
The cities and their monuments: a study about the italian immigration in Buenos Aires and Caxias do Sul 1910 - 1954 - 2016

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Abstract

The text is about a study of two Italian immigration's monuments - the Cristopher Columbus Monument, in Buenos Aires / AR and the National Immigrant Monument, in Caxias do Sul / BR, both built in urban spaces and related to the Italian presence in both South American countries. Being bearers of this identity, both monuments represent not only the communities who built them and their will, but also bring with them memories and tributes from who donated them. Such monuments, at the same time that they are memory spots and places of remembrance, they belong to their countries cultural patrimony. Though they are sensitive to modifications that might follow over time, this urban equipment had, in its trajectory, different destinations.

Keywords

Cities. Italian Immigration. Celebrations. Monuments. Memories. Identities.

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As cidades e seus monumentos: um estudo sobre a imigração italiana em Buenos Aires e Caxias do Sul 1910 - 1954 - 2016

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Resumo

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O texto faz um estudo sobre dois monumentos à imigração italiana – o Monumento a Cristóvão Colombo, em Buenos Aires/AR e o Monumento Nacional ao Imigrante, em Caxias do Sul/BR, ambos erigidos em espaços urbanos e ligados à presença italiana nestes dois países Sul-americanos. Sendo portadores dessa identidade, os dois monumentos representam não só as comunidades que os ergueram e a sua vontade, mas carregam consigo lembranças e homenagens de quem os doou. Tais monumentos, ao mesmo tempo em que são espaços de memória e lugares de rememoração, pertencem ao patrimônio cultural de seus países. Embora sensíveis às modificações que podem acompanhá-los ao longo do tempo, esses equipamentos urbanos tiveram, na sua trajetória, destinos diferentes.

Palavras-chave

Cidades. Imigração Italiana. Comemorações. Monumentos. Memórias. Identidades.

1 - The Italian Immigration, the Cities and the Monuments

Building monuments¹ in the cities is a recurring practice among the people since ancient times. It can be found as a result of a victory on the battlefield, after a territorial conquest, or also as a tribute to national heroes, unknown soldiers, men and women who stood out because of their performance in specific events of the local and national history. But often, to build a monument can be a way to express and model a memory of/to the nation, or even to project past events.

With the intent to pay tribute, the relationship of the monument with the city is highlighted, because they are usually located in urban sites, whether in the city gate or in a prominent place within the city. Therefore, building monuments has been a recurring celebration form. However, over the 19th century, we started to understand the urbanization of the cities as a single set, and to project the public space [...] as a whole². In this process of city planning, the sculpture, mainly present in monuments, started to have a significant role in new spaces, and the interest about the past started to be expressed in celebrations and tributes, highlighting the sculptures in the city squares and streets. Today, such monuments are present in new districts and areas where people try to recover the “historical pieces” in squares and avenues. Knauss and Mauad state that, whilst the imaginary organizes and characterizes the several urban spaces, the city is [also] symbolically delimited by it, because when a monument is built, the citizens give a new

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¹ Monument is a word with a wide meaning, and may be understood as a legacy of the past, but also as a commemorative and/or funerary work, as Le Goff tells us. According to Françoise Choay, a monument is everything built by a community of individuals to recall or allow other generations to remember events, sacrifices, rites or beliefs. The specific nature of the monument should be exactly its mode of operation on the memory. The monument can be expressed by a public sculpture, a building, a house or a bridge built in a particular style, which has in its structure specific technique. In this article, the word monument is used to determine two sculptures located in urban sites in the cities of Buenos Aires/AR., and Caxias do Sul/BR. See LE GOFF, Jacques. *Memória e História*. Campinas: UNICAMP, 1990, p. 535; CHOAY, Françoise. *A alegoria do patrimônio*. São Paulo: Estação Liberdade: Editora da UNESP, 2001, p.18.

² CORREIA, Victor. *Arte pública: seu significado e função*. Lisboa: Fonte da Palavra, 2013, p. 57.

meaning to the different territories of their daily routine and create [or strengthen] their identification with the city³.

Therefore, if on the one hand, the space of the cities is marked by certain urban equipment, on the other hand, such areas are inhabited by people from the most diverse origins, including the Italian immigrants, the object of this study. In this situation, the monuments have allowed us to better understand immigrants as its residents, as well as the places of remembrance built by them in countries such as Argentina and Brazil.

The cities of Buenos Aires and Caxias do Sul are, hence, the setting of our thinking, and we read their monuments as a material support for the immigrant remembrance, since they represent the society which produce them. The presence of the Italian immigrants indicated in the monuments built is felt in both cities, for the places they occupied in society during the 20th century and for the presence of their cultures within those spaces or in other spaces, such as cemeteries, museums, schools, clubs, squares and restaurants. The root of this culture is historically connected to the Italian immigration to Argentina and Brazil, and its significant position within the context of the migratory movement to Latin American in the last quarter of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century.

