

SAO PAULO – THE IMPACT OF CHANGE AND THE RECOVERY OF INTANGIBLE HERITAGE **Suzanna SAMPAIO*, Brésil / Brasil**

Foreword

Digging out the immaterial heritage of the city of São Paulo from beneath tons of concrete rubble is as challenging as it is complex and the outstanding research, lectures and heritage conservation work of the scholars of the University of São Paulo has served as a source of inspiration for all of us.

In line with the theme proposed for the XIV ICOMOS General Assembly, this paper deals with the "*Spiritus Loci*", sleeping in the innermost heart of the largest economic centre of South America: São Paulo, and is chronologically divided into four sections:

1. 1554 - 1822: A Clay Village;
2. 1822 - 1889: The Imperial City;
3. 1889 - 1964: The Economic Capital of the Republican Bourgeoisie;
4. 1964 to the present: The Contemporary Metropolis.

São Paulo do Campo de Piratininga: A Clay Village 1554-1822

Contrary to the rules set forth by the Portuguese, whereby settlements should always be located on the coast (so as to avoid raids from pirates or cruisers from other nations), the Jesuits and other Portuguese seamen settled in this area, and hence surpassed the Serra do Mar, towards the hinterland. Thus, in 1554 the historical disobedience of the Jesuits laid the foundations of a Seminar for the Catechism of Indians in the Piratininga Plateau. On January 25th, St. Paul's day, a mass was held inaugurating the small seminar.

Although the small village on the hill between the Tamanduateí and Anhangabaú rivers was born of transgression, the coexistence between Indians and colonizers was officialized under the rule of Governor-General Mem de Sá in 1560, with the arms and pillory, symbols of the municipal jurisdiction that had formerly been denied to the village of Santo André da Borda do Campo.

At first, this urban ecclesiastic nucleus grew slowly, developing a Portuguese building technique with a street pattern that avoided steep hills and settled houses on firm ground. The material used was clay, but instead of moulding it into bricks, it was smashed between wooden boards tightly bound by a wood mesh. The "smashed clay" architecture must have been inevitable as the alluvium provided good clay and, above all, there were no quarries on the flat top of the Jesuit hill.

Much has been said about the modesty of the early "Paulista" house and of its "caipira" (rustic) style, with its endless repetitiveness. However, the reasons underlying the choice of such architectural style have been often ignored: the precarious economic condition of the first inhabitants, who were mostly peasants and craftsmen. The dwellings arising in such setting were simple – without ornaments – and built by the dwellers themselves for personal use. The façades had but a few small openings that were as much as the clay wall allowed. The roof edges were long – and held in place by props – so as to protect the walls against rainfall; due to choice or lack of architectural knowledge, they had no pipes. In 1585, chronicler Fernão Cardim described the "quinces, peas, grapes, onions, wheat and barley" plantations, cattle breeding and mentioned the first street names: São Bento, São Francisco, Santo Antônio, Direita, Misericórdia, Carmo, thus showing how land was used according to religious precepts. One century after the foundation of the Jesuit Seminar, the houses were worth 5 thousand "réis" and in the central area, those with "two floors, having its corridor and backyard, roofed with tiles" were worth 24 to 50 thousand "réis".

The first illustration of the village of São Paulo, a landscape from the São Vicente "capitania" by João Teixeira Albernaz, dates back to 1631.

Still in the XVII century, in 1681 the village of São Paulo surpassed that of Santos and São Vicente and was made head of the "capitania". At that time, the urban settlement had approximately 2000 inhabitants, 260 houses, 3 convents (São Bento, São Francisco, Nossa Senhora do Carmo), 4 churches subordinated to the Sé Cathedral (Santo Antonio, Nossa Senhora do Rosário dos Pretos, São Gonçalo dos Pardos, São Pedro) and two convents for nuns (Santa Tereza, Nossa Senhora da Luz) plus the Jesuit Seminar.

Thus, the century that had been marked by the violent "entradas" and "bandeiras" saw the massacre of thousands of Indians in the neighbouring areas, and the discovery of gold and silver mines, which stimulated the growth of a foreign population.

