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## SANTA CATARINA HILL: MONUMENTS, TOURISM AND SELECTIVE COLLECTIVE MEMORY<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** The historical past of Santa Catarina Hill diverges from the prevailing narrative in the State. Until 1729, the region was home to indigenous groups, known as bugres, a word used in popular language. The monuments present in the highland plateau did not attempt to tell this story. Neither the promotional material on online platforms by the entities responsible for tourism in the region. Such observations aim to verify the extent to which the dominant and selective narrative excluded the indigenous heritage and presence from the region's history.

**Keywords:** Bugs, indigenous presence, monuments, Santa Catarina hills.

## **COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND MONUMENTS IN SANTA CATARINA HILL**

What defines the identity of a city, a region, a country, a nation, among other things, is based on the memory that is built. Following the more classic definition brought by Halbwachs (1952/1992), each individual memory is built from relationships of belonging and the set of shared memories is what would form the collective memory. However, the complexity in the development of history and social sciences from the second half of the 20th century onwards recognizes that this formula cannot do without the fact that there is a field of forces immanent in the struggle over what can or must be remembered.

Since Le Goff (1996) it has been accepted that what survives in the present does not bring together the set of what existed in the past, but is the result of a choice. On the one hand, the choice of the historian himself; on the other hand, of the forces "which operate in the temporal development of the world and of humanity". Monuments and documents are the materials that translate this composition. The monument speaks of these forces and the

dominant narrative present in the "official memory". The monuments of Santa Catarina Hill inform the memory of its occupation and population. The inclusion of the region in the economy of Colonial Brazil was due to the interest of São Paulo leaders (Vincentists, at the time) in creating a large transport network that could supply the population exploring gold and precious stones in the region of the mines from the cattle of Rio Grande do Sul (Santos, 1998). The publicity page of the Secretary of Tourism of Lages, the hub city of the so-called "Planalto Serrano", names 29 tourist attractions for visitation, including squares, parks and others. Of these, 3 are monuments, in the strict sense of the term. Everyone talks about this period that marks a key point in the official memory of the city and the region. Also selecting four other monuments of the city, it is observed how the bandeirante and especially the tropeiro appear as the representative figures of the regional identity and are at the center of the dominant narrative.

With the awareness of the incompleteness of what is established as collective memory, Pollak (1989) found in oral history a way to investigate what was lost between silence and oblivion. By privileging "the analysis of the excluded, the marginalized and the minorities" (1989:4) it would be possible to rescue subterranean memories of minority and dominated cultures. "Once the taboo is broken, once the underground memories manage to invade the public space, multiple and hardly predictable claims join this dispute over memory" (Pollak, 1989:5). His investigation starts from the memories that bring the Russian examples, the Jews who return to Germany and Austria after the experience of the concentration camps and the Alsatian conscripts. The reports raised showed "another side of the story" that has always been ignored by the dominant

narrative, but which is present in individual memories, emerging only in informal communication channels.

In an attempt to review the history of Santa Catarina through oral history, Cristina Scheibe Wolff (2003-a) carried out a work with the support of students in which she collected several interviews between Lages, Vale do Itajaí and the south of the State, and made underground memories emerge of indigenous ancestors in Santa Catarina families, contrary to historiographical studies and government and tourist propaganda that favor European immigration in the State or the Vincentian “pioneers”, in the case of the highlands, in explaining the origin of its population. Wolff’s work (2003-a; 2003-b) rescued a series of reports that described great-grandparents who were “caught in a lasso” or “by dog” and how, from then on, they were incorporated into the nuclear family that welcomed them and also shaped this family nucleus. A good part of these women from the collected memories are identified as “skilled midwives, people dedicated to the cure of diseases” (2003-b:13), wise grandmothers or even, when aggregated from powerful families, as “submissive and faithful”.

