

## INTERCONTINENTAL ROYAL ROAD AND ITS CONNECTION WITH CUBA

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The Intercontinental Royal Road is a project of the International Committee of Cultural Itineraries that has a geographical, historical and cultural dimension of great value and universal meaning. This initiative, proposed by the National Committee of ICOMOS of Spain, has the purpose of preserving the historical, natural and cultural resources of a commercial Itinerary that Spain implanted in its colonies of America from the XVI century to the XIX one.

The commercial system settled down in that period, of monopolist character, was based on the exploitation of the American resources and of an unequal exchange of goods and products, in an organic regulated and continuous way, in a wide geographical area, embracing three continents: Spain, America, and part of the southeast Asian. The Itinerary travelled a forced round trip circuit. It comprised marine and terrestrial routes, and it made a net of dynamic communication between ports and cities.

The forced traffic was made from east to west, from the ports of Cádiz and Sanlúcar de Barrameda, Canarias, the Caribbean, the Gulf of Mexico and Philippine Island and a return from west to east. The famous Fleets of Nueva España and of Tierra Firme made this Itinerary annually. The Galleon of Manila made a different journey through Acapulco, Islas Marianas, Manila, San Francisco, Acapulco and Veracruz.

Once surpassed the limits of the sea, the goods and products were exchanged in the port cities and another part of the load was transported by the royal and fluvial roads. The means of terrestrial transportation used, were generally caravans whose loads were carried by animals that went toward the main political, economic and administrative places. Many times roads very frequently used before Columbus, were already taken, as those of the Aztecs, in the north, and those of the Incas, in the south.

This maritime and commercial relationship had repercussions on the development of many cities and in an outstanding urban and defensive infrastructure. In the Caribbean important port cities which participated in this Itinerary are well-preserved, and many of them show the

distinction of World Heritage as Chagre and Portobelo, in Panama, San Juan de Puerto Rico, Cartagena de Indias, Santo Domingo, Campeche and Havana. Other cities also reached considerable development as La Guaira, in Venezuela, Veracruz and Santiago de Cuba.

This activity created by the human being, with a specific and functional purpose, which evolved in the time, which led to a phenomenon of human mobility, which developed a flow of economic, commercial, cultural and religious exchange, by means of an interactive process, of going and return, during centuries, and in a vast geographical extension, are elements that identify the Project of the Intercontinental Royal Road and, at the same time, they are inserted in the concept of a Cultural Itinerary.

Cuba was inserted in this Project because this Route was actively linked with three Cuban historical cities: Havana, Santiago de Cuba and Trinidad. The historical, social, economic and patrimonial repercussion of these three cities allowed them to be appointed as National Monuments. On the other hand, Trinidad and Old Havana with their fortifications, were included in the list of the World Heritage from the eighteenth decade of the XX century.

The geographical environment had an influence on the mercantile functions of these three cities. It made possible for the galleons of the Fleets of Nueva España and of Tierra Firme to travel through their ports. Their hierarchies also had an influence: **on the sailing**, due to the very important function performed by the Royal Arsenal of Havana, where modern crafts were built, mainly in the second half of the XVIII century; **on the discoveries**, because many members of expeditions sailed out of these ports, to conquer Mexico, La Florida and other territories of America; **on urbanism**, because they engendered an infrastructure of outstanding domestic, civil, religious, industrial and military colonial constructions; **on engineering**, for the spectacular fortifications created in these cities were representative of the modern Spanish American military architecture; **on mining**, due to the exploitation of copper, extracted of the mines of Santiago de Cuba, in the last decade of the XVI century; **and on the culture** because the commerce and

the socio-economic relationships with Spain, America and África, produced a cultural syncretism and an intangible patrimony based on customs and on very evident cultural features.

As historical cities, Havana, Santiago de Cuba and Trinidad are included in the first seven villages been founded in Cuba in the XVI century. As fortified cities, they concentrated on them the most important fortresses in the Island.

The Cuban authorities are the highest responsible for the conservation of these cities and of the patrimony of their fortifications. Starting from 1977 they are aided by laws that guarantee their protection and permanence due to their historical, cultural and patrimonial significance.

## **Havana**

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Havana, located to the north and western part of Cuba, was the most important city in the political and economic power of the Island and today it keeps the same rank. Galleons loaded with enormous American riches, especially with precious metals, and also those sophisticated goods that were transported by the Galleon of Manila, met in its port.

