

Problems and perspectives in the ‘Santuário Mariano’: The protogenesis of a visual source of the Brazilian Heritage.

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“There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism.”

Walter Benjamin

1.

Between 1707 and 1723, Frei Agostinho de Santa Maria wrote, under the Church’s license, the *‘Santuário Mariano e História das Imagens Milagrosas de Nossa Senhora’*¹. This was a 10-tome book describing sanctuaries, Saint Mary’s images and the history of the miracles of these images. In the words of Agostinho, *“Moved therefore by a small zeal of the cult, and with the greatest Glory of the Holy Virgin Maria, our Lady, as so obliged to its favors, I started to collect news about the beginnings and the origins of some miraculous images, those already so celebrated by some writings around the world, like others not already treated, especially in the Portuguese Kingdom where I wrote these words.”*². Sculpture dimensions, colors, wood craves, materials and other specific descriptions were some of the information presented on this important document about the Portuguese relics. It is also dedicated to the description of some chapels, churches, and religious sites. A book dedicated to the construction, history or yet activities of these monuments, organizing a kind of religious portrait of the Portuguese Kingdom.

From the 11th century, the sanctuary practice was stimulated in Portugal as a way to keep the sacred objects in their places. Thus, the churches could maintain a record about their objects, preserving their relics from thieves or even bishops, who intended to send some of the miraculous images or sacral objects to religious centers³. In the terms of the Portuguese Kingdom, the sanctuaries were important not only to know about the miracles that the images had already accomplished but also to know what the churches had under its possession, the Church’s property. Describing the objects, churches and

¹ SANTA MARIA, Frei Agostinho de. *Santuário Mariano, e Historia das Imagens de Nossa Senhora, etc.* Tome I-X. Lisboa: Of. António Pedroso Galvão, 1707 a 1723.

² Idem (Free translation).

³ PENTEADO, Pedro. Santuários. In: Universidade Católica Portuguesa; Centro de Estudos de História Religiosa, ed. lit.; Guerreiro, Jacinto Salvador, co-aut.; Azevedo, Carlos A. Moreira, dir.; Jorge, Ana Maria, ed. lit. *Dicionário de História Religiosa de Portugal*. Lisboa: Circulo de Leitores, 2000.

monuments in detail, Santuário Mariano is a kind of a religious inventory and certainly one of the first documents about the monuments and religious art in Brazil - the subject of the two last tomes. This is one of the oldest inventories about Brazil, one of the oldest sources of Brazilian art. A source very well utilized by IPHAN, The Historic and Artistic National Heritage Institute from Brazil.

2.

IPHAN was created in 1937, during the 'Estado Novo', the dictatorial regime of president Getúlio Vargas. This was the final and official approach to establish a Brazilian institute specifically dedicated to the heritage. Since the 18th century, series of public and private initiatives pointed out to the problem of heritage, thinking how and why a building, a church, a monument or a work of art could represent the Brazilian culture. Earls, ministers, critics, artists, deputies and professors claimed some action to the federal government to legislate about this subject⁴. The first IPHAN's director – Rodrigo Melo Franco de Andrade – also pointed that, beyond these questions, the real problem regarding the heritage in Brazil was how the government could interfere in the private property⁵. The main concerning point was how the government could deal with an object that is at the same time private and also an important piece to organize an idea of Brazilian culture, an idea of a public heritage. In this context, the 1934 Brazilian Constitution was the final necessary step to legislate about this question. The social and collective interest was highlighted as a predominant matter in comparison to the right to property. Thus, the heritage question was included as a constitutional principle and, finally, opened the ways to be implemented as a public policy⁶.

This relation between the heritage and the property is essential to understand the strategies taken by IPHAN since its first years of work. At this point, it seems important to comprehend not only which buildings, monuments or works of art IPHAN has

⁴ The first Brazilian heritage approach was on the material culture – specially the architecture – and not on the immaterial culture, despite indications in the Decree-Law No. 25 (November 30th, 1937).

⁵ ANDRADE, Rodrigo Melo Franco de. *Monumentos históricos e arqueológicos*. México: Instituto Nacional de Antropologia de México, 1952.

