

The macabre collection:

The mummies of Guanajuato allusion to dark Mexican tourism

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Abstract

The following investigation is of a qualitative exploratory type, which aims to know the term and the characteristics of natural mummification and how this process formalizes an attraction for foreign and local tourists, who experience death in a closer way through the different stories offered by the mummies exhibited in the museum, allowing dark tourism. Likewise, important events that have an impact on the eccentric tourism that this type of attraction represents transcend, the museum of the mummies of Guanajuato is a clear example for visitors who like death and suffering, embodied over time in mummified bodies. which, without a doubt, have marked traces of history, mysticism, occultism and religious issues.

Keywords

dark, Guanajuato, mummies, tourism, visitors

1. Introduction

Within the current concepts of dark tourism, you can see endless stories related to this type of practice around our planet, since from this derive their own themes with death and destruction. Likewise, in the following investigation, a topic related to dark tourism is disclosed, which explores one of the regions of Mexico, and it is the state of Guanajuato where people live directly with this type of places that are attractions for non-conventional tourists, who, as mentioned above, look for places where there was death, suffering and different macabre stories, giving rise to the famous museum of the “Mums of Guanajuato”, which over the years has gained local tourism as international. Putting it in context, a mummy is a corpse that lasts over time, conserving soft tissue remains without complete decomposition [Trancho, 2012]. In this way, studying these bodies reveals circumstances of past lives, beliefs, social and cultural level, in certain periods of time. Therefore, Mexico is among the countries that offer places of dark tourism, and particularly the state of Guanajuato, considered a tourist place with great historical importance, full of mysticism, culture, magic, death and paranormal phenomena, having popularity within of dark tourism.

2. The term mummy

The term mummy is an expression that derives from the Arabic word mumiya; in Persian, mumiai, which means asphalt or bitumen. Mumia (Judean bitumen) is a bituminous substance carried by some rivers. Judean bitumen is a fossil resin that comes from Lake Asphaltites (old name of the Dead Sea), presenting itself in the form of compact, brittle, shiny blackish-brown masses [Trancho, 2012]. Thus, the notion of mummy is associated with that of an embalmed or prepared corpse with the intention of preserving it as long as possible, usually for religious reasons. The corpses very rarely remain incorrupt, because the conditions for their natural conservation are fortui-

tous and scarce [Egas, 2010].

2.1 The natural mummification process in Mexico

The natural mummification of the corpses is due to the crypts made of clay or limestone and the humid environment in which they were found, these two elements together create a hydroscopic condition that controls temperature and humidity, preventing larvae and insects from starting the process. of putrefaction of the body [Hoyos and Niño De Rivera, 2006].

2.2 Museum of the Mummies of Guanajuato (MUMOG)

In this way, the mummies of Guanajuato have become part of the culture, history, traditions, beliefs, etc., establishing tourism ties within the Mexican Republic, as well as internationally. Likewise, in 1865 the first body was extracted from the Santa Paula Pantheon [Negrete et al., 2010], resulting in the first mummy that began the pictorial legend and the discovery of more mummies.

The exhibition began clandestinely and little by little it was opened to society (Figure 1), at the same time that the government saw it as an opportunity to generate resources, already in the sixties, the first museographic assembly was made [González et al., 2020], and in this way the Museum of the Mummies of Guanajuato (MUMOG) was born.

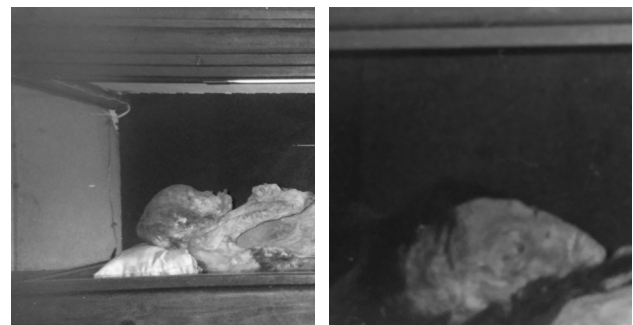


Figure 1: Exhibition of the mummies

3. Methodology

For the following work, an exploratory qualitative research was carried out, that is, Sampieri cited by Galvis [2006], states that exploratory studies are normally carried out when the objective is to examine a little studied research topic or problem, or that has not been addressed before.

3.1 Research objective

Know the term and the characteristics of natural mummification and how this process formalizes an attraction for foreign and local tourists, who experience death in a closer way through the different stories offered by the mummies exhibited in the museum, allowing dark tourism.

3.2 Research question

What is the impact that the mummies of Guanajuato have on dark tourism and motivate people to practice it?

3.3 Study area

The state borders to the north with Zacatecas and San Luis Potosí, to the east with Querétaro, to the south with Michoacán de Ocampo and to the west with Jalisco, likewise, it has 46 municipalities and 11,458 urban and rural localities [Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, 2017], as observed in Figure 2.

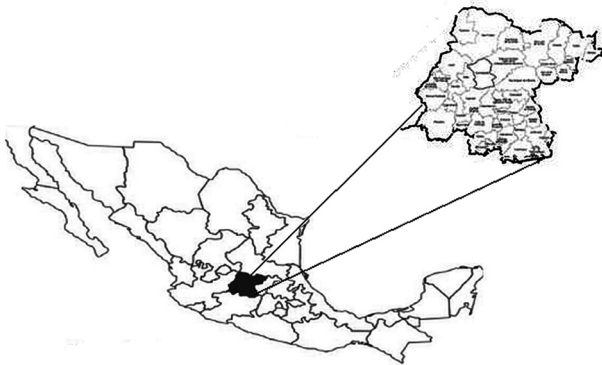


Figure 2: Geographic location of the state of Guanajuato, Mexico

Source: Map retrieved from Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía [2017].