Despite the brutality and cruelty of the "bandeirante" conquests, all the routes towards the hinterland were henceforth consolidated along the paulista rivers: Ribeira de Iguape, Tietê, Grande, Pardo, Paraíba and Piracicaba.

The “entradas” extended Brazilian territory beyond the limits set down by the Tordezilhas Treaty (papal edict “Inter Coetera” 1494) giving rise to new settlements that were to become either the urban centers on the border of the provinces of Minas Gerais, Goiás and Mato Grosso, or the trading entrepôts in Paraná, Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul. All these settlements bore the main feature of paulista material culture: smashed clay (Taipa de Pilão).

In the early XVIII century (1711) the village was promoted to the category of “city”. By 1745, it already lodged the bishopric. The enlarged village underwent an architectural transformation and its façades were adorned with shutter trusses, wooden balconies, props and “mucharabis” (Moorish balcony protected by a wooden grating).

The 18th century village was characterised by peace and boredom and changes began to take place only in the XIX century, when the Portuguese Royal Family came to Brazil in exile. After 1808, new regulations modifying the façades were put in place. The official recognition of Brazil as member of the United Kingdom of Portugal and Algarve (1815) and the arrival of the “French Mission” in Rio de Janeiro (1816) inaugurated a new era in Brazilian colonial architecture. The proclamation of Brazil's independence in 1822, which took place in the capital of the province of São Paulo, provided the city with a new political face. In 1827, the old Jesuit village saw its Franciscan Convent give rise to the Law College – the nucleus of its university.

The Imperial City - 1822 - 1889

In 1818, Luiz d'Alincourt, a Portuguese engineer, reporting on his trips to Brazil wrote the following about São Paulo:

“The roads in São Paulo are wide, paved and in good condition; the buildings are made of clay... There are many stone bridges and some wooden ones... The old Jesuit Convent has become the Government Palace... This city has the right conditions to lodge a University: cheap abundant foodstuff, healthy air, temperature and climate, little entertainment, in short, everything seems to favour this site for cultural development...”

In the XIX century many travellers wrote similar reports on the pleasant and modest aspects of the city, which was brought to life by the students. There had been no significant changes in the first three centuries: domestic architecture still used the same plans, materials and building techniques.

The Lebreton Mission, which had changed the “architectural patterns and proceedings” in Rio de Janeiro, reached São Paulo only after the coffee plantations had been established. The first Brazilian coffee plantations, in 1723, were concentrated in the north. In São Paulo, the first plantation in the Paraíba Valley, dates back to 1809 - 1830.

The plantations in Campinas, established between 1809 and 1830, transformed the city into São Paulo's main producer as far back as 1835. In 1852, they produced 2.000.000 “arrobas” (1 arroba = approximately 15 kg), and by that time plantations were also moving westward. The expansion of coffee plantations took place “*pari passu*” with the first industries, and not as a successive cycle economy. In 1810 the first ironworks (Ipanema) was set up (Catalan molds), followed by the first cotton textile company in 1811 and the first steam engine sugar refinery in 1836.

Coffee monoculture required some changes: the introduction of immigrant workforce (wage earners as opposed to slaves), railways and the enlargement of Santos docks so as to cope with the transportation and exportation needs of the product. Having undergone such transformations, Campinas and Santos now dispute with São Paulo the “status” of “province capital”.

The accumulation of wealth through agricultural revenues transformed the still modest city of São Paulo in the mid XIX century, bringing about new brick and masonry buildings. Urban train stations alongside factories and warehouses provide the city with bricks and wrought iron, which had not yet extended to common dwellings. In fact, the imperial city of São Paulo de Piratininga, rebuilt in masonry on top of the existing clay buildings, was severed from the new “labour city” and laid the foundations for the future residential and service area. In 1875 there were three thousand buildings and a close analysis of urban development reveals that the 32.000 buildings existing in 1910 were simply erected on top of the former ones.

The Capital of the Republican Bourgeoisie

After the proclamation of the Republic, Rio de Janeiro was still the capital of the country, maintaining its former “status”.