⁶ RUBINO, Silvana. *As fachadas da história: os antecedentes, a criação e os trabalhos do Serviço do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional, 1937-1968*. Campinas: IFCH-Unicamp, 1991. p.45. About this question, 'The Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments' (1931), designated at the 'Administrative and legislative measures regarding historical monuments says that "... while approving the general tendency of these measures, the Conference is of opinion that they should be in keeping with local circumstances and with the trend of public opinion, so that the least possible opposition may be encountered, due allowance being made for the sacrifices which the owners of property may be called upon to make in the general interest.".

classified or restored and yet not only the period or the style that these monuments represent. Of course it is essential to understand which narrative and which idea of culture the historians, architects and anthropologists were dealing with inside IPHAN and, consequently, inside the federal government. But, more important is to comprehend which were the strategies to ensure the preservation of a monument and in which conditions it needed to be preserved. This is a matter of which documents needed to be pointed or highlighted, which documents assured a certain strategy of restoration. The question is not only which monument was preserved, but also which documents, archives and collections needed to be preserved as documents that prove the characteristics of these monuments.

During the regime of Getúlio Vargas, culture was considered as one of the most important areas to represent an idea of a changing State. Before 1930, the Ministry of Education and Health – where culture and, consequently, IPHAN was associated – didn't exist. It was created in the 1930's and the regime acted to organize more concrete measures to set up and define a symbolic and '*imagerie*' referential to the national culture, the monuments visual documents. Parallel with the creation of this Institute, the Ministry was responsible for organizing three new museums: The National Museum of Fine Arts, created in 1937, The Museum of Inconfidência, created in 1938, and The Imperial Museum of Brazil, created in 1940. Beyond these great and major institutions, a series of regional museums were also created under IPHAN's administration. Still in the search to establish a referential to the national culture, this Ministry organized a series of new public art collections, the promotion of annual competitions to acquire new works of arts to these new museums and yet the promotion of sculptural and architectural projects⁷. Thus, beyond the consolidation of a certain group of monuments, the federal government acted to establish a symbolic and '*imagerie*' repertory through the collections of these new museums, including not only the works that represented the past of the Nation but also the ones that represented a contemporary perspective of the Brazilian art.

These governmental actions were developed with a clear objective in favor to organize a referential, the base of a collective identity, the Brazilian's identity as a Nation. With

⁷ The construction of the Ministry of Education and Health's building, in the capital public space of the federal capital – at that time, Rio de Janeiro – coordinated by Lúcio Costa and with some propositions of the architect Le Corbusier, was one of these architectonic monuments constructed to consolidate a singular representation of this New State policy. See: GOMES, Ângela de Castro (org.). *Capanema: o ministro e seu ministério*. Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Editora FGV; Universidade São Francisco, 2000.

this referential, specially linked with the visuality, IPHAN started its work; the buildings, monuments and churches restorations. With these visual documents, IPHAN started the interventions in the properties, because they were the visual evidences of the monuments past. The management of these *objects* of history assumed, therefore, an important role to set up a symbolic referential to the Nation. This was about the definition and the institutionalization of a referential – *the origin* – from which it would have to be recognized as the starting pointing of a national culture. Thus, the State guaranteed and controlled a repertory from which a nationality could be kept through a rhetoric maintenance regarding to what should be the national culture⁸.

3.

One example of this strategy could be seen in the restoration of the Chapel of Our Lady of the Pillar in Taubaté, a city in the country of the state of São Paulo. This chapel, built in 1748, was classified by IPHAN in 1944 and, some years later, it was restored⁹. The first relevant thing about this chapel is that it is a singular exemplary of a religious building in the Paraíba Valley, one of the most important places to the history of the economical cycle of coffee in Brazil¹⁰. Thus, the inventory and restoration of this chapel was a way to preserve not only a certain architectural plasticity or an architectural program, but also an important chapter of the Brazilian's official history. But the most important thing about this process is the IPHAN's strategy of restoration.