Fernando Devoto⁴ pointed out that, from 1881 to 1914, around 4,200,000 immigrants arrived in Argentina, of which approximately 2,000,000 were Italians and 1,400,000 were Spanish. This period of strong immigration was also a moment of great expansion of the Argentinean economy but, at the same time, utmost concern for the need of “making this mass of immigrants become Argentinians”, because for them it was a national identity issue, a matter of “nation-building”. To resolve the issue, the Argentinian and Italian governments took political actions regarding education, culture and economy.

³ KNAUSS, Paulo; MAUAD, Ana Maria. Cidade vaidosa. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Sette Letras, 1999, p. 7.

⁴ DEVOTO, Fernando. Historia de la inmigración en la Argentina. Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2009, p. 247.

From 1880 to 1915, that is, in the last quarter of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century, approximately 31 million immigrants arrived in the Americas, of which 2.9 million came to Brazil⁵ and, among them, about 2,033,654 went to São Paulo. Rio de Janeiro, Espírito Santo, Paraná, Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul, among other States, also received a significant contingent of Italian immigrants.

Italian immigrants arrived to the Province of Rio Grande do Sul from 1875 on, in the Upper Slope of the Plateau (Encosta Superior do Planalto) between the valleys of Caí River and the Antas River. Settlements such as Dona Isabel and Conde D'Eu (today known as Bento Gonçalves and Garibaldi), and Colônia Caxias were the first three created with the purpose to receive immigrants, and had been delimited and populated by colonial groups. Other settlements close to the first three were afterwards delimited. In 1877 the fourth settlement of Italian immigrants was created, named Silveira Martins, towards the center of the Province of Rio Grande do Sul, close to Santa Maria. From 1877, the first crops had been harvested in those communities, with some essential feeding products⁶. The continuance of the economical development occurred gradually, despite the many existing difficulties. With the advent of the Republic, the first settlements achieved emancipation and became wealthy cities.

Another measure taken to follow up the development of the Italian settlements in Argentina and Brazil, in this early period, was connected to education. In Argentina, the Dante Alighieri Society, founded in 1889, was important, such as other Italian societies (educational societies or not), especially in Buenos Aires. In that period in Rio Grande do Sul, it was difficult to implement public schools by governmental authorities in immigrant areas, but they faced competition of political measures of the Italian government, which subsidized schools and also

⁵ OLIVEIRA, Lucia Lippi. O Brasil dos imigrantes. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Ed. 2001, p. 22.

⁶ BENEDUZI, Luís Fernando. Os fios da nostalgia: perdas e ruínas na construção de um Vêneto imaginário. Porto Alegre: Editora da UFRGS, 2011, p.128.

founded the Dante Alighieri Society⁷, in the South area of Brazil (1898 – 1901) with the purpose of defending and disseminating the Italian language and culture outside Italy.

In the context of the early years of the 20th century, both cities, Buenos Aires and Caxias do Sul, presented a process of urban growth, with a significant presence of Italian immigrants. The urbanization plan in Buenos Aires, which was now officially the capital of the Republic in 1880, was in full development. Thus, in 1910, when celebrating their 100th independence anniversary (May Revolution), the city of Buenos Aires, as the capital of the Argentinian Republic, planned multiple festivities, including the solemnities of May 21st, welcoming international guests, exhibitions, conferences, monument building and expansion of the green areas within the city, among others.

In Caxias do Sul, the commemorative dates deeply marking the immigrant group were related to the years of 1925 and 1950, respectively, the fifty and seventy-five years of the Italian immigration in the region⁸. Unlike what happened in Buenos Aires in 1910, the celebrated date in Rio Grande do Sul and other regions of the Brazilian South and Southeast was the arrival of the first Italian immigrants. In this context, the 50th anniversary produced some events and works, such as a commemorative album⁹. But, when celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Italian immigration in Rio Grande do Sul, among other activities, they planned the construction of a monument to honor the immigrants.

The general framework outlined shows as a common bond between both cities the presence of Italian communities and the celebrations

⁷ LUCHESE, Terciane Ângela. Histórias cruzadas: imigrantes italianos e processos educativos (1875/1914). In: RADÜNZ, Roberto; HEREDIA, Vânia Beatriz Merlotti (Org.). Imigração e sociedade: fontes e acervos da imigração italiana no Brasil. Caxias do Sul, RS: Educus, 2015, p. 237.

⁸ In 1975, the celebrations of the centennial of the Italian immigration occurred in an official event - Biennium of the Colonization and Immigration -1974/1975, a magnificent event, which is not the focus of this study.

⁹ Álbum do Cinquentenário della colonizzazione italiana nel Rio Grande del Sud, 1875-1925 [Commemorative album for the 50th anniversary of the Italian Colonization in Rio Grande do Sul, 1875-1925]. Porto Alegre: Globo; Roma Ministero degli Affari Esteri, 1925.

made by them, marked by the creation of two monuments. Although they had different purposes, both were offered by the same Immigrant group to the communities. We have assumed that the monuments outlined here are inserted in the broader view of – immigration – and, in that case, they allow us to check the process of remembrance and representations modernization among Italian immigrants in Argentina and Brasil.

