories of group identity and collective memory. The designs of the monuments or tombstones and their richness of symbolism reflect the beliefs in the afterlife of a society.¹⁵ Some cemeteries, like the mountaintop cemeteries of West Virginia, that have been continuously used for generations, also reflect the local community's cultural background and burial practices.¹⁶ There is a growing awareness of the need to preserve the heritage values of these unique cultural landscapes.¹⁷

Some cemeteries have already been recognized as historic sites in the Philippines and have had their historical markers issued by the National Historical Commission of the Philippines. Under the Republic Act no. 10066, s. In 2009, cemeteries included in structures at least 50 years old were presumed cultural properties, hence the need to be protected.¹⁸ The protection is rooted in the interpretation that older burial grounds used for generations are of the community's history and have collective significance. Though cemeteries have their use value, problems also arise in their setting. These include the effects of urbanization on burial practices in different parts of the world.¹⁹ An example is the case of the Manila North Cemetery, which has become overcrowded and now only has a few spaces for new burials. Another problem is the residential use of some families of three different cemeteries in Cebu City.²⁰

¹³ Chen V. Ramos and Jenefy Sarte. "Ang Sementeryo ng La Loma Bilang Espasyong Pandigma, Pansanitasyon at Recreational Park, 1899 – 1945." *TALA: An Online Journal of History* 5 no. 2, (December 2022): 28, <http://talakasaysayan.org/index.php/talakasaysayan/article/view/119>

¹⁴ Hirokazu Kato, Anthony Reedman, Yoshihiko Shimazaki, Toshihiro Uchida, Nguyen Thi Minh Ngoc and Adichat Surinkum, eds., *Stone Heritage of East and Southeast Asia* (Tsukuba: Geological Survey of Japan, 2016), 177. http://www.ccop.or.th/download/pub/ccop_stone_book_low_res.pdf

¹⁵ Alison Clarke, "Heavenly Visions: Otago Colonists' Concepts of the Afterlife," *Journal of Religious History* Volume 30 no. 1, (March 2006): 21, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9809.2006.00385.x>

¹⁶ Elizabeth A. East and John N. Maples, "Destroying Mountains, Destroying Cemeteries: Historic Mountain Cemeteries in the Coalfields of Boone, Kanawha, and Raleigh Counties, West Virginia," *Journal of Appalachian Studies* 19, no. 1/2, (Spring/Fall 2013): 7–26, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42635924>.

¹⁷ Richard V. Francaviglia, "The Cemetery as an Evolving Cultural Landscape," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* Vol. 61, no. 3 (1971): <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2569228>

¹⁸ Official Gazette, "Republic Act no. 10066."

¹⁹ Matthew Au. "Housing the Dead: A Lens Through Local Densification Patterns," *Room One Thousand* Vol. 4, no 4, 2016: 3, <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/10g1v3rz>.

²⁰ Joyce V. Lapatha, Zyra Marie A. Largo, Fe Laurice A. Lawas, Abigail F. Malagar, James Louies B. Un, Reynaldo B. Inocian and Rebecca Leslie J. Cabras, "Living with the Dead: A Qualitative Study on the

Methods

This study employed the qualitative method and the narrative-descriptive form of writing to describe the setting of the cemeteries and give further details of the research. The research focus was the two significant cemeteries in Tayabas, Quezon, that were established during the Spanish and American colonial era: the Tayabas Roman Catholic Cemetery, established in 1887, and the Old Municipal Cemetery, which was first activated in 1911. Both cemeteries are located in Barangay Baguio, Tayabas City.

Data and observations for this study were gathered through walking surveys/walk tours, archival research, and photo documentation. Walking surveys are systematic observations made on foot. For this study, the walking survey was done in the second week of December 2021 without any accompaniment. The cemeteries visited were the Tayabas Roman Catholic Cemetery and the Old Municipal Cemetery. Follow-up walking surveys were also done the following week, revisiting the previous ones and the new Municipal Cemetery. Archival research was done with the assistance of the Parish Pastoral Office of the Minor Basilica of Saint Michael the Archangel, which owns and administers the Roman Catholic Cemetery. The office provided the researcher with burial records, cemetery layouts, and plans for the cemeteries. Meanwhile, the Officer-in-Charge and staff of the Municipal Cemetery provided the researcher with the latest Accomplishment Report for the Fiscal Year 2020, which contains rich information regarding the history and status of the Old Municipal Cemetery. The researcher also did photo documentation to assess the status of the cemeteries.