During the year of 1947, a newspaper from Taubaté reported one of the most important moments in the restoration of this chapel. Titled '*Restoration of the Chapel of Our Lady of the Pillar*', the article points that the work of restoration was going in a very slow rhythm but it was justified by the very honest and professional work under IPHAN's care. The text also points that Luis Saia, the director of IPHAN's regional in São Paulo, knows that the Paulista Museum has a painting made by Professor Paulo Florençano, where the Chapel of Pillar appears with two doors in Bispo Rodovalho Street façade. In the year of 1947, in the beginning of the restoration, the chapel had only one door on that façade but, on the other hand, the painting shows two doors. It is important to notice that the Paulista Museum, located in the city of São Paulo, is on of the most

⁸ BHABHA, Homi K. *O lugar da cultura*. Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG, 1998.

⁹ LIMA, Francisca Helena Barbosa; MELHEM, Mônica Muniz; POPE, Zulmira Canário (orgs.) *Bens móveis e imóveis inscritos nos Livros do Tomo do Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional: 1938-2009*. Rio de Janeiro: IPHAN/COPEDOC, 2009. (5ªed).

¹⁰ Side by side with the cycle of sugar in Bahia in the 16th and 17th century and the cycle of gold in Minas Gerais in the 18th century, the cycle of coffee had its apogee during the 19th century.

relevant museums in Brazil. It's dedicated to the Brazilian Independence and has huge collections of paintings, photographs, sculptures and objects. Another singular fact is that, knowing its importance to the country's history, IPHAN classified all the archeological, ethnographic, artistic and historic collections in this Museum in 1938. Almost a decade before the restoration of the chapel in Taubaté, IPHAN had already classified a collection that was in its interior. In this collection there was a painting, probably from the 19th century, on which figures the chapel of Pillar, in this case, with two doors. Thus, with this painting classified, Luis Saia authorized the destruction of part of the wall to open a door.

The question that this restoration process brings here does not refer specifically to the intervention in that building; the opening of a door. Of course there is an important problem related to an idea of architectural typology. But the question here is the way IPHAN used a certain joint of paintings, drawings and even photographs as visual documents, justifying the choices in the restoration process. A painting, a classified painting that belong to one of the major museums in Brazil, was a key document to the intervention in that building. In this process, the chapel restoration did not only recover an *original* characteristic of the building. It also not only highlighted the importance of a painting inside a museum. At the same time, the restoration connects the monument and the painting into only one cultural narrative: a visual narrative. It means that IPHAN's working processes were completely connected with what Brazil has as visual sources in its museums or even what Brazil organized as its visual sources. The restorations justify the collections and the collections justify the restorations.

Another significant example of these restoration practices in IPHAN, relating visual collections or visual documents with the inventory of a building, could be seen in the 'Church of Our Lady of Escada', in the city of Guararema. In this case, a watercolor made by Thomas Ender (1793-1875), a French painter, was used as the *original* visuality of that church, the evidence of a past¹¹. When IPHAN started its restoration it was possible to see a bell tower in the left side of the building but, at the same time, that tower was not represented by Ender in the watercolor from the beginning of the 19th century. Knowing the importance of this painter to the Brazilian history and also underlining his importance, the IPHAN's option was to destroy that tower, reconnecting

¹¹ Ender, an Austrian painter who traveled around Brazil between the years of 1817 and 1818, produced nearly a thousand drawings and watercolors, picturing cities, landscapes and workers on the streets. He made a kind of a visual inventory of the Brazilian cities in the beginning of the 19th century.

the building with the image and making the watercolor a document of that monument. More dramatic is the case of the ‘Convent of Our Lady of Embu’. Without a picture, a photograph or a drawing, IPHAN restored that convent justifying some choices – such as remodeling the bell tower – as a way to reconfigure that building as a church typology to the country of the state of São Paulo. In this case, the convent was not connected with a specific painting in the interior of a museum, but with an idea of a colonial architecture that, at the same time, links the building with a certain architectural representation that can be seen in the collections of the museums. Therefore, if this restored church is not connected with a specific document in the interior of the museums, it is connected with an ideal of church from the country of São Paulo.