When talking about monuments, we realize that numerous authors indicate reasons for them to be continuously built in cities, among them, we referred to Bethencourt and Curto¹⁰; Knauss¹¹; Choay¹²; Correa¹³; Ramos¹⁴; Correia¹⁵.

Correia, among the mentioned authors, lists many reasons for the actions linked to the construction of monuments connected to “commemorative intervention”. In other words, the intention is not to celebrate, pay tribute, worship and honor, and this distinguishes them from any other kind of contemporary street art, with a mainly urban purpose¹⁶. The author points out that the celebration is an evocation of certain events of the past, to which we add value¹⁷. The celebration has a solemn and ceremonious purpose, triumphant at times, with speeches, military parades and festivities, among other manifestations¹⁸. Such ceremonies almost always incorporate the memory of

¹⁰ BETHENCOURT, Francisco; CURTO, Diogo Ramada (Org.). *A memória da Nação*. Lisboa: Livraria Sá da Costa Editora, 1991.

¹¹ KNAUSS, Paulo; MAUAD, Ana Maria. *Cidade vaidosa*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Sette Letras, 1999.

¹² CHOAY, Françoise. *A alegoria do patrimônio*. São Paulo: Estação Liberdade: Editora da UNESP, 2001.

¹³ CORREA, Roberto Lobato. *Monumentos, política e espaço*. In: Scripta Nova. Revista Electrónica de Geografía y Ciencias Sociales. Barcelona, vol. IX, n. 183, 2005.

¹⁴ RAMOS, Eloisa H. Capovilla da Luz. Imigrantes em monumentos: da gratidão às homenagens, In: MARTINEZ, Elda Evangelina Gonzalez; RAMOS, Eloisa H. Capovilla da Luz; ARENDT, Isabel Cristina; CUNHA, Jorge Luiz da; WITT, Marcos Antônio. *História da imigração: possibilidades e escrita*. São Leopoldo: Oikos; Editora Unisinos, 2013.

¹⁵ CORREIA, Victor. *Arte pública – seu significado e função*. Lisboa: Fonte da Palavra, 2013.

¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 65.

¹⁷ CORREIA, Victor. Loc. Cit.

¹⁸ CORREIA, Victor. Loc. Cit.

past events, temporally distant from the celebration, but for the ones evoking this memory, it gives meaning to the present. The tribute, on the other hand, according to the same author¹⁹, is different from the celebration, because it is paid to people from the present and the past, while the celebration takes in consideration past events. Therefore, the tribute means to honor someone for his/her acts, and may have a festive nature.

When transposing those ideas for our analysis, we can see that, when talking about construction and launching of a monument, for example, we can see a group seeking to be seen and/or reassert themselves in those cities. This happens with the groups of Italian immigrants that appear in this text. The inauguration of a monument requires certain degree of solemnity and, in it, we can see the society presenting themselves, their values, separations²⁰ and contradictions²¹. This allows us to think that the monuments of the cities are not only a part of the urban imaginary, but they define the relationship with the cities ancestors, pioneers and founders.

The study of such urban sculptural collections, as we can see, meets some parameters indicated by Knauss e Mauad²² and other authors, among which we highlight the ones who requested the work, the location where it belongs, the author of the project, if the work was defined by a contest or made following the indication of authorities. It will be necessary to analyze the descriptive part and the inventory of emblems of the sculpture composition, that is, the symbols comprising the monument, as well as the (bronze) plaque in it. For a successful analysis, it is also important to check the rejected proposals, when applicable, and the documents produced for the confection of

¹⁹ Ibidem, p. 66.

²⁰ Separation has the meaning of rupture. See: MICHAELIS. Moderno dicionário da língua portuguesa. São Paulo: Companhia Melhoramentos, 1998, p. 963.

²¹ CORREIA, Victor. Arte pública – seu significado e função. Lisboa: Fonte da Palavra, 2013, p. 69.

²² KNAUSS, Paulo e MAUAD, Ana Maria. Cidade vaidosa. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Sette Letras, 1999, p.8.

the work. Besides those aspects, there is an important second stage in this process, which is the pursuit of evidences (oral, written, recorded, images, among others) of the inauguration party.

2 - The monument to Christopher Columbus in Buenos Aires/AR

The construction of the monument to Christopher Columbus in Buenos Aires was one of the many gifts received by the city during the 100th independence²³ anniversary. Susana Costa²⁴ wrote about the participation of the Italian community in the celebration of the 100th Independence anniversary in Argentina, connected this immigrant community, with the donation of the monument, establishing a past/present relation when stating that

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From the middle of the 19th century, a number of Italian citizens - men, women and children - crossed the Atlantic searching for life job and opportunities. Argentina was one of the countries selected by the Italian immigrants during a period when the country had an *expanding market*, and this situation stimulated the *migratory flow*. [Our highlights].²⁵

²³ Nelly Perazzo, in the text “El centenario de la revolución de mayo y la escultura en el espacio público”, describes eight monuments that were donated by foreign communities to the city of Buenos Aires on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the May Revolution. In: BLANCO, Ricardo; GUTIERREZ, Ramón (Coord.). Temas de la academia: Las artes entorno al centenario. Estado de la cuestión (1905–1915). Buenos Aires: Academia Nacional de Bellas Artes, 2010, p. 68.