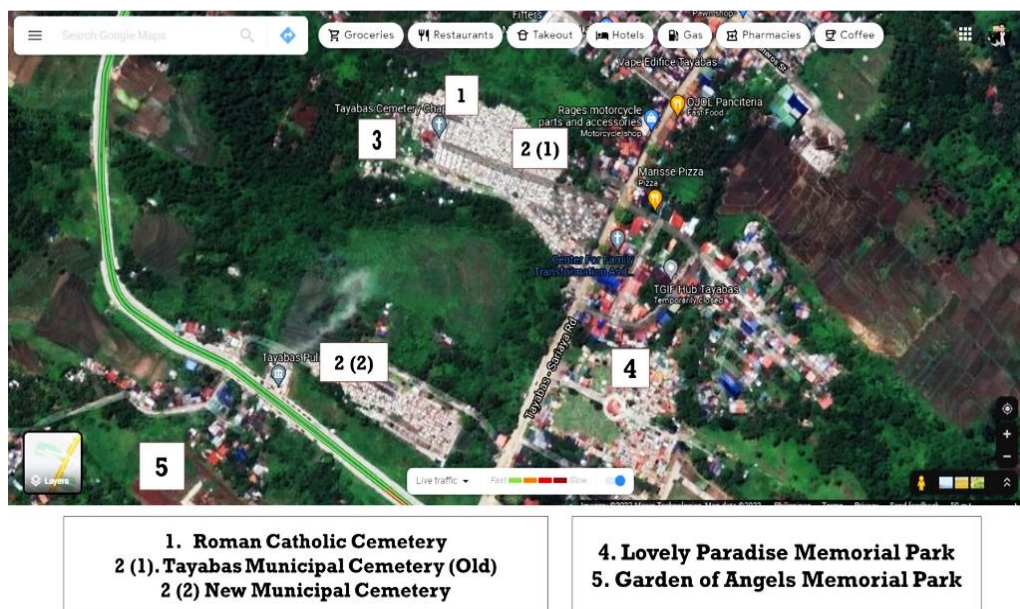
Results and Discussion

This part discussed the findings and results from the walk surveys, archives, and documentation of the two colonial-era cemeteries in Tayabas, Quezon. Photographs are provided to simplify the discussion and better illustrate the cemeteries and their location, physical layout, and setting.

Cemeteries in Tayabas, Quezon

At present, Tayabas City has eight mortuary establishments within its territory:

Figure 1: Site map of cemeteries in Brgy. Baguio, Tayabas City



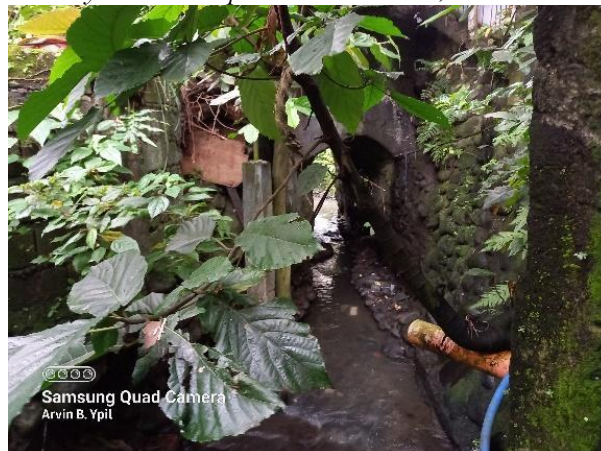
The cemeteries are still in use today, though some are in limited use as of the time of this writing. Most of these cemeteries are located in Barangay Baguio, at the boundary of the so-called Munting Bayan located at the southwest flank of the city proper. They are also located along the Tayabas-Sariaya Road. The establishment of these cemeteries in the same barangay has caused concerns among the locals because of the belief that the monetary values of their properties might depreciate because of the presence of cemeteries in their area and as well as the presence of decaying remains, which they believe would bring bad luck to their lives.²¹ Meanwhile, the locale of this study, the Roman Catholic Cemetery and the Old Municipal Cemetery, are located in the same barangay lot and next to each other, separated only by fences. They are also flanked by river tributaries in the east and west. (see Figures 2 and 3).

²¹ E. Hallam and J. Hockey. *Death, Memory, and Material Culture*. (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2001.

Figure 2. Bolain Creek. Photo taken by Arvin B. Ypil on December 15, 2021



Figure 3. An unnamed creek on the eastern side. Photo taken by Arvin B. Ypil on December 15, 2021



The Tayabas Roman Catholic Cemetery

I. Background

The Tayabas Roman Catholic Cemetery was established by the local parish in 1887. Its former name, Cemeteries para los Indios, suggests its purpose as the burial grounds for the locals, or Indios, who converted to Roman Catholicism.

The Cemetery was also established because of the need to expand the camera's burial grounds as there was an increase in the number of deaths caused by disease outbreaks such as typhoid, diphtheria, and smallpox. This was also in compliance with the issuance of a Royal Ordinance dated March 27, 1789.²² This decree mandated the erection of cemeteries in the outskirts of Philippine towns.²³ What made matters worse was that there were no other acceptable burial means at that time because of church regulations. Corpse disposal methods such as cremation were forbidden at that time, particularly in the stronghold Spanish settlements like Tayabas. Before the Cementerio para los Indios was established in 1887, an earlier burial ground, the Santuario de las Almas, located in Barangay Lita in the southern area of the city proper heading to Lucena City, was already established. Santuario de las Almas, established earlier than the Cementerio, was said to be the burial grounds allocated to the town's elites, including the peninsulares, insulares, and church officials.

²² J.S. Cornelio, C. Delos Santos, L. Mau, B. Padrique, R. Ng. and C.A. Vitangcol. *Religious Rituals in Tayabas*, (Ateneo Cultural Laboratory, Unpublished manuscript, 2009) 5.

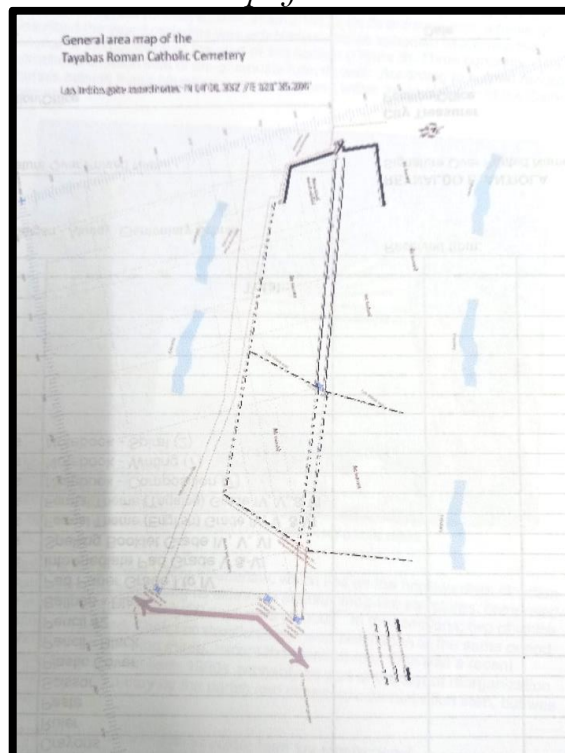
²³ Michelangelo E. Dakudao, "The Development of Cemeteries in Manila Before 1941." *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society* 20, No. 2/3 (June/September 1992): 133–150, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/29792084>.

