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MODERNISTS AND THE CHOICES OF THE PAST IN SOUTHERN BRAZIL

Ana Lúcia Meira

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Ana Lúcia Goelzer Meira is Doctor in Architecture and Lecturer at the University of Vale do Rio dos Sinos, Unisinos. She has expertise in preservation of urban areas and restoration of cultural interest buildings, with emphasis on communities participation in preservation actions.

ABSTRACT

This research is intended to contribute to the understanding of the history of Brazilian architectural heritage preservation, from the emergence of public policy to its consolidation at the national level, and, in particular, its influence on Rio Grande do Sul. In addressing cultural heritage in this country, it is necessary to make reference to the work of modernist professionals who constructed the idea of preserving the past with a view to integrating it with the nation's future. Their actions were radical to break academic standards and surpassed contemporary paradigms. The issue investigated is the choice of a particular past history selected by modernists, the choices they made in a region far from the center of the country, the values attributed to architectural assets, the aspects of heritage thereby established and the methods they created to develop their work. Generally, research on the subject is limited to activities in the central region of the Historical and Artistic Heritage National Service (SPHAN), now IPHAN, and ignores the implementation of these policies in different regions of the country. The analysis of the registry processes at the national level, during the institution's first years of operation, made possible the establishment of a framework that situated the work of SPHAN in Brazil to better understand its activity in the country's southernmost state.

Keywords: SPHAN Modernists; Nacional historic and artistic heritage; Rio Grande do Sul; Assets registry; National heritage preservation.



1 MODERNITY AND TRADITION

'After one thing comes another, to be modern is - knowing the past deeply - to be current and forward-looking' (Costa, 1997, p.116, our translation¹).

To common sense, architectural heritage preservation seeks to perpetuate the past and hinder the present. But it is much more than this: the preservation of built heritage represents a reference level, the continuities through which societies recognize, identify, construct and reconstruct their values and their development. The concept is not restricted to works of art of monumental or exceptional character, and extends itself to simple works of the past that have acquired, with time, a cultural significance as expressed in the Venice Charter (Cury, 2004).

Architecture plays an important symbolic role related to the cultural identities of each place, region or country. In Brazil, this is evident in the cases of the Ver-o-Peso market in Belem, the Maracanã stadium in Rio, the Luz Rail Station in São Paulo, the baroque churches of Minas Gerais, the Pelourinho in Bahia, the ruins of São Miguel Arcanjo in Rio Grande do Sul and in many other examples. What many do not know is that it was thanks to the action of trendsetters, from the 1930s, that these buildings could acquire meaning and were preserved over time.

Brazil lacks studies on the ways of regional trajectories of cultural heritage preservation. Thus, this paper seeks to contribute with the discussions on the development of public policies from the point of view of decentralized branches of the Historical and Artistic Heritage National Service (SPHAN), The understanding of the actors involved, the established disputes, the choices made and the values assigned to heritage registry allow better understanding of the assets that have come to represent the national identity, and permit evaluation of the radical and pioneering actions of modern intellectuals who built this process. Modernity, tradition, identity and nationalism came together in the process of Brazilian heritage preservation.

The quest for modernity at the turn of the 20th century was presented in various forms of artistic expression, and architecture was one of them. In Brazil, modernity in architecture presented a counter-position to the conventions of eclecticism, as occurred in other countries; but not to tradition, which was different from what happened in those countries. In the modern imagination, traditional luso-brazilian architecture was considered to be a continuity of the classical tradition (Comas, 2002). This peculiarity of the Brazilian process – the relation between the modern and the old that existed in the country – is recognized by several authors (Chuva, 2009; Comas, 2002; Costa, 1997; Montaner, 2001; Wisnik, 2001).

The search for alternatives to the eclectic language occurred almost simultaneously with major changes in the economic, cultural and political scenes. In 1922, with Modern Art Week, and during the 1930 crisis, the country began to form an awareness of itself, seeking authenticity in artistic expression. Arantes (2004) reiterates that the crystallization of avant-garde expression occurred with the Revolution of 1930 and, in just over ten years, forged modern Brazilian architecture.