²⁴ COSTA, Susana. Participación de la colectividad italiana en los festejos del Centenario. In Revista Devoto Historia n. 19. Edición invierno 2010. Junta de Estudios Historicos de Villa Devoto. Revista de colección – Devoto Historia. Buenos Aires, 2010.

²⁵ Translated freely from: “A partir de mediados de siglo XIX un sin número de italianos, hombres, mujeres y niños atravesó el Atlántico en busca de mejores oportunidades de vida y de trabajo. La Argentina fue uno de los países elegidos por la inmigración italiana en una época que nuestro país se presentaba como un mercado *en franca expansión*, *situación que favorecía el flujo migratorio*”. COSTA, Susana. Op. Cit., s/n.

We emphasize the immigrant presence (small agricultural producers and builders, traders, artisans and professionals) in the Argentinian daily life in that period, highlighting the argument of the same author, who points out the active participation of immigrants in the social, economical and political life of the adopted country, and many of them had prominent representation in the city and the country²⁶. Moreover, Costa indicates that the group was very smart when proposing the construction of a monument to Christopher Columbus as a gift to the city during the 100th anniversary celebration. In the same article, Susana Costa concludes the narrative about the 100th anniversary celebration and the participation of the Italian immigrants:

Undoubtedly, this will be the most important contribution of the Italian community in the centenary celebration and, at the request of the Italians, the work is going to be named “*Monument to Cristoforo Colombo*” and is the only monument to Columbus in a Spanish-speaking country bearing the name of the Genoese navigator in his native language [Italian]²⁷.

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Soiza Reilly²⁸ in an article published in the newspaper *Caras y Caretas* said the monument was a gift given by the Italians to the Republic of Argentina. The same author noted that the conception of the monument was the result of a contest selection, and the winner was the Italian sculptor Arnaldo Zocchi. In May 24th, 1910, the foundation stone of the monument was laid, but its inauguration only happened in July 15th, 1921. The newspaper *La Patria degli Italiani*, mentioned by Susana Costa, describes in detail the solemnity of laying the foundation stone

²⁶ COSTA, Susana. Loc. Cit.

²⁷ Translated freely from: “Sin lugar a dudas esta será la participación más importante de la Comunidad italiana en los festejos del Centenario, y a pedido de los italianos la obra será llamada Monumento a “Cristoforo Colombo” constituyéndose en el único monumento a Colon emplazado en un país de habla hispana que lleva el nombre del navegante genovés en su lengua materna.” COSTA, Susana. Loc. Cit.

²⁸ SOIZA REILLY, Juan José [JJ]. *Caras y Caretas*, n. 536. Semanario Festivo, Literario, Artístico y de Actualidades. Buenos Aires, 09 de enero de 1909. In: *Anuario Italo-Sudamericano Buenos Aires*, vol. VII, anno de 1921, homenagem do Jornal “La patria degli italiani” aos seus assinantes.

of the monument to Columbus during the 100th anniversary celebration. Some parts of such newspaper, printed in 05.26.1910, indicate the development of the foundation stone inauguration ceremony:

At 9:05 a.m. the participants of the organizing committee arrive. At 10 a.m., preceded by a military squad, the Ambassador of Italy, Ferdinando Martini, arrives in his car, along with the Minister Count Macchi de Cellere, on behalf of His Majesty, the King of Italy. The troops present military honours, with a standing ovation by the crowd and, after that, [the attendees] are welcomed on stage by the Commander Antonio Devoto, along with the office clerks Marques Negrotti Cambiasso and the Prince of Camporeale and the vessels of the Italy, Pisa and Etruria Kingdoms²⁹.

The continuation of the narrative about the event add some more data about the ceremony:

Also in the event, the Chilean representatives, headed by their President, Mr. Montt and the Ministers for Foreign Affairs and the Army. [...] Received by the chords of the Ituzaingó March (Marcha de Ituzaingó), the President of the Nation, Mr. Figueroa Alcorta. The Italian Minister addresses the crowd, followed by the President of the Pro-Monument Committee, Commander Antônio Devoto. At the end of the speeches, a parchment referent to the occasion was signed. President Figueroa Alcorta and the Director and Commander Antônio Devoto were the first to walk down the steps and lay the foundation stone, followed by the Chilean President, the Ambassador and the Interior Minister, Mr. Gálvez. While the workers, commanded by the engineer Buschiazzo and by the constructor Bottini move the granite block, the Anthem to Garibaldi... sailors, firefighters, volunteers and battle heroes of the Homeland present a military salute, applauded by the audience.”³⁰

²⁹ Translated freely from: “Siendo las 9.05 llegan los componentes de la comisión organizadora de la manifestación. A las 10.00, precedido por un escuadrón militar, llega en su Berlina el embajador de Italia Ferdinando Martini y el ministro Conde Macchi de Cellere, encargado de negocios de S. M. el rey de Italia. Las tropas rinden honores militares, la multitud aplaude largamente al y son recibidos en el palco por el Comendador Antonio Devoto acompañado por los secretarios Marques Negrotti Cambiasso y el príncipe de Camporeale y por los comandantes de las naves del reino de Italia Pisa y Etruria.[...]” In: COSTA, Susana. 2010, s/n .