The city São Paulo, relieved from overbearing governmental expenditure, was free to accumulate wealth derived from coffee trade and to invest in industrialisation, whose revenues would gradually change its habits and construction patterns. This renewal complied not only with legal norms set forth in 1868 and 1872, but also with a spontaneous demand for embellishment. The late XIX century reform was based on a refinement of social and domestic habits of noble coffee farmers, important urban tradesmen and early industrialists motivated by the arrival of immigrants; especially Italians. The latter, experts in artistic handicraft, formed the workforce required to create more sophisticated façades, buildings and even interior architectural designs in the city, whose foreign “mansions” used imported material in its construction. The new workforce and the imported materials were essential features of the “eclectic period” of the city's architecture. The mighty constructions of the wealthy elite also influenced the middle-class housing style.

Although houses were evenly set up by the constructor, with front windows and side entrances, with or without gardens, they made use of all sorts of ornaments: neoclassical, pre-Raphaelite, pseudo Gothic, renaissance, baroque and neocolonial turnings (torneados); stylised wooden blinds and stair-rails and Riga pine details, wrought-iron from Glasgow, Belgium and Germany; Italian marbles; French lamps, ranging from the most simple to the most sophisticated ones, and Portuguese tiles from Porto.

Examples of such “palaces” still standing to this day are the Ipiranga Museum, the Campos Elíseos (former residence of coffee farmer Elias Chaves), the Justice Palace in the historic centre and the Municipal Theater.

Many “mansions” built by Ramos de Azevedo were demolished and only a few isolated examples have survived. It is worth noting that the remaining ones were originally either public buildings or became so when purchased by public authorities. The most distinguishing feature of eclectic architecture in São Paulo was the Av. Paulista, located 850m above sea level, dividing the Tietê and Pinheiros basin. This important public road was opened in 1891 and until the mid XX century it was the main residential area of the agricultural, industrial and commercial capitalists of the State of São Paulo.

Eclectic architecture first appeared during the industrial revolution, deriving from a peculiar “retrô” manifestation against technology, and became very successful among immigrants seeking their origins. Nevertheless this style found its opponents in noteworthy men like Monteiro Lobato, Alcântara Machado and Mário de Andrade, who thought that the eclectic style endowed the city with an “international exhibit” aspect and that even if “European”, the buildings constituted a sort of “architectural Esperanto”. By the 1920's, some isolated modern constructions could already be seen, and in the 1930's – at the time of the “Avenues Plan” of engineer Prestes Maia – concrete had already been consecrated. After the end of World War II, demographic explosion led to a construction boom: new ideas, techniques and materials, and the valorisation of projects signed by distinguished architects who arrived as war refugees or who were graduates from architecture schools set up in São Paulo in 1946 and 1948.

The city's “modernization” did not accomplish the expected results. The apartment buildings and houses to let belonging to the new life style – detached or semi-detached – as a refusal to the “archaic” and “decadent”, were part of the struggle towards “modernization”. The ruling mentality of the 50's first appeared in the 30's and 40's and its fast, widespread acceptance by the population led to the flourishing of an enormous number of buildings devoid of aesthetic value. Time and lack of maintenance brought irreversible damage to them. Large deteriorated urban areas bear sad witness to this period, save for rare isolated buildings of historic and architectural value forgotten among the rest, and even then most of them are deteriorated and anonymous. Were it not for photographic files, the first architects of São Paulo would have been doomed to oblivion.

For the celebrations of the 400th Anniversary of the city, São Paulo became one enormous building site. In the Ibirapuera region, the Oscar Niemeyer building project connected by a “marquise” predicted and forecasted Brasília. Nevertheless, the “return to origins” contributed to the preservation of cultural heritage. Since the federal government drew much of its attention to the baroque of Minas Gerais – listed since 1937 –, the destruction of the old colonial “taipa” (clay) architecture in São Paulo, with the same architectural and urban characteristics as the most valuable cities of Minas Gerais, became more evident. As a result, the “bandeiristas houses” still existing at the time underwent repairs. The valorisation of the first three centuries of architectural history had struck official consciousness and had affected the paulista and paulistano population. For, after all, the recognition of “caipira” (rustic country people) roots gave the paulista “quatrocentões” (traditional rich families of landowners living in São Paulo since the beginning of colonization) the aristocratic status they needed.