In 1930, the Federal Government created the Ministry of Education and Public Health (MES). Rodrigo Melo Franco de Andrade, who was close with intellectuals linked to

¹ **From the original in Portuguese:** 'Depois de uma coisa, vem outra, ser moderno é – conhecendo a fundo o passado – ser atual e prospectivo' (Costa, 1997, p.116).



modernism, became Ministry Chief of Staff. At that time, new directors were appointed to the National History Museum, the Music Institute and the National School of Fine Arts (ENBA). To this last position, the young architect Lucio Costa was appointed. Tasked with updating the academic education, he tried to introduce modern architecture as an alternative to the ENBA curriculum (Costa, 1997), but he remained in office a short time due to conservative reactions. Many political leaders at the time were against modern architecture and considered the modern movement a corrupter of morals and good customs (Cavalcanti, 2006).

Costa had graduated in Architecture from the same National School of Fine Arts and, at the beginning of his professional life, adopted a favorable stance toward the neocolonial – the movement that sought inspiration in the expression of regional art – and reproduced it in his work. For this, he made study trips to Brazil's interior. In describing his impressions of Minas Gerais from a visit made in 1922, he recorded the constructive and formal qualities of Brazilian architecture from the colonial period, and was able to establish a theoretical relationship between stripped-down international modern architecture and the simplicity, adaptation to the environment and functionality of traditional architecture. That is, he showed that the basis for a new architecture was part of the Brazilian tradition as mentioned above (Comas, 2002). This conviction allowed him to prepare a critique of neo-colonial architecture, and he converted himself into a militant of modern architecture and one of its most important promoters.

At the same time that they aligned themselves with European avant-garde movements, the Brazilian modernists developed a relationship with tradition, looking to it for clues that would lead to the identification of national roots. This duality was not contradictory and showed that Brazilians dared to overcome the radicalization against the existing past in the international modern movement.

In MES designing, SPHAN was created. Rodrigo Melo Franco de Andrade took over the organization and Lucio Costa was invited to direct the technical activities – a position he held until his retirement in 1972. It is a little known fact that one of the country's greatest architects, who designed Brasilia – the only modernist city recognized as a World Heritage Site by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) – dedicated his life to preserving the country's past. The theoretical and practical influence he exercised was profound, from architecture inventories to criteria for intervention in historically registered buildings – the methods of which had to be constructed based on regional conditions. His rejection of eclectic architecture and admiration for modern principles were widespread among SPHAN officials in all regions of the country.

Questions related to heritage preservation reached an important legal milestone in the Federal Constitution of 1934, which established, for the first time, the predominance of social or collective interest above property rights, which allowed for heritage registration laws. Shortly after, as a result of the Estado Novo (New State), measures were implemented in order to build a national identity, and for the creation of an autonomous organization charged with legitimizing the idea of a national heritage that was not only coherent but also necessary for nationwide integration (today it is understood that in a country with such cultural diversity there are multiple identities).

The SPHAN was formalized in 1937, the same year in which Decree-Law No. 25 was enacted, which deals with historic preservation and is the legal instrument that protects heritage assets and prevents their demolition or disfigurement. The Decree instituted four registries intended to list protected assets at the national level: the Historic, the Fine Arts, the Applied Arts, and the Archaeological, Ethnographic and

Landscape. At the state level there were precursors in Bahia, Pernambuco and Rio Grande do Sul which implemented incipient preservation mechanisms such as monument inspections and legislation on this issue.

In general, it is assumed that aesthetic criteria would prevail in value judgments that would give meaning to the assets to be preserved. The need to deepen on the field led to the invitation of German art historian Hannah Levy, who was living in exile in Brazil between the 1930s and 1940s, to lecture technicians of the newly created organization. She also wrote in the Heritage Journal (Revista do Patrimônio) where she mentioned the thought of Alois Riegl in relation to art theory (Pestana, 1997). One can conjecture that Levy could have also disseminated the author's text on the cult of monuments in which he laid out his reflections on the values attributed to monuments.

The context of modernity's construction, at the turn of the 20th century, made it possible for Riegl (1984) to reflect on what he called the modern cult of monuments. For him, historical and artistic values can be confused, whereas an artistic monument is also historical because it represents a certain stage in the evolution of art, and whereas a historical monument is also artistic because it presents a series of art elements in its configuration. The most relevant contribution of his theory points to the relativity of values, which are not proper attributes of artifacts but perceptions from each historical context which give them an always updated modern dimension.