³⁰ Translated freely from: “Acompañan el evento la delegación Chilena presidida por su presidente el Dr. Montt y sus ministros de relaciones exteriores y de guerra. [...]Recibido por los acordes de la

Recently, when analyzing the bicentenary and its meanings, Margarita Gutman³¹ alerted us to the fact that every celebration is also a social construct, and it only turns into celebration when societies [...] become their promoting agents and establish [...] their meanings and modalities.³² We can realize this in the description of the 100th anniversary festivities and with the donation of the monument by the Italian community to the local people.

Another important aspect of the monument studied is linked to its sculptural details. One of the details shows the figure of Columbus as if he was exploring the Ocean over a column made from a single block of marble. In its base turned towards the East, we can see sculptures representing the *Civilization*, one hand holding a torch and the other supported by the *Genius*, signaling the faraway land. Next to the *Genius* we can see the *Ocean*. The *Science* awaits with a pensive attitude and the sailors help to take the boat to the sea. The composition seems to suggest the European civilization been conducted to every corner of the world by the navigator. In the western side of the same base, we can see a blindfolded female figure, representing Justice, the *Future*. We can also see a cross being raised by the navigator. On this side, we can see the Church and Justice together, brought together by the messenger to the new world. Here, we reinforce the idea that the sculptor interprets the action of Columbus within a civilizatory process. To complete the

Marcha de Ituzaingó llega el Presidente de la Nación Doctor Figueroa Alcorta. Dirigen la palabra a la multitud el Ministro de Italia Conde Macchi de Cellere, y posteriormente el Presidente del Comité pro Monumento Comendador Antonio Devoto. [...] Finalizados los discursos, se firma un pergamino alusivo a la ocasión. Serán el presidente Figueroa Alcorta con nuestro Director el Comendador Antonio Devoto los primeros en bajar la escalera para colocar la piedra fundamental acompañados por el presidente de Chile, el embajador Martini y el ministro del interior Sr Gálvez. Mientras tanto los obreros dirigidos por el Ingeniero Buschiazzo y por el constructor Bottini operaran el movimiento del bloque de granito mientras suena el himno a Garibaldi... marineros, bomberos, voluntarios y héroes de las batallas de la Patria hacen su saludo militar mientras que la multitud aplaude." In: COSTA, Susana. Loc. Cit.

³¹ GUTMAN, Margarita. *Construir bicentenarios latino-americanos en la era de la globalización*. Buenos Aires: Infinito, 2012.

³² Ibidem, p. 38.

monument, sculpted in Italy by the sculptor Arnaldo Zocchi, as already pointed out, embossed parts representing different moments connected to the discovery: The Oath made by Christopher Columbus to the Catholic Monarchs and his Return to Spain taking merchandise from America. We can also highlight in the sculpture the figure of the navigator in Carrara marble, weighing 38 tons and 6.25 meters high. It was located in Parque Colón, next to La Casa Rosada (The Pink House). It was taken from there in 2013.

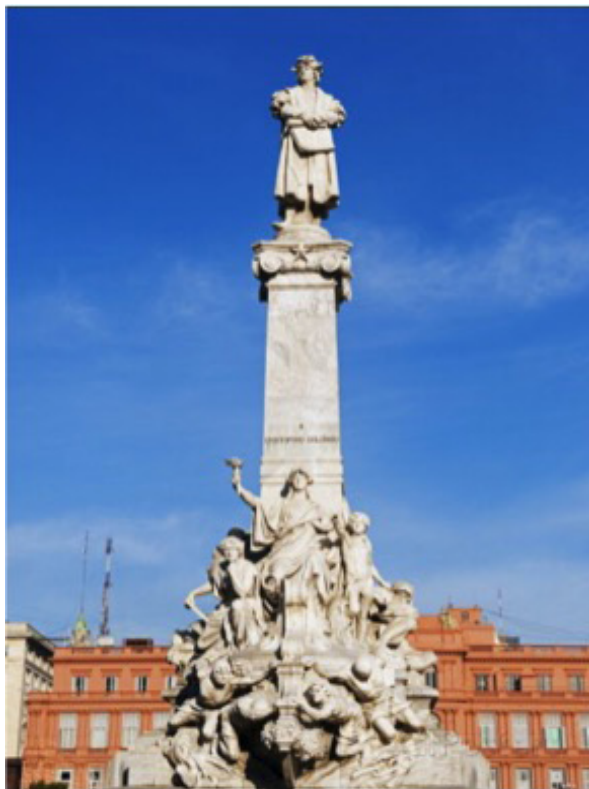


Image A

Monument to Christopher Columbus in Buenos Aires.
Donated to the city in 1910 by the Italian Community. Accessed in: 15/07/2015.
Available at: https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monumento_a_Cristobal_Colón.