Thirty years later, with the destruction of eclectic residences on Av. Paulista, and in the Brás district, due to the construction of the underground; and the defacing of Av. São João and part of the Bexiga district with the construction of flyovers, we are faced with the modern city, where roads and vehicles crush the path of men. In the so-called recovery of memory in 1954, revival was rather an unfinished reconstruction of lost identity.

The Contemporary Metropolis

After the second half of the XX century, specific legislation was drawn up for the defence and recovery of historic heritage, leading to the creation of various entities to deal with different aspects of this complex issue.

Nowadays, the city is beset by a myriad of problems of a natural, physical, administrative, social and economic nature. On the one hand, there is the geographical location of the city, within a hydrographical basin, where years of administrative neglect have led to disorganised and illegal settlements that continue to spread out, oblivious of legislation, such as those protecting river sources and springs. On the other hand, there is the socio-economic equation for which there is no easy solution: economic stagnation and unemployment resulting in widespread poverty and an alarming growth of criminality.

The gigantic gap between rich and poor in what is still the economic powerhouse of the country galvanises restoration professionals in their resistance against the onslaught of continuous destruction to which the city has been exposed for so many centuries.

Given this situation, it is quite simply urgent that we document contemporary cultural assets in every possible way, using all the material resources at hand.

Fortunately, a lot of work is being done and, as a result, a significant part of our modern and daring contemporary architectural heritage, alongside moving examples of the intangible remnants of our spiritual sites, are being carefully studied and published by scholars and/or specialists associated to ICOMOS.

The recovery of intangible heritage by means of new technologies has been the major cause for the renewed and growing interest in the preservation of religious festivities throughout the state of São Paulo. These festivities include not only Catholic manifestations (a legacy of Portuguese colonisation), but also Afro-Brazilian and Tupi-Guarani manifestations (a legacy of the African Diaspora and the almost forgotten native inhabitants of São Paulo, the Tupi-Guarani, respectively). Within the city itself, the same increased interest and participation is attested to by the festivities that celebrate patron saints and in the folklore of various groups of immigrants that settled in the city at the turn of the XX century: patron saints of catholic communities of Italian and Spanish immigrants, folkloric festivities of Japanese immigrants, Arab and Jewish festivities in their clubs and associations (such as the Monte Líbano and Sírio Libanês, for the Arab community, and the Hebraica, for the Jewish community).

Former Jesuit settlements surround the city of São Paulo all the way down to the coast. On the one hand, places like Cotia, Embu, Guararema, Guarulhos, Osasco, São Miguel Paulista, Santo Amaro, São Bernardo, São Roque and others, which constitute what is known as the Greater São Paulo, and on the other, Bertioga, Cananéia, Iguape, Itanhaem, Peruíbe and São Vicente, which dot its coast. Ongoing archaeological survey and excavations have uncovered significant material which accounts for the presence of various features that survive to this day in the handcrafts of local Tupi residents of Parelheiros, one of the many districts of the city of São Paulo, in their sophisticated ceramics and basketry.

The African presence is manifested above all in religious practices, which in São Paulo have taken a rather different turn from their counterparts elsewhere in the country, e.g. Bahia. Unlike the latter the, so to speak 'Paulista-Africans', only practised their religious rites in closed precincts. Of course nowadays they are free to practise their Umbanda. However, past restrictions on their practices led to the development of closer ties with the established Catholic Church. As a result, many of them are devotees of Saint Benedito (originally a black friar), Our Lady of Aparecida (in Aparecida in the Paraíba River Valley), Our lady of the Rosary of the back people, in the Nossa Senhora do Rosário Church (Largo do Paisandu, city of São Paulo) and of Saint Ifigênia, 'Protectress of the Blacks', whose church lends its name to the surrounding district in the city of São Paulo and which became the Cathedral of São Paulo for many years while the Sé Cathedral was under reconstruction. African craft has not had the same lasting effects as its religion. Nevertheless there are to this day important manifestations of it, such as hand-woven tapestry with totemic patterns and motifs handed down to them by their African ancestors, such as the Sudanese, Bantu, Hottentot, etc.