Riegl established two categories of values that could be assigned to the commemoration of monuments: commemorative values, which are divided into historical, age and intentional commemorative, and contemporaneity values, which include use and artistic, and which is divided into newness value and relative artistic value. Those of interest to the study presented here are the historical and the artistic values. The historical value is understood as all, '[...] that was and is no longer' (Riegl 1984, p.37, our translation²). This applies to something that cannot be reproduced or replaced because it is part of the development of human activity. The artistic value must meet the aspirations or the *will-to-art* of a particular period, and can exhibit newness (in the sense of 'new') or a relative artistic value, which refers to the capacity of a monument to make one sensitized or to provoke emotion from a current point of view. In this case, the artistic value of a work, as esteemed in the present, is usually different from its original perception when the work was conceived.

The thought of Riegl coincides, regarding historical value, with the concept applied by SPHAN in the first decades of the 20th century when history was still viewed as celebratory and linked to noteworthy facts and characters. However, one can consider the modern buildings that were registered during or shortly after their construction – an unprecedented feat at the international level. This deals with relative art value in which the context of a work's conception was the same as its recognition, which is a hypothesis that Riegl had not considered. At the same time, it deals with the newness value because they were the first modern buildings in the country, and they still elicit surprise and misunderstanding in society.

2 MODERN HERITAGE CHOICES

It is a recognized fact that, in Brazil, professionals committed to the future were the same who built the idea of preserving of the past, as mentioned previously. The first generation of SPHAN preservationists, among officials and collaborators, included the names of the intellectual vanguard of the era: Carlos Drummond de Andrade, Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, Gilberto Freire, Mário de Andrade, Manuel Bandeira and the

² **From the original in Portuguese:** '[...] aquilo que foi e que já não é mais' (Riegl 1984, p.37).



young architects Oscar Niemeyer, Carlos Leão, Affonso Reidy as well as Lucio Costa himself. Part of this group was entrusted with the selection and preservation of heritage sites and its activity was felt in several states, with Rio Grande do Sul among them.

Just as Lucio Costa linked the Brazilian architectural tradition with modernity, modernist officials at SPHAN, among whom he included himself, officially legitimized a relationship between the present and the future to ensure the transformation of examples of modern architecture into heritage sites. One can say that they turned the present into history. The Chapel of São Francisco in Pampulha was registered in 1947, the MES building, inaugurated in 1945, was registered in 1948. A little later, the seaplane airport in Rio de Janeiro became protected. Brasília Cathedral was registered in 1967, although it was completed three years later. The Catetinho was registered in 1959 to protect the first construction used as the President of the Republic's offices in the newly created Brasília. This registration equated modest illustrative achievements of national development with the status of already protected monumental constructions, thus anticipating, in practice, the principles of the Venice Charter.

In addition to guaranteeing the present in the future by means of the registrations cited above, they went further, being able even to anticipate the future in the present. These registrations reveal a radically new attitude toward the preservation of modern architecture that, at the international level, is unprecedented. The institutionalization of the concern for the legacy of modernism would only be realized in 1980s with the creation of *Documentation and Conservation of Buildings, Sites and Neighbourhoods of the Modern Movement* (Docomomo) in Europe.

The choice of modern architecture in the construction of some of the headquarters (though not all) of the New State (Estado Novo) ministries, and of modernists to select and preserve past cultural heritage assets, was not without conflict. In Cavalcanti's understanding (2006), modernists assumed a prominent role because of their qualitative superiority over their traditionalist opponents, and also their ability to deal with the monumental in architectural projects. Lucio Costa was able to demonstrate to the academics and neocolonialists that the architecture designed by the modernists was at the same time new, national and linked to a tradition. While opponents defended civic aspects with nostalgia, modernists dedicated themselves, in addition to buildings, to the groundbreaking study of artistic, anthropological and ethnological expression.