We also have in the monument, as a fundamental icon, the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus and the resulting arrival of the evangelization to the Continent by his hands. This would have taken, in the end of the 19th century, the Catholic Church, with the Pope Pius IX and a group of Catholics, to advocate for the beatification of Christopher Columbus, because of his evangelizing action, what did not happen. But the Catholics had a high regard of the explorer in the beginning of the 20th century. Thinking about the monument in this context, it is important to bear in mind the words of Dvorák³³ that the historical monuments are always unique, can not be reproduced and may carry to the future its characterizing elements and the traces of time, that is, although they are unique, they allow updates over time, made by groups or individuals (paintings, plaques, remodeling) and offer the possibility of readings and interpretations.

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3 - The National Monument to the Immigrants in Caxias do Sul/BR

The idea of a National Monument to the Immigrants in Caxias do Sul/BR came into being in January 1949, within the context of the future celebrations of the 75th anniversary of the Italian immigration in Rio Grande do Sul. The theme was communicated by the journalist Luis Compagnoni, via a radio station named Rádio Caxias.

In the same year, a subcommittee was organized, within the Central Commission for the celebration of the 75 years of the arrival of the early Italian immigrants in the region. Along with the Festa da Uva (Grapes Festival), they had another purpose now: the construction of the monument. The subcommittee received the name of Pro-Monument Committee (Comissão Pró-monumento) and was responsible to

³³ DVÖRÁČEK, Max. Catecismo da preservação de monumentos. Cotia: Ateliê, 2008.

raise funds for the construction of the monument and the discussion of the conceptions around it.³⁴

At the suggestion of the historian João Spadari Adami and with the endorsement of the majority of the Pro-Monument Committee, the sculpture should represent a couple of young, brave and determined pioneer immigrants, (...) with their son. Compagnoni agreed to the idea and adopted the recommendation from Adami.³⁵ To build the monument, the Commission launched a contest, in which the local sculptor Antônio Caringi attended with the project “New Homeland” (Nova Pátria). It was the winning project. So, he was responsible to make the work.

The sculpture is a work with monumental characteristics, because it is five meters high and weighs 2,920 kilos. As we know, it is composed of a couple and an infant and its content reverences the work, the family and the desire to look for new horizons. Behind the main sculptural set, we can see the obelisk, signaling, at the top, the date of arrival of the first immigrants - 1875 - where three embossed marble panels stand out, with a representation alludes, firstly, to the arrival of the immigrants and the contact with the indigenous people; then, to the success of the immigrants because of their hard work, and finally to the integration of the immigrant to the Brazilian nation with the privates. Below the main sculpture, the crypt houses a small museum devoted to the memory of the construction and inauguration of the monument. From this, we can deduce that the indicative elements for the construction of the monument were connected to the arrival of the first Italians to the region, from 1875 on.

Another source provides details about the inauguration of the monument in February, 1954. It is the newspaper *Correio do Povo* which, with an article written by Brasílio Machado Neto, specially for the pa-

³⁴ See in: MARTINS, Jorge Luiz Cardoso. A história do Quartel em Caxias do Sul. Monografia de conclusão do Curso de Especialização em cultura e região. Caxias do Sul: UCS, 2008, p. 30; ADAMI, João Spadari. História de Caxias do Sul. Caxias do Sul: São Paulo, 1966, p. 30.

³⁵ ADAMI, João Spadari. Op. Cit. p. 22.

per, mentioned the construction of the National Monument to the Immigrant in Caxias do Sul, which would be launched in the next days:

The monument aims to offer a summary of the contributions of the settlers to the national development, representing a homage from the Nation to the foreigners arriving here with the intention to set their roots and work for the collective growth.³⁶

The speech of the President of the Republic, Getúlio Dornelles Vargas, is also about the inaugural act, when presenting the plaque alluding to the launching of the monument in February 28th, 1954. They were full of meaning for the understanding of the importance of such event. He started his speech:

People from Caxias

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This majestic monument presents a high level of historical sense and deep human expression, and is dedicated to celebrate, for the years ahead, the invaluable achievements of the immigrants to the development of the nation. The recognition of such good fellows of working and fruitful life, also consecrates the generous spirit of our people, and their initiative created the superb sculpture that now illustrates the thriving landscape of this city. With the harmonious beauty of its artistic conception and the symbols created by the statuary, it summarizes the adventure of the ones coming from remote parts of the world to find here the opportunity of a new existence, in the name of hope and liberty.³⁷

Further on his speech, the President emphasized:

In its glory, Brazil is quintessentially destined to be a friendly nation, the great welcoming homeland, where the children from every end of the Earth may work in an atmosphere of encouragement, tolerance and fraternity. We kept

³⁶ MACHADO NETO, Basílio. Reportagem especial sobre “a inauguração do Monumento Nacional ao Imigrante”. Porto Alegre: Jornal Correio do Povo, 28 de fevereiro de 1954, p. 2.