As Thomas Ender, a series of painters, draftsmen and, later, photographers produced thousands of visual documents that was, in the 20th century, a kind of major source to the process of restoration. Names such as Jean-Baptiste Debret (1768-1848), Ludwig Briggs (1813-1870) and Félix Émile Taunay (1795-1881) were also used as sources. The Brazilian painter José Wasth Rodrigues (1891-1957), responsible for one of the most important architectural inventories in the beginning of the 20th century, made a singular description of the transformation of Paço Imperial, the royal residence of King John VI of Portugal, using pictures made by some of these painters. Rodrigues pointed that the first phase of this building was recorded by G. Theremin, J. Steimann and Chamberlain. The second phase could be seen in some images made by Debret, L. Buvelot and A. Moreau. The third phase could be seen in a photograph made by Marc Ferrez in the beginning of the 20th century. And a fourth and last phase was what people could see in the year of 1945, when he made some notes about this inventory¹².

This description concerning Paço Imperial is a kind of a list of the major visual sources to the Brazilian architecture, or even to the Brazilian’s heritage history. These are some of the major artists that contributed to compose an idealized image of the cities, not only because they were exceptional painters but also because of their importance in the museums archives and collections¹³. Once again, the restoration of the monuments is

¹² RODRIGUES, José Wasth. *Documentário Arquitetônico: Relativa à antiga construção civil, no Brasil*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes; Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 1975. (1ªed. 1945). p. 192.

¹³ It’s important to notice that, in the case of Paço Imperial, Rodrigues does not mention the engraving produced by Luis dos Santos Vilhena in the year of 1770, where it appears with only two floors. Maybe, he didn’t use it because he didn’t know that image when he wrote those words. Or this wasn’t a known picture at that time, maybe because this image isn’t from a museum collection. Or even because the period represented by this picture – the 16th century – wasn’t the period that the official narrative wanted to be recorded as the Brazilian official history. These are all possible reasons for this absence in his visual narrative.

well connected with the museums collections. Through IPHAN's practice, it is possible to comprehend that images, paintings, drawings and photographs are one of the most important documents of the monuments and the acquiring practice of these documents.

4.

In the beginning of the 1970's, almost three decades after the creation of IPHAN, an important photographic inventory was started. Under the name of 'Inventário de Artes Menores' – that means '*Minor arts inventory*'¹⁴ –, the IPHAN's regional of São Paulo started to photograph public and private images, goldsmithery, paintings and other objects. Thousands of photographs were taken with the cooperation of private collectors, churches, museums and art historians. The final intent of this initiative was to produce documents – visual documents –, organizing a kind of inventory of these objects and, thus, knowing what Brazil had in its public and private collections. It's also clear that one of the main objectives of this inventory was to preserve these objects in the Brazilian territory. This was a kind of visual report created by IPHAN to serve as a border control to inhibit the international black market.

At the same time that IPHAN produced this important 'Minor arts inventory'¹⁵ with the objective to help the Brazilian police to control the evasion of works of art, this was a major opportunity to produce visual documents – photographs – of these works. IPHAN was allowed to photograph works that, most of the times, were hindered in the past. At this time, the collectors saw this initiative as an opportunity to assure that their property would be well policed and preserved. On IPHAN's side, this was an opportunity to know what kind of objects and works of art Brazilians had in their collections and, at the same time, search for objects that had been missed or even removed from their original places. But even more important is that this initiative was a major opportunity used by IPHAN, to establish a connection between these objects and the 'Santuário Mariano'.

During the processes of documentation of these private and public works of art, one of IPHAN's strategies was to use the 'Santuário Mariano' as a guide, a visual guide, to identify objects, not a guide for what needed to be documented. The complexity and variety of objects, from different centuries, materials, sizes, functions, etc., didn't place

¹⁴ This inventory is possible to be seen at the Photographic Archive of IPHAN's Regional in São Paulo.