They constructed an ideal for the strategic national patrimony for the New State from a system of relations spread throughout the country, deploying, in some cities, regional offices. The breadth and integration of SPHAN's work was impressive, and so to were the partnerships that it was able to institute. The strategy that established a coordinated system of employees, often without pay, was very successful. One could pose here a hypothesis that merits further study: many of the representative pioneers of the Service were related to literature – Mário de Andrade (São Paulo), Augusto Meyer (Rio Grande do Sul) and Godofredo Filho (Bahia), among others. In the Service's central administration, in Rio de Janeiro, where Carlos Drummond de Andrade and Manuel Bandeira worked. The Director Rodrigo Melo Franco de Andrade was a journalist and man of letters related to groups of modern writers. The historian Dante de Laytano, who was also a representative of SPHAN in Rio Grande do Sul, told to the journal *História e Fatos* (History and Facts) that in his generation, plainly



it, '[...] did not start with historical studies, or with research. It started with literature, poetry and short stories' (Laytano, 1997, p.13, our translation³).

If this finding can be generalized among other Brazilian states, it helps to explain why so many writers and so few historians were representatives of SPHAN in the first decades. Segawa (1997) recalls that the adoption of modernity in literature occurred before and with greater force than in architecture. Therefore, it can be assumed that the patrimony network was built having as a base an earlier network – that of intellectuals linked to modern literature in various regions of the country. This network of correspondence has been studied by Alencar (2004), but without relation to the heritage field.

Segawa (2001) finds that there wasn't a hegemonic discourse in the organization and draws attention to the diversity of activities. But it is paradoxical that this diversity ended up building a unity that is reflected in the choices of the registered assets. Representatives of SPHAN, in several states, attributed meaning to certain assets having regional characteristics as a reference. But the regional choices were only legitimized with the evaluation of the central region in Rio de Janeiro, which definitively consecrated the assets proposed for registration from the point of view of national relevance, and for their function in the construction of a national identity. Many times, proposals were rejected because national significance was not recognized in them.

It is important to point out that, due to Brazilian cultural diversity, it was neither expected nor desired that the heritage collection would be homogeneous. Furthermore, nothing prevented citizens from making suggestions for national registration, as happened several times in Rio Grande do Sul (Meira, 2008) and which enriched the process of selection and designation of heritage assets. In the Minas Gerais collection this selection process had a distinguishing feature – the Mineiro Baroque came to dominate the imagery and references of national heritage, and it has been a unanimity to this day.

As Le Goff recalls (cited in Audrerie, 2003, p.52, our translation⁴), heritage, '[...] is the natural and historical place of genesis and affirmation of individual and collective identities'. Smith (1997) observes that among the many collective identities shared by human beings, national identity is probably the most important and inclusive. In the cultural field, it manifests itself in myths, values, memories, languages, ceremonies, playing a role that varies with time.

Human connection to a monumental legacy, able to represent nationality, to symbolize a past without conflict, to express unity, greatness and modernity, helped to build a Brazilian national memory. According to Ortiz (1994), national memory is imposed on everyone and is not the private property of any social group. Also, according to the author, as this identity is a symbolic construction, it is not possible to appoint one identity as authentic, but, instead, it is considered to be a plurality of identities, constructed by various groups in society, in different places and different historical moments. However, in the early decades of the 20th century, the understanding was more restricted and, in general, the aesthetic criteria applied by SPHAN to choose what would constitute national heritage had little applicability in

³ **From the original in Portuguese:** '[...] não se começava com estudos históricos, não se pesquisava. Começava-se pela literatura, poesia e contos' Laytano, 1997, p.13).

⁴ **From the original in Portuguese:** '[...] é o lugar natural e histórico de gênese e de afirmação das identidades individuais e coletivas' (Le Goff cited in Audrerie, 2003, p.52).



contexts where traditional architecture did not demonstrate the opulence of Minas Gerais, Rio de Janeiro or Bahia – as was the case of the states in southern Brazil.

3 The modernists and heritage preservation in southern Brazil

The first years in the formation of SPHAN are essential for understanding the choices of assets that would consolidate the historical and artistic heritage in all of Brazil. In São Paulo, Carlos Lemos (1993) criticized the lack of values attributed to traditional Paulista architecture on the part of Mário de Andrade, who referred to traditional São Paulo art as miserable, indicating that there were no works with artistic or historical values such as those found in other regions. Luis Saia (cited in Amaral, 1979) also regarded that the Paulista building tradition was too rustic to qualify as a national heritage. The architect Júlio N. B. de Curtis (2003) referred to the architecture of Rio Grande do Sul with the same kind of disregard, reducing it to the materialization of common sense and resorted to as a response to a frail economy, that is, it was plain and functional, and feeding certain feeling of inferiority.