³⁷ VARGAS, Getúlio Dornelles. Discurso proferido no ato de inauguração do Monumento Nacional ao Imigrante. Caxias do Sul: Jornal O Pioneiro, 06 de março de 1954, p. 1.

the traditions of our formation untouched.³⁸

Finally, Getúlio Vargas said:

Brazilian people,

This monument is a tribute for justice and a reason for national pride. It was erected as a statement of our gratitude for everything we owe to the ones who, coming from diverse lands, but brought by the same hope, committed themselves, as we did, to promote the development of our land, that is already a Homeland for them, too.³⁹

Moreover, we can say that erecting a monument to immigrants in Caxias do Sul/BR has turned the word *gratitude* into an important expression presented, directly or indirectly, in the sculptures dedicated to “commend” immigration. Quite often, the request comes from the community, or even from the public authorities in different levels, with sentences such as the one in the National Monument to the Immigrant, in Caxias do Sul/BR, included in this space as suggested by the Republic Presidency⁴⁰. Besides the symbolic sentence, other icons are present in the monument, such as the date 1875, highlighted in the Obelisk, in reference to the date of arrival of the Italian immigrants in the region. With regard to other ethnicities, we can only see natives interacting with immigrants. It is also important to mention, from the entire work, the crypt gateway, made of bronze, embossed at the top. You can see below the poem “Exortação”, by Cassiano Ricardo.

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³⁸ Ibidem, p. 2.

³⁹ Ibidem, p. 2.

⁴⁰ According to the Law No. 1.801 from January 2nd, 1953, the President of the Republic declared that the monument to the immigrant, under construction, named National Monument to the Immigrant, was a “tribute by the people and the Government to the brave pioneers of the colonization in Brazil, recognition of the Homeland to the collaboration of the good immigrant and that the monument will present, in its gantry, the following caption: The Brazilian Nation to the Immigrant (A Nação Brasileira ao Imigrante)”. In: RAMOS, Eloisa H. Capovilla da Luz Ramos. De bagagem cultural a patrimônio urbano: museus e monumentos à imigração no Sul do Brasil. In: HERÉDIA, Vânia Beatriz Merlotti; RADÚNZ, Roberto (Org.). Imigração e sociedade. Caxias do Sul, RS: EducS, 2011, 187.

But the construction of a monument needs other elements, besides the fund raising and the call for competition to choose the sculptor. It needs a public space to be placed and authorization to be built. It is important to point out that, in this respect, the site selection is not casual. There is a political character for the monument, since the work restores virtues offered as a lesson to the present and the future, providing the foundations for a collective memory, inventing a tradition, a past, in which the community tries to acknowledge themselves.⁴¹

We can say that the construction of a monument is also a memory desire and that a site of memory is born and lives by the feeling that there is no spontaneous memory, and it is necessary to invoke dates and celebrations because the processes involving memories are not natural.⁴²

⁴¹ FABRIS, Anateresa (Org.). Monumento a Ramos de Azevedo: do concurso ao exílio. Campinas, SP: Mercado das Letras, São Paulo: FAPESP, 1997, p. 22.

⁴² Ibidem, p. 53.



Image B

National Monument to the Immigrant. Donated to the Italian pioneers by the community of Caxias do Sul, with the help of the Federal Government. Inaugurated in 1954. Picture: Tatiane de Lima. Author's archive.

4 - Two monuments, two destinations

The first monument studied, dedicated to Christopher Columbus in the city of Buenos Aires, sealed its fate after over a hundred years by the Argentinian President, Cristina Kirchner. The objective, she said⁴³, was to make the statue go through a restoration process, to avoid it to “collapse”. The locals had been taken aback with the cranes removing the 6-meter-tall monument on a Saturday, June 29th, 2013. Since then, many places had been considered to replace it, but none of them really

⁴³ Jornal Folha de São Paulo, 30 de junho de 2013.

worked. Shattered and on the floor, without a permanent location and being carried from side to side. Considering that the memory requires traces and fragments to be implemented, and that there is no memorial representation without traces⁴⁴, the monument to Christopher Columbus shattered on the ground is a clear sign of discredit. This fact reaches specially the descendants of Italian immigrants who donated the monument, and they see this attitude as an official lack of consideration, because a monument, as a site of memory⁴⁵, has an important function for the cities and for the citizens who acknowledge it. As it does not interact with the population anymore, it loses the function of memory and identity. It loses its meaning. And that is how, quite often, a monument exchanges places, moves from a neighborhood or a city. But also, there may be a change in government, or a revolution and, in such case, the figure represented can be destroyed by its opponents.

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In this particular case, we are sure that removing the monument to Christopher Columbus was a political event, since there was another project with identical content in progress, and it was supported by the Government: the construction of a monument to Juana de Azurduy de Padilla, a woman who was the symbol of the native peoples and representing the fight for the independence of the Southern Cone countries. Juana certainly deserved a monument in her honor. It was built with the approval of the Bolivian government, and located in the same pedestal of the Christopher Columbus monument.