4. Results and discussion

Of the places that the state of Guanajuato offers, there is the famous museum of mummies, perhaps the most visited tourist place in recent decades, which somehow manages to capture attention with the eccentric exhibition of mummified bodies, giving rise to great stories that can be found in such a remote place on the planet.

As is known, the mummies exhibited in Guanajuato are natural and have managed to resist the action of time, mainly due to the composition of the soil, climatic conditions and the repeated use of lime, for hygienic reasons, in burials [Peñaloza, 2011].

From the above, allusion is made to the legend that the mummies wake up [Negrete et al., 2010], giving place for the making of important films within the golden Mexican cinema, thus promoting the state of Guanajuato and being recognized touristically.

However, in this scenario, the museum of the mummies of Guanajuato has positioned itself over the years as one of the reference dark tourist places for many visitors, this being the third most visited museum nationwide [Luna and Vidaurri, 2018], as can be seen in Figure 3.

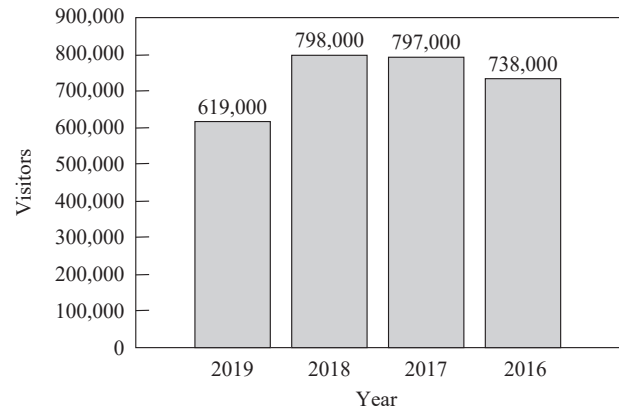


Figure 3: Visitor numbers per year

Source: Created by author based on González-Rosas et al. [2021].

From the above, it can be seen that the figures with the most visits were between 2018 and 2017, reflecting important statistics for the tourism sector of the state of Guanajuato, it is evident that within the 2019 category, there was a drop in tourism, but it follows, then, that tourists look for places with cultural history, and the mummies museum is an example for tourists who like this type of attraction, which has a close relationship with death and the suffering that mummies represent.

From all this are important events that impacted over time, to publicize the eccentric tourism that these types of attractions represent, allowing for the exploration of mummified bodies and how these mummies rose to international and local fame, determining a place in the current dark tourism. Some of the most important events are described below, as shown in Figure 4.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be seen that this type of attraction has become known through time, giving stories that have marked an entire culture of beliefs and mysticism to the unknown, without a doubt, dark tourism defines places where there was death, this being the attraction that attracts tourists to practice it, leaving their own teachings about history and on other occasions being morbidly bizarre. In this way, dark tourism spreads in an important way, and the best representation of having death is with the exhibition of the mummies of Guanajuato, which will give the most demanding tourists an unforgettable experience of the eccentric stories exposed behind of mumi-

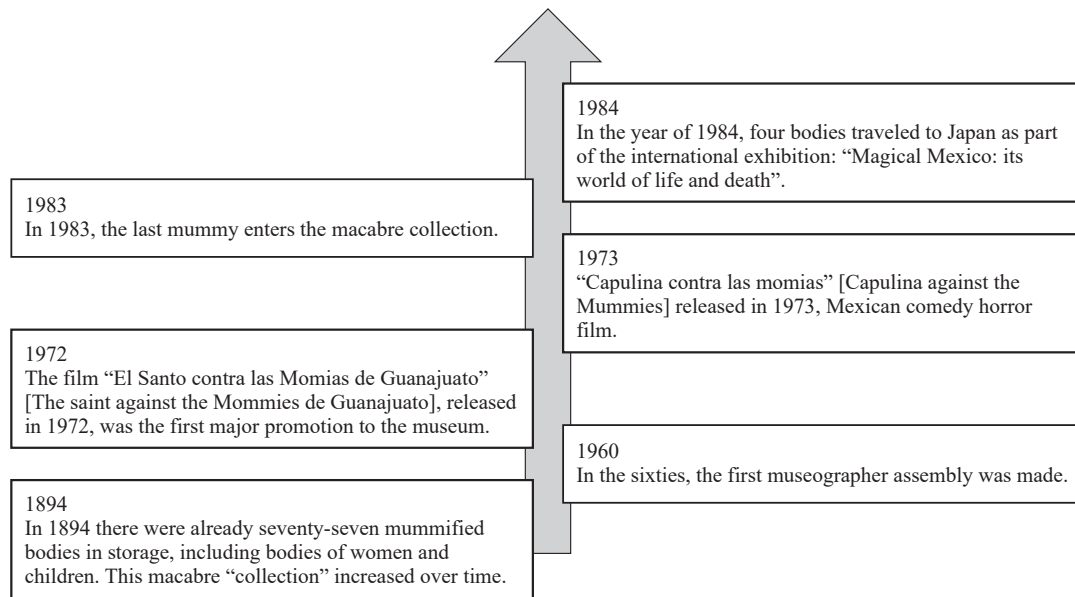


Figure 4: Events that impacted the international and local fame of the mummies of Guanajuato

Source: Created by author based on Perichi [2006], Luna and Vidaurri [2018], and González et al. [2020].

fied bodies.

Finally, the museum of the mummies of Guanajuato is a clear example for visitors who like this type of attraction, about death and suffering embodied over time in mummified bodies, which, without a doubt, have marked traces of history, mysticism, occultism and religious issues.

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Received September 20, 2022

Revised December 1, 2022

Accepted December 12, 2022

Published May 31, 2023

 https://doi.org/10.37020/jgtr.8.1_83