To better assess the illustrative choices of Rio Grande do Sul in the national heritage field, existing registry processes were studied in the IPHAN Central Archive, Section RJ, and the existing documentation at the Fundação Casa de Ruy Barbosa (FCRB) – both in Rio de Janeiro. The chosen time frame was the first half of the 20th century, from beginning of SPHAN's activity to the year in which the regionalist historian Dante de Laytano officially took over as the institution's representative in the state. In this period of fifteen years, various constructed assets were listed (Table 1), as well as mobile assets.

Process No.	Asset Identification	Current Location	Observations
0001-T-38	Igreja Matriz de São Pedro e Capela anex (2 constructions)	Rio Grande	Registered
0094-T-38	Casa de Bento Gonçalves	Triunfo	Registered
0095-T-38	Casa da Feitoria Velha	São Leopoldo	Unregistered
0096-T-38	Igreja Nossa Senhora das Dores	Porto Alegre	Registered
	Igreja Nossa Senhora da Conceição	Viamão	Registered
0097-T-38	Palácio do Governo Farroupilha	Piratini	Registered
	Casa Garibaldi		Registered
0098-T-38	Solar D. Diogo de Souza	Porto Alegre	Unregistered
0104-T-38	Casa de material missioneiro	Entre-Ijuís	Registered
0141-T-38	Forte D. Pedro II	Caçapava	Registered
	Povo de São Miguel: ruins of the Igreja de São Miguel	São Miguel das Missões	Registered
0178-T-38	Igreja N. S.do Rosário	Porto Alegre	De-listed
0337-T-44	Igreja Matriz de São Sebastião	Bagé	Registered

0350-T-50	Torres natural monuments	Torres	Unregistered
0351-T-	Historic City	Rio Pardo	Unregistered
0392-T-48	Forte de Santa Tecla – foundation	Bagé	Registered
0450-T-51	Quartel General Farroupilha	Piratini	Registered
0457-T	Igreja Matriz N. S. Conceição	Cachoeira Sul	Unregistered
0467-T-52	Casa de David Canabarro	Santana do Livramento	Registered

Table 1: Historic registry applications for constructed assets in Rio Grande do Sul (1937-1952). Source: Prepared by the author and based on process files in the IPHAN Central Archive, RJ Section.

Table 1 allows us to observe that fourteen constructed assets were registered and five applications for registry were denied; that is, a third of the applications did not result in registry. Also, an instance of demolition that occurred during the registry process was also recorded: the Solar D. Diogo de Souza (first governor of the province) and a rare case of de-listing: the Igreja N. S. do Rosário in Porto Alegre, also demolished. Seven buildings were listed in the Historic registry (for historic value), and seven buildings in the Fine Arts registry (for artistic value).

Registrations for historical value favored the Farrapos War, landmark of great significance in sul-rio-grandense culture, including the protection of the Quartel General, the Palácio Farroupilha and the Casa Garibaldi in the city of Piratini, the Bento Gonçalves houses in Triunfo and David Canabarro in Santana do Livramento. Only years later would registration be completed on the foundations of the Forte de Santa Tecla and the Igreja de São Sebastião in Bagé, which are related to episodes of the country's defense. Entered in the Fine Arts registry were the other churches, the Forte D. Pedro II in Caçapava, and two assets in the missions region that will be referred to below.

In the case of Rio Grande do Sul, there was early initiatives to assign value to regional history and heritage. The first official nomination emerged in the Land Regulation of 1922, under the heading 'Logares Históricos' (historic places) that should be conserved, and referred, '[...] ruins of the antique Jesuit missions, particularly those of São Miguel' (Rio Grande do Sul, 1923, p.486).



Fig. 1: Church ruins of São Miguel Arcanjo seen from the Museum of the Mission. Source: Ana Lúcia Goelzer Meira, 2005.

The beginning of SPHAN activities with the remnants of the antique reduction (mission village) of São Miguel Arcanjo (Fig.1), now located in the municipality of São Miguel das Missões, occurred more than ten years after the state government's own initiatives. In March of 1937, Rodrigo Melo Franco de Andrade sent a letter to the gaúcho modernist writer Augusto Meyer, then director of the Public Library of Rio Grande do Sul, in which he refers to the need to 'expand' the role of the organization in the state (Andrade, 1937a). He stressed the exceptional historical and artistic value of 'documents', such as the ruins of São Miguel, thus introducing the reference to the old reductions (missions in permanent settlements established by the Jesuits in the Americas).