Today, the navigator is in *Costanera Norte*, lying and tied in the margin of the River Plate. Its destination is uncertain and its condition is critical. It is with no vessel, no crew, and no worlds to discover. The ones who donated to build the monument, advocate for it. The ones who received seem to have forgotten. And the oblivion, when it comes to a monument, is a sentence of death.

⁴⁴ CATROGA, Fernando. Memória e história, In PESAVENTO, Sandra Jatahy (Org.). Fronteiras do milênio. Porto Alegre: Editora da Universidade/UFRGS, 2001, p. 48.

⁴⁵ NORA, Pierre. Entre memória e história: a problemática dos lugares. In: Projeto História. Revista do Programa de Estudos Pós-Graduados de História. São Paulo: PUC/SP, vol. 10, 1993, p. 13.



Image C

Christopher Columbus on the floor, waiting for a new location.

Accessed in: 03/07/2016. http://www.clarin.com.br/DisputasCristina-Kirchner-Cristovao-Colombo_0_947305676.html

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After 60 years of the construction of the National Monument to the Immigrants, in Caxias do Sul/BR, it developed a different trajectory in relation to the monument to Christopher Columbus in Buenos Aires recently. After the inauguration, in February, 1954, the monument went through the finishing stage, with the restructuring of the crypt, which became a museum, with the purpose of presenting the stages of its construction, mainly through pictures.

In September 13th, 1985, the National Monument to the Immigrant received special attention, because it was donated to the municipality of Caxias do Sul by the Pro-Monument Committee. When the inauguration celebrated 40 years, in 1994, a booklet created by

the Cultural entity from Caxias do Sul⁴⁶ about the monument, stating, among other considerations:

The Monument - from the Brazilian Nation and dedicated to all immigrants who came to this land with no ethnic distinctiveness - is a set of symbols related to the immigrant faith, to the political and economic relations between Brazil and other nations, and to the ideal of progress of a region.

It resumed the values connected not only to the arrival of immigrants to Brazil, but also to the importance given by them to the development process of the Caxias do Sul/BR area. In relation to the Monument, the authors expressed to the population and to the public authorities the will to make it a City Cultural Heritage:

After four decades, when celebrating the 40th anniversary of the National Monument to the Immigrant, and the national acknowledgment to the pioneers, Caxias do Sul need to take back the historical importance of such monument and offer a new and deserved law: the designation of it as a historical and artistic heritage of the city!

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In the year 2000, another revitalization took place in this public asset, developed through a Project of Monument Revitalization carried out by the Municipal Administration of Caxias do Sul and by the *Miseri Coloni Cultural Society*. Such work was sponsored by the Rio Grande do Sul State Government with the support of the Secretariat of Culture of the State and the Cultural Encouragement Law. This attitude shows that the community was aware of the action of men and time over the protected asset, and the municipal authorities registered it in bronze plaques, as an evidence of this action, as shown in image D:

⁴⁶ CAVAGNOLLI, Anelise; ALVES, Eliana Rcla. Construção de um referencial para Caxias do Sul. Caxias do Sul: Prefeitura Municipal de Caxias do Sul/Museu Municipal, 1995. p. 01.



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Image D

Plate alluding to the restoration of the National Monument to the Immigrant. Caxias do Sul/BR. Picture: Tatiane de Lima. Author's archive.

Finally, in 2005, the State Legislator Rui Pauletti, representing Caxias do Sul in the Parliament, has sent a proposed bill to the Legislative Assembly, requesting that the National Monument to the Immigrant should become a Historical and Cultural Heritage of Rio Grande do Sul. The request was approved by the Law No.198, dated August 28th, 2005, through which the monument was declared to be an *integral asset of the historical and cultural heritage of the State of Rio Grande do Sul*.

5 - 2016: Comparisons, (in)conclusions

To understand the sculpture collection of a monument dedicated to immigration, it is relevant to consider, besides the history of the people and of the monument itself, some keywords, such as *celebration, tribute, gratitude and oblivion*. Those are words that make the monuments more visible, and also other spaces in the city such as squares, streets, bridges or even other ethnic manifestations, because, when celebrating, the feeling of belonging is embraced by the communities.

Perpetuated in bronze, iron, marble or stone, among others, the monuments, pervaded by history and nurtured by mottoes of the ones who conceived them, reveal - in their content and surroundings - the presence of the immigrant as a substrate of its construction in such locations. In the past, and today, immigrants see themselves represented in those artworks, but they cannot guarantee their memories. Quite often, oblivion comes with the trajectory of such monuments and, presumably, it is happening with the monument to Christopher Columbus in Buenos Aires. We hope that the political conflicts do not invalidate its maintenance, despite its current situation. On the other hand, the National Monument to the Immigrant, in Caxias do Sul, Brazil, keeps its historical memory alive with the representation of the monument and the immigrant community and/or the local authorities are responsible to upgrade it.

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