However, as far as the church records show, there is no concrete proof to prove this claim because most of the church burial records dating from the 1860s until the 1940s were among the collateral damages when the Allied Forces conducted an aerial bombardment of the población area of Tayabas during the final days of the Second World War.²⁴ Furthermore, only those baptized as Roman Catholics have the right to be buried in this Cemetery.

II. Location and Layout

The Tayabas Roman Catholic Cemetery was located at the innermost part of the site's occupied land (see Figure 1). To mark the Catholic Cemetery's border with the Old Municipal Cemetery, it was enclosed in a wall with posts made from adobe blocks. An entrance arch, positioned directly in front of the gateway, was also located along the gateway (Figure 5). A metal grill was inscribed on this entrance arch with the year Los Indios, a Spanish quotation, and three concrete structures at each side of the arch form the Cemetery's wall.

Figure 4. *General Area Map of the Roman Catholic Cemetery.*²⁵



²⁴ Raymundo Andres V. Palad, *Bayan ng Tayabas: Kasaysayan at Kalinangan (1575-1985)* (Tayabas City: RJP Tayabas Books and Souvenirs, 2016) 10.

²⁵ Anna Maria Theresa P. Labrador and Erika Robis, (National Museum of the Philippines, Unpublished manuscript, 2010). pp. 1–2.

Figure 5. Entrance Arch. Photo taken by Arvin B. Ypil on October 31, 2021.



Directly in front of the entrance arch, a structure called by the locals as "paiyakan" (See Figure 16) was once located. From the entrance arch is a long pathway leading to the Mortuary Chapel, or capilla, located at the end of the pathway and set against Mount Banahaw's view. Formed along the sides of the Capilla is a pair of angular wing-like structures called loculi, composed of at least four levels of at least 20 rows for burial spaces. Below the large, apartment-style loculi are more minor, individual niches in the shape of shoeboxes. These niches were constructed and added to the Cemetery in the 1970s. They are symmetrically aligned on both sides and are set on concrete bases. Except for these, the graves in the rest of the Roman Catholic Cemetery are presumably older and may have been the area of the original burials before the 1940s. Located along both sides of the central pathway are rows of smaller-loculus compared to those constructed along the sides of the Capilla. These smaller loculi are intended for secondary burials.

Another thing noted in this Cemetery is the absence of a uniform orientation of the burials. This means that the tombs are oriented with the heads of the corpses facing different directions, unlike other cemeteries with a uniform orientation of corpses, such as the Libingan ng mga Bayani. At present, there is no concrete explanation for this phenomenon.

III. Burial Structures, Design, and Prominent Burials

This part discusses the different features of the Tayabas Roman Catholic Cemetery, the designs of these features, and a brief mention of the prominent individual buried on its premises.

Figure 10. *Façade of the mortuary chapel or capilla. Photo taken by Arvin B. Ypil on October 7, 2021.*



1. Mortuary Chapel or Capilla

At the start of the 19th century, it became a standard practice to build cemeteries away from the town's centers and churches in compliance with the Royal Decree of March 27, 1789, that ordered the erection of cemeteries in the outskirts of Philippine towns. Funerary chapels were then built and attached to the separated cemeteries, acting as smaller versions of churches at the Pueblo's center.²⁶ The construction of these chapels also served to provide sanctity to the cemetery grounds since some townspeople may seek symbols related to churches and religion within the Cemetery. The same was observed in Tayabas, Quezon when the church authorities established a new cemetery outside the población area.²⁷ A funerary chapel, or capilla, was also built in the northwestern direction of the Cemetery, with a view of Mount Banahaw in its background. The Cemetery's capilla was made of adobe, granite, and volcanic stones, the most common materials used during the

²⁶ Michaelangelo E. Dakudao, "The Development of Cemeteries in Manila Before 1941," *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society*, 11 Vol. 20, No. 2/3 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/29792084>

²⁷ Kristine Fitzpatrick, "Religion and Spanish Colonialism in the Philippines" (Undergraduate Thesis, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, 2013) 25, <https://minds.wisconsin.edu/handle/1793/66613>

Spanish era.²⁸ One can see on its façade the color differences caused by the stones used for its construction. The Capilla also has twin towers on its sides, and on top of these towers are crosses made of metal, though, during the site visit, the researcher failed to photograph these because of their high placement. Within the capilla, the remains of Rev. Fr. Amado Alandy, who served as Tayabas' parish priest from 1899 to 1901, were buried.²⁹

Fr. Alandy's grave was marked by a marble slab embedded on the capital's floor that Oriol crafted. This marble marker is at the center of the capilla's floor, and its inscriptions can be read by facing the altar, which greets visitors upon entering the capilla. Mass masses are celebrated in the Capilla during All Souls' Day, though these have not been held for two consecutive years because of COVID-19 restrictions.

Figure 11. *Marble grave marker of Fr. Amado Alandy. Photo taken by Arvin B. Ypil on October 7, 2021.*



2. Apartment-style Loculus

This loculus is constructed along the Capilla's sides and shaped like an angular, wing-like formation composed of four levels of at least 20 rows of

²⁸ Kato eds. et al., *Stone Heritage of East and Southeast Asia*, 177.