The first task requested to Meyer as a collaborator was to make a photographic record of the architectural assets that deserved to be preserved at the national level. The works of architecture classified as documents would require, according to the director of SPHAN, studies to guide the eventually necessary on-site work. Acts of conservation and restoration should be based on the knowledge of a monument in order to safeguard its integrity as a document of a particular time. The registration in the Fine Arts registry of the remnants of the old Povo (settlement) and the ruins of the Igreja de São Miguel, including its border plaza, is an indication that recognition of an asset, as a document, could be applied for both in the case historical and aesthetic values. To the same registry was added later, the building of the Museum of the Missions – with architectural design by Lucio Costa.

Just over a month after their initial contact, Rodrigo Melo Franco de Andrade invited Augusto Meyer to be the state representative of SPHAN (Andrade, 1937b). It should be clarified that SPHAN regional headquarters were initially planned to be in Belém, Fortaleza, Recife, Salvador, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Belo Horizonte and Porto Alegre. The last location was short-lived as an individual office; it only lasted until Meyer was invited to direct the National Book Institute in Rio de Janeiro. From then on, the Rio Grande do Sul region become subordinated to Paraná for a year and, soon after, subject to São Paulo regional for thirty-five years.

In their exchange of letters, Rodrigo Melo Franco de Andrade (1937c) asked again if some trace of the missions remained. Unfortunately, most of the letters and photos that Augusto Meyer sent to SPHAN were not found, but the responses documented by the institution, one can reconstruct most of the initial choices for historic registration. The examples chosen by Meyer stretched back to the 18th century, where they related to the missions, and came up to the mid-19th century, where they pertained to the Farrapos War. Meyer endeavored to obtain the information that had been requested in the initial contact and, to conduct the requested inventory, he came into contact with intellectuals among his acquaintances in various regions of Rio Grande do Sul.

Returning to the sequence of the correspondence with Augusto Meyer, Rodrigo Melo Franco de Andrade reaffirmed that only architectural assets that have historical and exceptional artistic value should be selected because 'selective' criteria should prevail (Andrade, 1937d). Thus, as selection criteria, the historical and artistic values of exceptional character were required, but without specified parameters. This leads one to think that the institutional discourse was built from practice, and that was a collective construction. The final opinion on registration would come from the SPHAN Research and Registry Board of Directors in Rio de Janeiro.

Among the first registry suggestions in the state were the most relevant churches: the Matriz de N. S. da Conceição in Viamão, for its historical value, as it was the second church in the state and the first from the point of view of architectural value. The first value was discarded and the Matriz was then inscribed in the Fine Arts registry as well as other temples: the Igreja N. S. do Rosário and the Igreja das Dores in Porto Alegre, and also the Igreja Matriz de São Pedro in Rio Grande. The registries were contested by the Catholic diocese, who were able to de-list the Igreja do Rosário. These value attributions were decided in the SPHAN central office and do not express any evident relation with modern references.

In defending the registry of the three that remained, Meyer makes it clear that he considered the weak state heritage, revealing the unfavorable situation in relation to the values that were being developed by the institution. He considered that it could not adopt another criterion that was not historical, because from the artistic point of view the architecture to be preserved would be insignificant – except for the missions, where the artistic value overlapped the historical value (Meyer, 1938). These criticisms in his report reflect self-depreciation in relation to the heritage of Rio Grande do Sul, situating it between meager and non-existent. Meyer maintains that, in relation to southern heritage, even valuable, there were only missions because they were historical documents, and also evocative images of the European Baroque and the state's origins. But this was an exceptional case, according to him.

Lucio Costa, before being hired as an employee of SPHAN, was commissioned to conduct a survey in the remnants of the Sete Povos das Missões (the seven mission villages in the west of Rio Grande do Sul) which he said were, '[...] ingrown into this side' (Costa, 1997, p.18, our translation⁵). The expression used suggests that the remnants were considered to be Spanish heritage and, inadvertently, have been incorporated into the southern region of the Empire of Brazil, which historians at the time held to be predominantly Lusitan. His report designated for registration the remnants of the antique Povo de São Miguel Arcanjo (Fig. 2) and the missionary house. And he also suggested the construction of the Museum of the Missions.