¹⁵ The Photographic Archive of IPHAN's regional of São Paulo preserves this documentation. It has hundreds of 35mm photographs that were made mostly by the photographers Augusto Ramasco and José Roberto Hofling.

these works in a specific context that could be placed in perfect comparison, in parallel with this sanctuary. But, IPHAN saw in this work an opportunity to establish a connection with this document, rich not only in historical references, but also in visual and plastic descriptions, a kind of proto-visual inventory of the religious works of art until the beginning of the 16th century. With this strategy of research and documentation, with a visual approach, IPHAN made the same that had been done with the classification of monuments.

Since the beginning of IPHAN's work, the historians, anthropologists and mostly the architects have used the museum's collections – like paintings, drawings and photographs – to justify the restorations strategies of the classified monuments. It was a way to reconnect the monuments with the works of art and the museums collections, compounding a cultural narrative that was very well associated with a visual culture, a visual narrative of the Brazilian culture. In the same way, IPHAN used this strategy to establish a connection between 'Santuário Mariano' and the religious works of art that were documented in the 'Minor Arts Inventory'. This was a strategy to IPHAN's researches not only comprehend which objects they were dealing with but also to organize a narrative, a cultural narrative very well linked with the monuments strategies of restoration. The strategy was the same but, at this time, they were dealing with works of art.

5.

The use IPHAN made of 'Santuário Mariano' points some problems, some cultural misunderstandings about the cultural official narrative, the official culture. A misunderstanding that isn't exclusive to the minor arts but also to the buildings, the churches and the monuments. The usage of documents to justify the classification and mainly the restoration practices points to the problem of the document – in this case, a visual document – as an interpretation of the real. In both cases, it is possible to highlight some indicatives about this question.

In the case of the paintings and drawings¹⁶, Luis Saia had already written that the usage of these visual documents in the restoration practice couldn't be used without an appropriate reflection. Writing about the Church of São Miguel, Saia pointed that

¹⁶ Even the photograph has some problems in its representation. A photograph is not a picture of the real, but an interpretation by the usage of some possibilities enrolled in the camera. KRAUSS, Rosalind. *O fotográfico*. Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 2002.

“[Thomas] Ender, (...), left documents whose plastic validity must be put in doubt.”¹⁷. Even when the painter is a known and important painter – in this case, Thomas Ender –, the validity of the visual document must be questioned, because the author, the painter, is always making a narrative, organizing a mental construction. Even Thomas Ender’s drawings and paintings, whose importance could be seen in the public collections around Brazil, need to be put in doubt. Saia ends his reflection saying that what could be seen in Ender’s picture of the Church of São Miguel is contradictory to what could be comprehended *in loco*, in the site of this building. The IPHAN’s analysis of the construction – “*centimeter by centimeter*” – highlighted that the representation made by Ender doesn’t express the reality.

In ‘Santuário Mariano’ the question is the same. In the first Tome’s Prologue, Frei Agostinho advises: “... to the ones that are going to read this *Santuários*, that I wasn’t able to visit all the places and, thus, there could be some information emitted to me that may have been changed, like ornamentation, size, richness, ‘anceio’ and some other things”¹⁸. Frei Agostinho highlighted in this Santuario that, even with the best intentions that he had, it is natural that these descriptions can have some distortions and problems in the representation of the works of art because he couldn’t visit all of them. This is a clue to understand that - as the problem pointed by Saia in the use of Thomas Ender’s pictures - these descriptions made by Agostinho need some reflections before its utilization.

There is a kind of noise between the object represented and its representation, a noise that would be responsible for some misunderstandings. Frei Agostinho also advised about the problem of the representation, especially about the visual representation: “*Because from the original the shadow is the portrait; because from the side face of a shadow, it is affirmed, the painting has its origin, and also the sculpture, that in this sacred image exhibits its courage: astonishment of such art, and from such prototype shadow.*”¹⁹. Among the objects, the representation, the classification and the restoration are necessary to put the documents in doubt, especially the visual documents.

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¹⁷ SAIA, Luis. *Morada Paulista*. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1972. p.17-19. (Free Translation).

¹⁸ SANTA MARIA, Frei Agostinho de. Op. Cit.

¹⁹ Idem. (Free Translation).