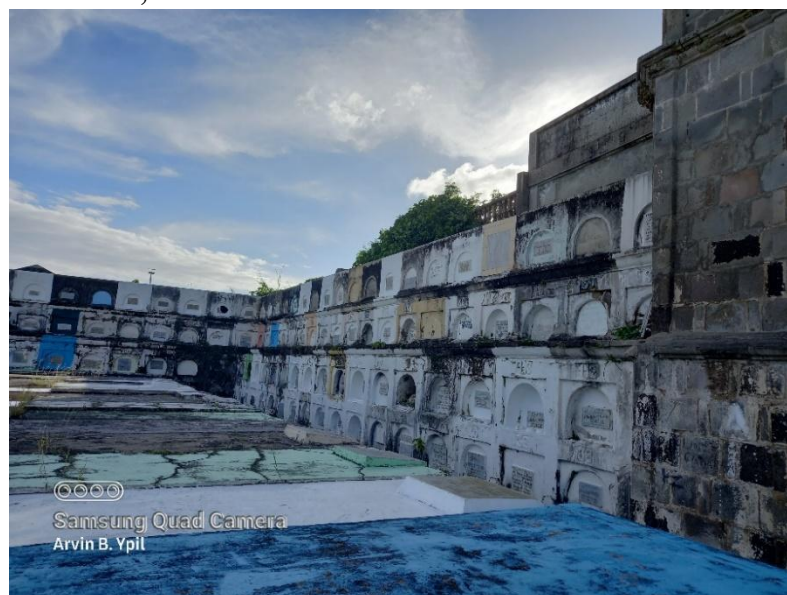
²⁹ Raymundo Andres V. Palad, *Bayan ng Tayabas: Kasaysayan at Kalinangan (1575-1985)* (Tayabas City: RJP Tayabas Books and Souvenirs, 2016), 10.

individual loculi on both sides. The construction of this structure may have been done at the same period when the chapel was constructed. This assumption is strengthened by the account of Juan Alvarez Guerra, who described the cemetery setup as that "in one of the sides of the cemetery stands a spacious and solid chapel, within which a short period, funeral shelves will be installed -an invention of some poor human beings who believe that such elevated boxes made of bricks, three tiers above the floor is a better bed to lie for the eternal sleep rather than a hole in the earth."³⁰

Figure 11. *The apartment-style loculus on each side of the capilla. Photo taken by Arvin B. Ypil on October 5, 2021.*



Figure 12. *A close-up look of the apartment-style loculus. Photo taken by Arvin B. Ypil on December 15, 2021*



³⁰ Juan Alvarez Guerra, *From Manila to Tayabas* (Manila: National Historical Institute, 2009), 115.

It is worth noting, however, that Guerra only mentioned three levels of loculus on each side when he visited the Cemetery in the 1880s, but nowadays, there are four layers. The caretakers of the Cemetery explained that the fourth and topmost layer was the newest addition to the structure and was added in the 1970s to accommodate new burials. Another feature of the loculus is its holes that are shaped like arches (see Figure 13), similar to those found in the Cementerio General de Paco, now known as Paco Park.³¹ Above those arch-shaped holes are the engraved numbers of the individual niches carved from the adobe stone used to construct the loculus.

Figure 13. *The holes of the loculus are shaped like arches. Photo taken by Arvin B. Ypil on December 15, 2021*



3. Smaller, Secondary Burial Loculus

Constructed along the central pathway are three-section, four-level structures of smaller loculi. Each hole is approximately the same size as a shoebox. This structure was the latest addition from the 1970s, and its purpose was to accommodate human remains, probably skeletons that were exhumed from either the larger apartment-style loculus or the tombs at the back of the loculus once the lease for these niches expires.

³¹ Dakudao, "The Development of Cemeteries in Manila Before 1941," *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society*, 11 Vol. 20, No. 2/3 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/29792084>, 141

Figure 14. *Smaller loculus along the pathway. Photo taken by Arvin B. Ypil on December 15, 2021*



4. Other above-ground burial structures

The Catholic Cemetery also has tombs that are enclosed within the loculi. These individual tombs are formed on the left side of the Capilla, are symmetrically aligned, form at least six quadrants, and are set on concrete bases. The shape of the holes for these tombs is also identical to those from the apartment-style loculus. However, they are more extensive.

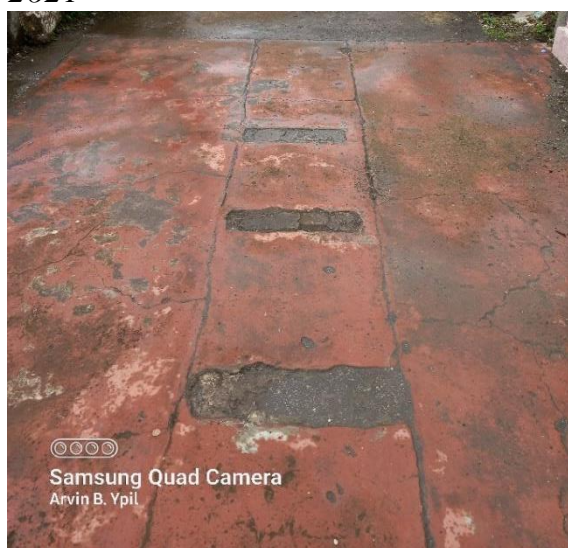
Figure 15. *Above-ground tombs Photo taken by Arvin B. Ypil on December 15, 2021*



5. The “Paiyakan”

Situated directly in front of the entrance arch was the former location of what the locals call as "paiyakan" (Figure 16). This was a concrete platform with a roof constructed for placing the coffin with the body for a final viewing of the bereaved and final benediction. However, the structure was destroyed when Typhoon Glenda struck Tayabas City in 2014 and was never rebuilt, according to the caretakers.