⁵ **From the original in Portuguese:** '[...] encravados do lado de cá' (Costa, 1997, p.18).



Fig. 2: Lucio Costa between his wife and Augusto Meyer in front of the ruins of the church. Source: IPHAN Central Archive, RJ Section, unknown photographer (1937).

The house built with masonry material, since demolished, is an example that allows one to presume that some criteria were used in the first decades in the choices with a view to national registry. In suggesting of registration, Costa (2004) highlighted the interest for the 'document' in regards to the missionary experience that the house expressed. He also referred to aesthetic qualities such as the harmonic proportions, the choice and the placement of the sculpted fragments, the columns and capitals reused in its construction (Fig. 3). Valuing a vernacular example that representing the common everyday life in the rural countryside can be considered radical for that time. It should be noted that the house's preservation was registered in the Fine Arts Registry, although the enrollment would seem more appropriate in the Archaeological, Ethnographic and Landscape Registry. This demonstrates that it acquired aesthetic value in the appraisal of Lucio Costa, which is even more innovative.



Fig. 3: Masonry house next to the ruins of the redução de São João Batista. Source: IPHAN Central Archive, RJ Section, unknown photographer (1937).

Costa admitted the existence of a historical dimension in the registries, but he didn't attribute a decisive role to it; what mattered, in fact, was the work of art – as erudite as it was vernacular, according to Pessôa (cited in Meira, 2008). Both categories were found in the missions. Considering the enormous strength of the ruins in the landscape, it was a document and also a representation of a utopian past. Costa, the master architect, suggested the construction of a museum, which he designed himself. He amalgamated the past, through the restoration of the formal aspect of a missionary home and the reuse of the remaining elements in the porch columns, with the contemporaneity through the formal language of modernism and the use of transparent walls and white walls to highlight the ruins while context where sculptures were produced. This is another example of innovation in relation to international modernist thinking, the guiding principles of which would not be permitted such a combination.



Another contribution of the proposal took place in the level of urban design, with the establishment of the Museum in front of the old church, in order to reconstitute the dimensions of the original plaza missionary village. The result of SPHAN's work in the missions, as embodied in the ruins of São Miguel Arcanjo, was selected to become national heritage and, decades later, world heritage.

4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Some peculiarities of the Brazilian process, which admitted the relationship between the modern and the antique, show that national architects radicalized the precepts of the international modern movement, which rejected all references of the past in architectural language. In Brazil, there was no contradiction between the new architecture and traditional architecture. The Museum of the Missions is an example of this stance.

Great modern architects like Lucio Costa, Oscar Niemeyer, Affonso Reidy and Carlos Leão were SPHAN collaborators and officials, while at the same time they introduced modernist concepts in the country with their architectural and urban design projects. The fact that this team had designed the first modernist building in the world to host the MES is not contradictory (Costa, 1997), and also host the institution responsible for preserving the heritage. That is, instead of being installed in an old restored building, SPHAN was placed in the pioneering and modern Palácio Capanema. This reinforces the break with the European position antagonistic regarding the past and present.

The novelty of the registry of modern architecture examples in Brazil, registered concurrently with their construction, also features a radical aspect in comparison with European modernism. It was implicit in the registry the possibility of transforming examples of modern architecture into monuments for posterity – intentional monuments according to Riegl's classification (1984) earlier referred, which was unusual.

The modernist concern with the vernacular architecture – as demonstrated by the registry of the simple house built with material taken from the ruins and Catetinho – and equating them with the 'monument' category, shows that simple architecture could obtain the rank of consecrated monuments. Thus, it is necessary relativize the common sense of a restrictive conception of the historical and artistic values by the modernist builders of historical and artistic heritage. The registry process, such as that of the masonry Mission house, helps to demystify the idea of exclusively search representative monuments of the economic and social elites. The studies that modernists conducted on anthropological and ethnographic manifestations, in and out of SPHAN, demonstrate a radicality in a different sense – in the sense of searching for roots, for what is fundamental in the nation that was being constructed at the time, finally, for Brazilian identity. It can be said that the SPHAN modernists were radical modernists.

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