In the region, questions about “Indian” will not receive as many answers as those that “bugre” can bring out. There is talk of “little bugs caught to breed”, and there are many reports of conflicts and disputes between Indians and non-Indians. In this sense, the material produced by the History teacher is relevant of the state public network Silmara Miranda, in Lages, with its four 6th grade classes. series in the year 2006. Titled: *Reports of the Indigenous Presence in the Serrana Region of Santa Catarina*, the work – which had the participation of almost 100 students to carry out more than 40 interviews – contains a brief description of the history of Lages and the Planalto Serrano, based on

the recognition of the millenary indigenous presence in the region. The work cites the royal orders for the foundation of Vila de Lages and the declaration of the “war on the Indians”, in this region considered barbarians due to the impossibility of their “civilization”. Bugre is how each native found is called and the use of the term is recurrent in the oral tradition of the city. The work – which calls for a need for more extensive ethnographic and archaeological research in the region – is complemented by interviews carried out by its students, who located neighbors and elderly relatives who described something of their memory about the indigenous presence from the recognition of a popular character called “Pedro Bugre”. An indigenous, Pedro Bugre had a nomadic life, moving between the municipalities of Panel and Lages, always on foot and never wearing shoes. A person of “clumsy speech”, he moved from farm to farm performing small jobs such as cleaning and cutting firewood in exchange for food and a place to stay. Not in bed; on the floor of the sheds, apparently by his own preference. He was killed, around the age of 90 or 100, according to reports, in a hit-and-run, on the newly built asphalt on the road that connects Panel to Lages in the 1990s. His death, reported in the local press, aroused great commotion. The reports about Pedro Bugre made the interviewees mention something about a relative, or other data from their memory regarding the conflicts and coexistence between Indians and non-Indians. Of these, 8 reported their descent from a captured indigenous person (grandmother, grandfather, great-grandmother).

In the official narrative, the bugre is remembered as someone dangerous and threatening. In fact, this is his only sculptural representation in the city, in the Monument: the Lavadeiras:



Photo 1. Monument: The washers – Square: Jonas Ramos.

Photo: Disclosure: Secretaria do Turismo – Lages.

The city's Tourism Department informs that the history of the monument is a tribute to the creation of the popular Tanque, officially named Parque Jonas Ramos and which from the mid-20th century became a leisure space in the city. The Tank was the damming of "four or five natural springs that existed there", carried out by order of the captain major of the province of São Paulo, Antonio Correia Pinto, in 1766 – the year in which explorations began in the surroundings for the foundation of the city – to guarantee the safety of the women who had washed their clothes until then in the Carahá River and feared being attacked by indigenous people or wild animals. The monument is composed of two women, probably black maids or slaves, who are washing clothes, and a mother – this one with long straight hair – breastfeeding her baby on the shore of the lake. A man in country clothes and a weapon exercising surveillance and, on the opposite diagonal, hides an indigenous person, a bugre, on the lookout for an attack.

The accounts cited above follow this clue that is silenced through the monuments. But it is through the observation of the monuments of the explorers of the mountain territory that one can lead to a confrontation about what remains to be said.

## SANTA CATARINA HILL: A HISTORICAL REVIEW VISITING MONUMENTS

There are records of human presence in the Sertão de Coritiba, as the unknown region was called until 1729, dating back more than four thousand years. Different indigenous populations inhabited or transited the territory of forests with araucaria and grassland ecosystems, as evidenced by the underground houses of the southern Jê Indians, among other archaeological inscriptions, in São José do Cerrito and other parts of the plateau (Schmitz, 2014; Reis, 2007). These inscriptions revealed a series of monuments left by these populations: platform embankments, 'dancers' and funerary mounds. Analyzing its dating, archaeologists found a record of this presence as far back as the 17th century.