Figure 16. *The site of the now-destroyed “paiyakan” Photo taken by Arvin B. Ypil on December 15, 2021*



The Roman Catholic Cemetery of Tayabas is still an active burial site but is only open for limited burials due to overcrowding and lack of space. The new burials accommodated are limited to individuals who already have relatives buried in the Cemetery or, at times, to secondary burials consisting only of the skeletons of the deceased. There are no plans to rehabilitate or restore the Cemetery because they intend to preserve its state, particularly the capilla and apartment-type tombs.

The Tayabas Old Municipal Cemetery

I. Background

The allotment of lands as cemeteries outside of a pueblo's población was partly because of the Royal Decree issued in March 1789. Tayabas also followed this trend when the local Catholic Church authorities decided to establish the Roman Catholic Cemetery in 1887. However, the population of the City experienced a steady increase upon the entry of the 20th century, not

to mention the influx of migrants who were not qualified to be buried in Catholic Cemeteries because of their religious domination, hence the need for the expansion of the local burial grounds.

This also came at a time when the Spaniards were ousted as the Filipino's colonial masters, and replacing them were Americans who started to enter into Tayabas before the 20th century started. At the time when the Americans established a local government in Tayabas, they also gave the Filipinos an entirely new perspective on death: the burial of the dead is not just for the safe afterlife but also for the health and sanitary precaution of the living.³²

Following this idea and policy, the American colonial government opened a new public cemetery in 1911. This Cemetery is situated just outside the walls of the Roman Catholic Cemetery. It is known today as the Old Municipal Cemetery. At this time, the Americans implemented an open policy wherein all citizens were qualified to be buried in the newly established Cemetery regardless of their domination.

However, they were also stricter on the manner of burying the dead to avoid the potential diseases that people can get from the dead.³³ Meanwhile, as a result of the continued demand for additional public burial grounds due to the increase in the City's population, the Tayabas Municipal Council passed Resolution no. 01-05 on January 15, 2011, which approved the construction of a new Municipal Cemetery located in the same barangay. The said Cemetery was formally opened in 2002.³⁴

II. Location and Layout

The Old Municipal Cemetery is located on the outer area of the land, and it is also situated directly along the Tayabas-Sariaya Road. A concrete, tent-like structure was constructed at the entrance to the Cemetery (see Figure 20).

³² Dakudao, "The Development of Cemeteries in Manila Before 1941," 9.

³³ Dakudao, "The Development of Cemeteries in Manila Before 1941," 13.

³⁴ Office of the Cemetery Operation, Accomplishment of Cemetery Operations F.Y. 2020.

Figure 20. Entrance area of the Old Municipal Cemetery. Photo taken by Arvin B. Ypil on December 15, 2021



Upon exit from this structure was the central pathway of the Cemetery. However, the central pathway for the Municipal Cemetery has no fences, and one can directly observe tombs along its sides. The Municipal Cemetery was also a combination of niches, family plots, and mausolea.

III. Burial Structures, Design, and Important Persons Buried

This part discusses the different features of the Tayabas Old Municipal Cemetery, the designs of these features, and a short list of prominent individuals buried on its premises.

1. The Entrance Shed

This structure was built in 1968 and serves as what the locals call "paiyakan." It has a concrete slab at the shed's center, where the coffin will be placed on top of it for the final viewing of the family and final rites before burial. The "paiyakan," particularly its concrete slab, is in poor condition, as observed by the noticeable cracks in the concrete.

Figure 21. “Paiyakan” for the Old Municipal Cemetery. Photo taken by Arvin B. Ypil on December 12, 2021



2. Family Plots

A family plot is a type of burial where a family may purchase a small area of the Cemetery where members of the same family can be buried together. It could be marked with a single headstone, or at least each family member buried in the family area will have his or her own smaller headstone marking the individual grave.³⁵ Family plots can also serve as funerary monuments, especially if one of the remains buried in the plot belongs to a historical figure, such as in the case of the family plot of the Baustista-Nakpil Family in the Manila North Cemetery.³⁶

2.1. Reyes Family Plot

In the case of the Reyes Family, it is the latter. This family plot is composed of two above-ground structures containing the remains. The first structure (Figure 22) is much older, with at least six (6) remaining interred inside. One of the burials in this structure is Jose C. Reyes, who served as the Municipal Mayor from 1926 to 1928.³⁷

³⁵ “How to Plan for Family Plots and Companion Graves,” Merkle Monuments, last modified on September 23, 2022, <https://www.merklemonuments.com/planning-family-plot-companion-grave>.

³⁶ Andrea Malaya M. Ragradio, *Ang Mamatay ng Dahil sa Iyo: Patriots’ Graves at Manila Cemeteries and Neighboring Provinces* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2016), 127.

³⁷ Palad, *Bayan ng Tayabas*, 335.

Meanwhile, the said structure was said to have been built in 1930 to accommodate the remains of Antonio Reyes, who died in 1920. One notable feature of this structure is a statue of a weeping woman attached to the tomb, which gives the impression of a woman in eternal mourning (see Figure 22).