The Roman Catholic Faith brought over by Portuguese colonisers spread throughout the country and constitutes the major bulk of the intangible heritage still to be found among us. Since its foundation under the Jesuit Order in the XVI century, São Paulo has witnessed the arrival of many other Catholic Orders, such as the Benedictines, the Franciscans and the Carmelites, as well as of congregations, then known as 'Reclussions', for religious women, since under the Marquis of Pombal, in the XVIII century, the word 'Convent' was not allowed. Thus, the urban settlement of the city of São Paulo originally followed a Canonical form. The Jesuit College (nowadays 'Pátio do Colégio'), the Benedictine Abbey, the Carmelite Convent and the two Franciscan churches, Penitência and São Francisco das Chagas, attest to the concession, by the Municipality, of the best and most coveted lands to these religious groups: on the hilltop where they could better defend themselves. The construction of these religious buildings enabled the city to retain the same religious beliefs, rites and worship (of the same patron saints), *in loco*, throughout its history, despite the fact that none of the original religious buildings or the houses surrounding them have survived. In this sense, São Paulo constitutes a remarkable example for those who defend the Nara Charter, whereby the surrounding, and not the buildings themselves in isolation, is seen as the bearer of the spiritual message of any given culture.

In the past, celebrations such as Holy Friday and Corpus Christi gathered expressive masses of faithful to these sites, but from the 1960s to the 1980s the numbers dwindled dramatically so that they all but disappeared. However, the subsequent influx of migrant workers to the city has reinvigorated these festivities which have become important once again.

However, there has been a significant shift in the religious behaviour of the country since the last decade of the XX century: namely, the massive spread of various Protestant creeds. Formerly associated to Northern European immigrants and their established Churches, such as the Presbyterians, Methodists and Anglicans, Protestantism has now taken an entirely new and more proselytising turn.

The establishment of various Pentecostal branches has brought about an unprecedented growth of followers, which, according to some sociologists specialised on religion, has resulted in the construction of multi-functional 'temples' that act as schools and, more importantly, as meeting places for masses of destitute people. Estimates show that in the State of São Paulo 40% of the population is now Protestant, 55% Catholic and 5% has other creeds. To understand the extent of this shift, it is worth remembering that Catholicism was the only (accepted) faith for the first three centuries of our history, and that from the 1850s until the 1950s it accounted for 78% of the population! Yet the change in mentality and beliefs has not affected the original, ecclesiastical urbanisation of the city centre for, as expressed in the words of our fellow ICOMOS member, Architect Murilo Marx:

"Unlike the palimpsest, urban soil, bearing the dramatic and kaleidoscopic human adventure, is never completely erased; true, it remains there as support for newer writings, but always indelibly marked by previous ones."

ABSTRACT

In 1954, during the celebrations of the 4th Centennial of the foundation of São Paulo, people boasted about the great progress the City had made by admiring the high rate of construction. Safe for the great cities in the USA, large urban centres such as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro are generally capital cities that concentrate the largest and best historic and architectural sites – made up of significant and often artistic heritage – keeping in full with the power they represent. São Paulo never bore the symbolic physiognomy of power, nor does the beauty of its landscape, its rivers and vegetation stand out at first sight. Like most American cities, the urban setting of São Paulo demonstrates the power of its civil society – not its political power.

It is still surprising to look back on the pride and the excitement which took hold of the people at that time. Everyone resorted to “the strength, talent and courage of Paulista origins” so as to explain the material metamorphoses the city had undergone in the last seventy years (1874 - 1950).

The continuous destruction of the original colonial village and of the provincial imperial town, and the devastation of almost the entire bourgeois republican architecture, was thus hidden beneath the “progress” metaphor that constituted the ultimate justification for all previous destruction.

The architectural and historic heritage of São Paulo was thereby buried beneath endless layers of concrete. This paper aims at searching among the debris for whatever significant evidence has remained of these past historical moments:

- São Paulo do Campo de Piratininga;
- A Clay Village 1554 -1822;
- The Imperial City - 1922 - 1889;
- The Capital of the Republican Bourgeoisie;
- The Contemporaneous City: Problems and Proposals.

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