From the 18th century onwards, they are: *Kaigang* and *Xokleng*, the peoples who descend from this large group, who start to occupy this geographic space. The first ones with a tendency to settle more, due to their dedication to the cultivation of food, especially corn. The latter, also called Botocudos – due to the ornament placed on the perforated lower lip – were predominantly nomadic and, as they depended completely on gathering (fruits, honey and pine nuts) and hunting, they roamed different and wider areas of the territorial strip of what is now called the state of Santa Catarina (Santos, 1973). In summer they tended to roam along the coastal strips; in autumn they circled the pine forests of the plateau. What could be called their "territory", therefore, was considerably comprehensive:

"Their 'habitat' was still generally contained between the maritime slopes of Serra do Mar to the Timbó river, in the hydrographic basin of the Negro and Iguaçu rivers, to the north of the area, and to the Peixe river, in the Pelotas basin, to the south, where

they respected a boundary line that they recognized as the domain of the great nation of the crowned, or caingang de Palmas, their enemies. In their wanderings, however, they sometimes went to the forests of the coast of Santa Catarina.” (Ehlke, 1973: 37)

They lived in a community, bringing together about fifty to three hundred individuals, with a relative division of labor by gender (allowing for an anachronism)<sup>2</sup>. The women were dedicated to the manufacture of ceramics and the making of clothes, made with braided leaves. They were also responsible for storing the pine nuts, which were cooled in the rivers and sangas for consumption beyond the harvest period. Men, in addition to being responsible for hunting and protecting against threats, were the builders of the houses that sheltered them from the cold. Later, the Guarani also began to populate the state and, despite their predominance in the coastal area, they left their traces in the mountains.

The reason for this gap in the records of archaeological sites between the 17th and 18th centuries, according to the group of archaeologists coordinated by Schmitz (2014:14) is that, while acknowledging the fact that dating is never to an excellent degree of precision, the most likely is that “the population was dispersed by the colonizer’s advance on the territory”. And it is precisely in this period that the territory becomes of interest to Colonial Brazil.

In the year mentioned above, the pioneer and sergeant-major of São Paulo, Francisco de Souza Faria, traced a path connecting the extreme south of Brazil to the southeast region, allowing a wide exploration of the Santa Catarina Plateau (Miranda & Santos, 2015).

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2. For the anthropologist Jules Henry (1964), based on his fieldwork carried out for a little over a year between 1932 and 1934, on the Xokleng accommodated in the newly created reserve, there was a profound disproportion between the work of men and women, the first being those who accumulated the most tasks. Through his observation, the author even stated about women who “Aside from their specifically feminine functions Kaingáng society could exist just as well without them” (:15).

3. <https://www.visitlages.tur.br/ponto-turistico/31/monumento-correia-pinto>



Photo 2. Praça dos Bandeirantes – “In honor of the pioneers, pioneers of Brazil”

Photo: Disclosure: Secretaria do Turismo - Lages

The opening of the road led to the opening of stops, places where troops and cattle could rest. This phenomenon marks the beginning of the population of São Paulo in the region that until then was home to native peoples. The “Cima da Serra” path was favored, then, for three special reasons: it was less slow compared to the coastal path, it facilitated rest in the large expanses of fields, and it was an alternative occupation to face the growing Spanish domination in the south. The city’s Tourism Department informs that in the Correia Pinto Monument, created by the plastic artist Augustinho Malinverni, the city’s founder was sculpted “with the characteristic costume of the pioneer. In his right hand he carries a shotgun and with his left he points to the place where the village would be built.”<sup>3</sup>.





Photo 3. Monument to Correia Pinto – Praça da Bandeira.

Photo: Disclosure: Secretaria do Turismo - Lages.

The foundation of Vila de Lages fostered a more stabilized and defined troop path, linking “through the plateau, the Platine provinces, the old Missões district and the gaucho campaign to the fields of Curitiba and the city of Sorocaba, the terminal point of the mule herd from the south” (Machado, 2004: 60).



Photo 4. Monument – Avenida Luiz de Camões.  
Photo: Disclosure: Secretaria do Turismo - Lages.