Figure 22. *One of the structures in the plot has the crying statue at its centerpiece.
Photo taken by Arvin B. Ypil on December 12, 2021*



Figure 23. *Tomb of Former Mayor Santiago Reyes. Photo taken by Arvin B. Ypil on December 12, 2021.*



Another structure that belongs to this family plot is a much simpler one. Those buried here include the remains of Santiago J. Reyes, who served as

Mayor of Tayabas during the American Era in two separate terms of office: 1920 to 1922 and 1931 to 1936.³⁸

2.2. Dadia and Eclaren Family Plot

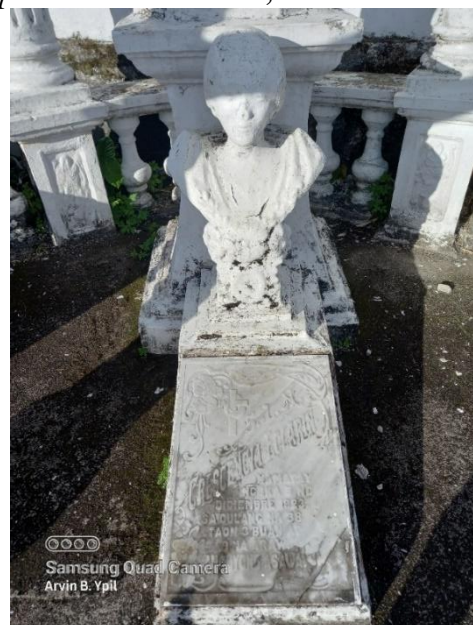
This family plot was owned by one of the prominent clans in Tayabas, the Dadia Family. The earliest burial was dated in 1940, a year before the Second World War erupted. It has a design that was derived from the Baroque style. Unique features of this family plot include the set of two pairs of guardian statues. At the lower part are a pair of sphinxes, with its head exhibiting the headdress of Egyptian pharaohs while their back was not the traditional lion, but the back of a fish was used as design instead (see Figure 24).

Meanwhile, a pair of angels holding a torch in one of their arms was positioned at the second level. At the center of the plot, another statue of an angel holding a torch in its left hand and a wreath in its right-hand symbol an eternal offering to the deceased. A bust of one of the first ones to be buried in the plot, Dona Cresencia Eclaren, who died in 1928 at the age of 38, according to her tombstone, was also placed at the foot of the angel's statue. Finally, a cross was placed at the topmost part of the family plot's arch.

Figure 24. Dadia-Elaren Plot Photo taken by Arvin B. Ypil on December 12, 2021



Figure 25. The bust and tombstone of Cresencia Eclaren Photo taken by Arvin B. Ypil on December 12, 2021



³⁸ Palad, *Bayan ng Tayabas*, 335.

2.3. Nadera Family Plot

This plot was owned by the Nadera Family, another influential family in Tayabas during much of the second half of the 20th century. The earliest burial in the plot was that of Tomasa C. Nadera, the family's matriarch. Also buried in the plot were the remains of Carmelo Nadera, the longest-serving Mayor of Tayabas from 1956 to 1959 and from 1964 until he died in 1982.³⁹ The plot itself was an open-air plot with a simple design, with three slots intended for the burial of fresh and whole remains, while four slots were intended for transferring decomposed remains. A cross with a flower design was also sculpted as the plot's centerpiece. (See Figure 26)

Figure 26. *The Nadera Family Plot. Photo taken by Arvin B. Ypil on December 12, 2021*



3. Individual Tombs

Individual tombs or, in some places, single plots are the most common type of plot in a cemetery. It contains the remains of one person in a casket.⁴⁰ In the case of the Philippines, however, this kind of tomb may contain two or more sets of remains depending on the need when an older burial with decomposed remains will be first exhumed and then returned to the same tomb with a new burial.⁴¹ These tombs may also serve as monuments for individuals with societal influence or national heroes.⁴² The Old Municipal

³⁹ Palad, *Bayan ng Tayabas*, 335.

⁴⁰ Merkle Monuments, "How to Plan for Family Plots and Companion Graves."

⁴¹ Paul Francois Tremlett, "Death-Scapes in Taipei and Manila: A Post-modern Necrography," *Taiwan in Comparative Perspective* 1 (November 2007): 23.
<https://oro.open.ac.uk/22431/1/TCP1Tremlett.pdf>

⁴² Ragradio, *Ang Mamatay*, 127.

Cemetery in Tayabas, Quezon, is the burial site of selected individuals who once held positions in their local government or were considered local heroes.

3.1. Isidoro Lavares

The tomb of Isidoro Lavares was located in the inner portion of the Old Municipal Cemetery, where the earliest burials can also be found. Isidoro Lavares, meanwhile, was one of the leaders of the Taaw Rebellion, a local rebellion of natives against the Spaniards in 1897.⁴³ Lavares died and was buried in the Cemetery in 1927. Meanwhile, the design of his funerary monument has a monolithic structure with a cross on its topmost part (See Figure 27).

Figure 27. *Tomb of Isidoro Lavares. Photo taken by Arvin B. Ypil on December 12, 2021*



⁴³ Palad, *Bayan ng Tayabas*, 111.

Figure 28. Marker at the tomb of Isidoro Lavares. Photo taken by Arvin B. Ypil on December 12, 2021



3.2. Procopio Nadera

The burial plot of Procopio Nadera was located at the border of the two cemeteries, directly below one of the posts of the entrance arch to the Roman Catholic Cemetery. Its location was said to be premier, for it lies along the Cemetery's central pathway, a trend which can also be observed in Cementerio General de Paco.⁴⁴ Procopio Nadera served as Tayabas' Gobernadorcillo from 1887 to 1888 and from 1898 to 1900 during the final years of the Spanish colonial rule. He once served as the town's chief and again as president of the municipal district from 1906 to 1907 under the Americans.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Dakudao, "The Development of Cemeteries in Manila Before 1941," 12.