The historical site, of 214 hectares, is remarkable for the permanence of its original urban plot; its environmental homogeneity; the variety of styles and artistic trends of its architecture; the many functions of the five Squares, and the combination of its urban and port landscape. This architectural ensemble is one of the largest and well-kept in Latin America.

The fortifications, placed at about twenty km. from the coast, have a great historical, monumental and regional remarkableness. They represent the evolution of the modern military architecture, from the XVI century to the XIX one. Of 90 fortifications built in Havana, 18 remain today.

Among its more valuable examples we can mention the castle of the Real Fuerza, first bastioned fortress in America; the castles of the Tres Reyes del Morro and San Salvador de la Punta, works of the military engineer Bautista Antonelli who created the first defensive system of the Hispanic Caribbean; the fortress of San Carlos de la Cabaña, which shows the advances of the military technology of the XVIII century; the ruins of the Wall and the fortresses of Santo Domingo de Atarés and El Príncipe. Havens, turrets and coastal batteries were added as smaller works. The No. 1 battery of Habana del Este, is the most novel in the military architecture of the XIX century in Havana.

The setting in value, from 1991, of the Morro-Cabaña Military Historical Park, has been outstanding. At present it is one of the main tourist and cultural attractions of the capital.

## **Santiago de Cuba**

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Santiago de Cuba, located to the south and in the oriental part of the country, is the second more important city of Cuba. The Fleet stopped here provisionally before continuing trip to the ports of Veracruz or Havana.

The historical site, located 8 km. off the mouth of the port, has the particularity of having an irregular layout, with narrow and winding streets and back alleys. It occupies a surface of 3,2 square km. Due to the fact that it is located in a seismic area, the constructions were built at not much height and on an uneven emplacement which forced the constructors to make perrons and natural miradors. Nowadays it is valuable because it keeps the original urban plot, the architecture and the environmental uniformity.

The city and the natural landscapes offered by mountain masses, the tortuous and beautiful bay, the coloring and marked folklore of its immaterial culture, are spectacular reasons that reinforce its Caribbean features.

Santiago had valuable fortifications located at the entrance of the port, in the bank of the coast and in the city, from the XVII century to the XIX one. At the entrance of the port, the castle of San Pedro de la Roca del Morro, was built as first bastion, 70 meters above sea level. It was inscribed as World Heritage in 1997. With four centuries of existence it still maintains its authenticity.

The Morros of Santiago de Cuba, of Havana and of San Juan de Puerto Rico, built by the Antonelli family in the Caribbean, adapted themselves to the impressive promontory. They were located at the entrances of spectacular bag bays and they were characterized by being colossal and very functional.

In the coast of Santiago de Cuba, 10 coastal batteries were added, and in the city other numerous small forts were built during the Independence wars. Nowadays those forts of Yarayó, San Juan's Hill, the Moncada barrack and the Viso still remain.

## **Trinidad**

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Trinidad, being founded in the south and central coast of

Cuba, did not have the same development as Havana and Santiago de Cuba. Its network of inland roads was of difficult access to establish a dynamic communication with the rest of the Cuban cities. Therefore, its port had a more direct interrelation with the routes and cities that were part of the Itinerary of the Fleet. For this reason its productive and exporting activity was more effective with other countries of the Caribbean, North America and Europe.

In the second half of the XIX century, with the lack of development of the sugar industry, of the railroad and the Independence wars, Trinidad was paralyzed for a long time. The rich farmers emigrated toward other cities. This isolation almost lasted one century, until the middle of the XX century. All this time, Trinidad was not in contact with the external world and did not have economic resources to assume urban transformations.

For these reasons its historical site shows itself nowadays as a living testimony of this epoch, with its traditional houses and irregular layout. Most of its houses were modest and even the most opulent were built with two stories and towers. It was built at a human scale. The domestic architecture as well as its environmental uniformity, are the most outstanding expressions and they represent the typical colonial Cuban house of the XIX century. These features have been well-kept in Trinidad, more than in other cities of Cuba.

Trinidad had from the XVIII century a maritime and campaign defensive system. It placed coastal batteries and the city protected its dominant heights with trenches, havens, guardhouses, barracks and magazines.

Nowadays eleven military constructions are well-kept, although they do not have the same levels of conservation. The Caballería barracks is the best kept of all. It is on the way to be rescued from wearing out.

### **Registration of the Project of Promotion**

Due to the linking of these historical cities with the Intercontinental Royal Road and for the momentous value of their patrimony, the Registration of the Project of Promotion was carried out.