In this period, the indigenous presence was perceived with some distance, or without representing a great inconvenience. On the contrary, it was more common for troops to come across communities *kaigangs*, whom they recognized as having a “similar nature to the Guarani”. Their good relations made them, albeit unconsciously, collaborators in the colonization in progress, facilitating the exploitation of the different resources found.

### THE IMPASSE OF THE INDIGENOUS PRESENCE WITH THE ADVANCE OF THE OCCUPATION

The moment in which the colonization campaigns took place in the Itajaí Valley and in the North of the State left the indigenous populations in a corner. The initial surveys of the territory recognized the indigenous presence, but it was believed that they would flee to some hinterland, as happened in other areas when occupied. However, what was not considered was that

“(…) the region was isolated, that is, surrounded by civilized establishments. On the plateau to the west were the breeding farms; to the south, on the Rio Grande, colonization began to march north, towards the frontier of Santa Catarina; to the North, in Curitiba, colonization began to descend towards the South, also towards Santa Catarina. There was, therefore, no way out, and nowhere to flee.” (Santos, 1998:84)

Considered “serious obstacles” to the expanding territorial occupation, the indigenous people received the declaration of war with the first organized attacks. Those who were formerly the scouts of the bush, who to some extent “tried to decimate the indigenous groups they encountered” (Santos, 1973: 7), became *bugreiros* and began to appear in official documents and in the local press around the end of the 1870s, which indicates a great intensification of their efforts. Settlers, loggers and the provincial government itself

then began to use the service offered by these armed sertanejos, which consisted of “hitting the woods and scaring off the foresters” (Santos, 1973).

The bugreiros carried out expeditions considered true “war expeditions” (Santos, 1973: 83). It was in these brigades that some women and children, when not killed, were captured: “caught by a noose” or “by a dog”. Laced like cattle or attacked by dogs, in order, between forced marriage and adoption, to be part of the first family nuclei in the mountains.

With the advance of the occupation, the use of bugreiros services became a common practice, to the point that “the ‘white’ population” proceeded “to eliminate bugres from the newly occupied regions as a preventive way of ‘clearing the land.’” (Machado, 2004:58).

The end of the bugreiros’ activity only came in 1914, six years after the international scandal generated by the revelation of their practices by a Czech ethnologist and a German settler who had educated an indigenous child, Maria Korikrã, in European languages and piano.

## **WHAT THE MONUMENTS DON'T SAY**

There were disputes and clashes over territory between Xoklengs, Kaigangs and Guaranis before the arrival of non-Indians. However, there is no doubt that the most drastic consequences were felt when the conflicts involved the latter. With the constant onslaught of drovers and the occupation of the territory by settlers and farmers, the Kaingang were driven westward, while the Xokleng inhibited their incursions, being today divided into two indigenous lands in the region of Vale do Itajaí, far from the plateau.<sup>4</sup>

These groups today no longer find their livelihood on the land itself, having to look for other means outside of it. On these outings, they sporadically appear again in the Santa Catarina Hill, where they try to sell their handicrafts. Its most remote monuments can be found in the archaeological inscriptions that left the “thatched huts with low floors” (Schmitz, 2014:10), the underground houses whose knowledge of oral tradition refers to as “bugre hole”.

It is true that a more comprehensive mapping is pending, without which an accurate survey of data is difficult. Even so, based on reports and previous works, it is not difficult to suppose that the still silenced indigenous presence in the region goes beyond the demarcated areas.

While the indigenous origin of the practices, beliefs and traits of this subaltern living (Spivak, 2014) remain ignored, the memory that emanates from the monuments and that stands out in tourist advertising prevails as a protagonist in the narration of the region’s history. Even so, archaeological work has already taken the first steps, unearthing and bringing to the surface another group of monuments, in turn capable of reaching another memory.

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4. In addition to these, there are some families in Rio Grande do Sul who declared themselves Xokleng and are waiting for the recognition of their lands.

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