⁴⁵ Palad, *Bayan ng Tayabas*, 150.

Figure 29. Marker at the tomb of Procopio Nadera. Photo taken by Arvin B. Ypil on December 12, 2021



4. Mausoleums

A mausoleum is an above-ground entombment place, more commonly in a building, that accommodates a dead person's remains. Located inside mausoleums are one or more crypts, or burial niches, for both whole-body burial and cremated ashes.⁴⁶ Mausoleums vary in size, design, and function.

4.1 Tan Family Mausoleum

The Tan Family Mausoleum was located at the front of the Cemetery, near the Tayabas-Sariaya Road. According to the caretakers, its location was a prime lot that may cost around two million pesos. It is a simple mausoleum with a semi-open-air design and a concrete roof. The most notable feature, however, was the tombstone of one of the mausoleum's occupants, Tan Tay Lim.

According to Mr. John Warren T. Abulencia, a grandson of Tan Tay Lim, his grandmother was a Chinese immigrant from Amoy, China (now known as Xiamen, China) who migrated to the Philippines in the early 1930s. Together with her husband, Yew Kux, they established numerous businesses in the Tayabas; the most famous and successful was the "Tan Tay Lim Copra Dealer," which brought her and her family a considerable fortune. When she died on May 18, 1991, she was buried in the newly-made mausoleum in a combination of Chinese and Catholic funeral rites.⁴⁷ Her tombstone, however,

⁴⁶ Merkle Monuments. "How to Plan for Family Plots and Companion Graves." September 23, 2022.

⁴⁷ Interview with Mr. John Warren T. Abulencia, December 2021.

was quite noticeable because it was written in a combination of Chinese and Roman characters (see Figure 30). This is a trend in which the Chinese immigrants still observed their traditional burial customs when they died in a foreign land, in this case, the Philippines.⁴⁸

Figure 30. Tombstone of Tan Tay Lim
Photo taken by Arvin B. Ypil on December
12, 2021



Figure 31. Tombs at the Tan Mausoleum.
Photo by: John Warren T. Abulencia



5. Apartment-type tombs

One of the most common features of cemeteries in the Philippines is the apartment-type section. Apartment-type sections are often described as having multiple layers of niches that can accommodate numerous burials, and these niches are often stacked on each other. This section provides a cheap yet temporary solution for families who are unable to afford a permanent plot to bury their loved ones.⁴⁹ The Old Municipal Cemetery of Tayabas, Quezon, also has a section for this use. According to the caretakers, most of the clients who avail of burial in this section mostly come from people living in poverty. Each new burial costs at least ₱500.00, which covers the apartment-style niche and the five-year contract. The tombstone, however, is for a separate payment. They also added that once the five-year contract expires, the families may opt to pay another ₱500.00 for the contract to be extended and for the remains not to be moved, or the second option was for the remains to

⁴⁸ Richard T. Chu and Teresita Ang-See. "Towards a History of Chinese Burial Grounds in Manila During the Spanish Colonial Period," 2016. <http://journals.openedition.org/archipel/283>. Retrieved on December 4, 2021

⁴⁹ Bianca Dava, "What it's like to rent a grave at Manila North Cemetery," ABS-CBN News, last modified on October 26, 2018, <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/10/26/18/what-its-like-to-rent-a-grave-at-manila-north-cemetery>.

be exhumed and reburied in another site or deposited in the Cemetery's bone vault.⁵⁰

Figure 32. *Apartment-type tombs at the Municipal Cemetery's extension. Photo taken by Arvin B. Ypil on December 12, 2021*



IV. Status

According to the cemetery administrator, the Old Municipal Cemetery remains an active burial ground. However, like the Roman Catholic Cemetery, it is only open for limited burial, particularly to individuals with relatives buried in it. During the walking survey, the researcher observed the growing number of new above-ground burials (See Figures 42 and 43), particularly in the outer part of the Cemetery, indicating what the administrator said: the Cemetery is still an active burial ground.⁵¹ The administrator also added that the proposed rehabilitation of the Old Municipal Cemetery was now canceled due to funding issues, the repeated, active calls of local heritage advocates for the project to be canceled, and the preservation of the old tombs in the area. The issue was also featured on a Facebook page named Sementeryo: Heritage Cemeteries of the Philippines. It aims to promote public awareness of the old cemeteries of the Philippines and their identification as heritage structures.

⁵⁰ Interview with Mrs. Jerdelene Tabi, OIC Cemetery Administrator, December 2021.

⁵¹ Interview with Mrs. Jerdelene Tabi, OIC Cemetery Administrator, December 2021.

Figure 42. *New burials in the Old Municipal Cemetery. Photo taken by Arvin B. Ypil on December 15, 2021*



Figure 43. *The new burial in the outer section of the Cemetery. Photo taken by Arvin B. Ypil on December 15, 2021*



Another observation was the installation of solar lights (See Figures 44 and 45) in the Cemetery, which, according to the caretakers, was installed as a solution to the problem of grave robbing and to prevent the Cemetery from being used as a hiding spot by thugs or drug addicts. With the solar lights

turned on at night, malicious elements could easily be spotted by night patrol men of the barangay.⁵²

Figure 44. Solar lights were installed along the Cemetery's pathways. Photo taken by Arvin B. Ypil on December 12, 2021