This registration helped to organize and to define the objectives laid out:

- 1 . To identify and to deepen in the scientific investigation of this Itinerary which was linked to Cuba during almost three centuries.
- 2 . To carry out an inventory of the historical sites of these cities and of their fortifications.

- 3 . To divulge the scientific, historical, patrimonial, economic and socio-cultural values of the Itinerary for its ulterior development.
- 4 . To support the conservation and restoration of its patrimonial goods and to take care of the observance of its protecting laws.

This project has developed on a national scale but having in mind a regional expectation due to the historical, economic and social links that Cuba has always had with the main commercial cities of the Caribbean. This interconnection facilitates, even nowadays the growing historical, educational and cultural interchange among different countries of the region.

In this triennium, Cuba has worked with the voluntary contribution of professional people and university students. Professional people who according to the characteristics and contents of their work are related to this project, have been engaged in this task. They have made great contributions to the project.

Up to the 2004 we have performed the following tasks:

- Completion of the inventory records of the historical cities of Havana, Santiago de Cuba and Trinidad.
- Working out of a bibliography on Land Architecture and proposal of its inventory record.
- Execution of the index card of Identification of the Intercontinental Royal Road of Cuba.
- Bibliographical compilation of the fortifications of Cuba and the region.
- Working out of 9 inventories of fortifications of Havana City.
- Links and collaborator engagements have been created in Mexico, Panama and Venezuela to systematize the inventory of the fortifications and to look for financial backing.
- In the book *The intangible patrimony and other aspects in relation to the Cultural Itineraries*, (Pamplona, 2001), we have published the record of Identification of the Cultural Itinerary that is linked to Cuba, the bibliographical sources, maps and plans concerning the fortifications and the three historical cities, and the methodology of the first part of the Project.

At present we are working in the reception of collaborators to continue and diversify the investigations and inventories in other areas.

The inventories of the fortifications of Havana City that serve as a basis for the Inventory Records of the National Council of Cultural Patrimony; the inventories of Isla

Margarita fortifications, in Venezuela, which belong to the Inventory of monuments of the Corporation of Tourism of the state of Nueva Esparta; and the inventories of the Royal Road of the Spaniards, from La Guaira to Caracas and the castle of El Libertador, in Puerto Cabello, Venezuela, have stood out among these tasks.

We conclude by saying that in developing these activities we have had in mind the following fundamental aspects:

- To work with a clear and precise knowledge of what the concept of a Cultural Itinerary implies, to identify it, to study it from a multidisciplinary and scientific perspective and to be able to link it with the rest of the regions involved in the Itinerary.
- To have an appropriate and correct orientation and information from the Executive Board of the International Committee of Cultural Itineraries.
- To distinguish between the importance that the multidisciplinary work and the scientific investigation have, to be able to put into effect, in an organized way, the recognition and the preservation of the tangible and intangible patrimonial goods, of a Cultural Itinerary, on a national and international scale.
- To extend and to promote the work towards other countries linked to the Itinerary, to achieve a reciprocal cooperation and the integral conservation of the heritage in a wider scope .
- To achieve a different action strategy for each country included in the Itinerary.

## Abstract

Le Chemin Royal Intercontinental est un projet du Comité International des Itinéraires Culturels répertorié à Cuba en raison de ses liens avec trois villes historiques cubaines et ses fortifications: La Havane, Santiago de Cuba et Trinidad. C'est en raison de leur importance historique et patrimoniale que Trinidad et la Vieille Havane ainsi qu' ont été déclaré Patrimoine Mondial.

A partir du XVI<sup>ème</sup> siècle et jusqu'au XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle leurs ports commerciaux ont accueilli les flottes de Nouvelle Espagne et de Terre Ferme. Cette position privilégiée a eu des conséquences sur le développement de l'urbanisation et de la culture. Actuellement, le centre historique de La Havane est un des ensembles urbains les plus vastes et les mieux conservés d'Amérique Latine. Santiago et Trinidad conservent leur architecture traditionnelle comme seul un petit nombre de villes ont réussi à le faire à Cuba. Leurs fortifications ont une grande importance historique, monumentale et régionale. Elles constituent des exemples représentatifs de l'architecture militaire moderne du XVI<sup>ème</sup> et du XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle en Amérique Latine.

Le Registre du Projet de Promotion atteste de la réalisation des principaux objectifs fixés grâce aux recherches scientifiques, aux inventaires et aux liens établis avec les pays inclus dans cet Itinéraire à travers les Caraïbes.

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