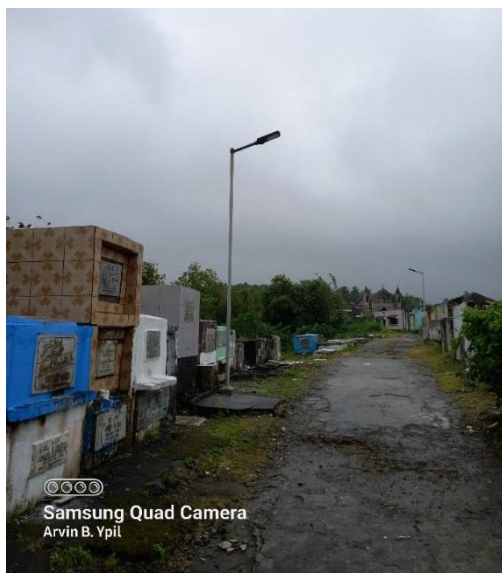


Figure 45. Solar lights were installed along the Cemetery's pathways. Photo taken by Arvin B. Ypil on December 12, 2021



Moreover, the City Government of Tayabas also operates a new public cemetery, which opened in 2002, and this is where the bulk of new burials are accommodated, not in the Old Municipal Cemetery, which now accepts a limited number of fresh remains.

Figure 46. Tombs at the new Municipal Cemetery. Photo taken by Arvin B. Ypil on December 12, 2021.



⁵² Office of the Cemetery Operation. Accomplishment of Cemetery Operations F.Y. 2020.

Figure 47. *A new version of “paiyakan” at the New Municipal Cemetery. Photo taken by Arvin B. Ypil on December 12, 2021*



Figure 48. *Tombs at the new Municipal Cemetery. Photo taken by Arvin B. Ypil on December 12, 2021*



Figure 49. *Tombs at the new Cemetery. Photo taken by Arvin B. Ypil on December 12, 2021*



Findings and Conclusion

Findings

The cemeteries' historical background is anchored on the colonial governments' policies at their establishment. For instance, the Tayabas Roman Catholic Cemetery was established during the time of the Spaniards. It was established in compliance with the Royal Decree dated March 27, 1789, which decreed the erection of cemeteries in the outskirts of Philippine towns for sanitary reasons primarily because of the need to expand the camera's burial grounds and the increase in the number of deaths caused by disease outbreaks such as typhoid and smallpox. Meanwhile, the Old Municipal Cemetery was established by the Americans in 1911 because of the rising demand for new burial grounds due to the increase in the town's population, and a similar reason was for the health and sanitary precautions for the living. The main difference between the two lies in the issue of the religious affiliation of the dead: only baptized Catholics were allowed to be buried in the Roman Catholic Cemetery. At the same time, the Americans adopted a more open policy of accepting any citizens and even migrants to be buried in the Old Municipal Cemetery, provided that they would follow the health and sanitary regulations of the time.

Regarding location, both cemeteries are constructed on the same barangay and on the same plot of land, which are only divided by a series of fences as their administrative borders. The Roman Catholic was located in the inner part, while the Old Municipal Cemetery was in the land's outer part. This setting reflects the occupation of two colonial powers in the town: the Spaniards came in first, and their Cemetery was established in the inner part. In contrast, the Americans who came later constructed the Old Municipal Cemetery in the outer portion of the land. Another observable aspect of the Cemetery's location is that it was situated between two bodies of water. This can also be observed in other colonial-era cemeteries in Quezon Province, such as the colonial-era cemeteries of Sariaya and Lucban. Finally, it is also notable that these cemeteries founded in the late 19th and early 20th centuries followed the same observations in other simultaneously constructed cemeteries: chaotic and unruly. It became disorganized as time passed because the separation of social classes adopted by the Spaniards was no longer observed for new burials.

The featured cemeteries are also rich in burial structures and elements considered part of the City's cultural heritage. The Roman Catholic Cemetery has a Capilla or mortuary chapel and Spanish-era apartment-type tombs, unique and rare features in colonial-era cemeteries because they are still used today. The Old Municipal Cemetery, meanwhile, has numerous

family plots, individual tombs, and mausoleums, which reflect the rich artistry and culture of the town in the context of the era in which they were built. Finally, both of the cemeteries have numerous and similar problems, such as grave robbery, destroyed tombs, rehabilitation plans, and threats to the structural integrity of the tombs.

Conclusions

The cemeteries covered in this paper should be considered local cultural heritage sites in Tayabas because they fit the criteria that can be observed in cultural heritage sites. The structures in the Cemetery, for example, date back as early as the 1880s and were constructed by the Spaniards in the early 20th century during the time of the Americans. This factor alone fits the Tayabas cemeteries into UNESCO's definition of cultural heritage as "the legacy of physical artifacts and intangible attributes of a group or society that are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present, and bestowed for the benefit of future generations." Furthermore, in the Philippine setting, the Republic Act no. 10066, s. 2009 also stated that structures at least 50 years old are presumed cultural properties and must be protected. These make the cemeteries possible candidates to be recognized by law as cultural heritage sites that the community must protect.

Older burial grounds used for successive generations are now interpreted as sites of the community's history and have collective significance to the community where they are located. However, the problem in this endeavor is that cemeteries such as those in Tayabas are always overshadowed by other cultural heritage sites such as historical buildings in the locality like the Minor Basilica of Saint Minor the Archangel and its Spanish-era bridges, both declared as National Cultural Treasures by the National Museum of the Philippines.

The cemeteries covered in this paper are unique. Their settings symbolically represent the two most extended periods of colonization in the Philippines: one Cemetery was constructed by the Spaniards, and the Spaniards constructed the other. The succeeding American colonizers constructed the other one; both regimes imposed on the Filipinos their policies and practices on burying the dead, which the colonized adapted to later as their burial practices. As Francis et al. stated, cemeteries must be appreciated as an essential site for creating culture and memory.

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