

The Casa de Cultura Ney Alberto and the surroundings of the heritage and regional history

A Casa de Cultura Ney Alberto e os contornos do patrimônio e da história regional

Natália Oliveira de Assis*

<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-1210-055X>

Amália Dias**

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3112-9301>

Abstract

This article analyzes the cultural initiatives produced by the Casa de Cultura Ney Alberto, a cultural facility run by the municipal government of Nova Iguaçu, and their role in shaping a collective memory about the city's history and culture. Opened in 2004 and located in a central area of the city, the Casa de Cultura occupies a 1930s mansion that functions as an art gallery, hosting free exhibitions. Drawing on discussions from sociology, anthropology, and history on the phenomenon of collective memory, the analysis focuses on the process of transforming the building into a cultural facility, understood as a process of heritage-making, and the narratives present in exhibition catalogs from 2019 to 2022. As a result, we understand these actions as products of a framing of regional history promoted by the intervention of actors belonging to the ruling elites of Nova Iguaçu – both past and present – with a view to shaping an official history of Nova Iguaçu linked to their political, economic, and cultural interests and activities.

Keywords: Casa de Cultura Ney Alberto; Exhibition Catalogs; Cultural Heritage; Regional History; Nova Iguaçu.

*Student in the Doctoral Program and MA in Education, Culture and Communication in Peripheries, State University of Rio de Janeiro (PPGECC/UERJ). Email: natalia.assis.edu@hotmail.com

**Full Professor in the Department of Sciences and Foundations of Education at the Faculdade de Educação da Baixada Fluminense (FEBF/UERJ). Full Member of the Education, Culture and Communication in Peripheries Graduate Program (PPGEC FEBF/UERJ). Email: amaliadias@gmail.com

Resumo

Analisam-se, neste artigo, as iniciativas culturais produzidas a partir da Casa de Cultura Ney Alberto, equipamento cultural da prefeitura municipal da cidade de Nova Iguaçu, na formação de uma memória coletiva sobre a história e a cultura da cidade. Inaugurada em 2004 e localizada em uma área central do município, a Casa de Cultura ocupa um casarão da década de 1930, que funciona como uma galeria de arte onde são realizadas exposições gratuitas. Tendo como referência as discussões da área da sociologia, da antropologia e da história sobre o fenômeno da memória coletiva, a análise parte do processo de transformação do imóvel em um equipamento cultural, entendido como processo de patrimonialização, e das narrativas presentes nos catálogos de exposições que ocorreram entre os anos de 2019 e 2022. Como resultado, compreendemos essas ações enquanto produtos de um enquadramento da história regional promovido pela intervenção de atores pertencentes às elites dirigentes iguaçuanas – do passado e do presente –, com vistas à conformação de uma história oficial sobre Nova Iguaçu, vinculada a seus interesses e atuações políticas, econômicas e culturais.

Palavras-chave: Casa de Cultura Ney Alberto; Catálogos de exposição; Patrimônio Cultural; História regional; Nova Iguaçu.

Introduction

This article presents an investigation into the narratives produced from the Casa de Cultura Ney Alberto [Ney Alberto Cultural Center], located in the center of the municipality of Nova Iguaçu (RJ), with the purpose of understanding the actions aimed at the formation and preservation of a collective memory about the history, culture and society of Nova Iguaçu produced at this venue. Occupying a mansion built in the 1930s, since 2004 that physical space has been used to promote exhibitions, among other artistic and cultural activities for the population, marking its use and naming as a cultural facility by the city hall. The investigation was carried out considering the historical dimension of the building that the Center occupies and based on the analysis of six catalogs, referring to exhibitions on local history and culture, held at the Culture Center between 2019 and 2022¹.

From the field of historiography on the Baixada Fluminense, we investigated the actions concerning regional history, heritage and memory developed by the municipal executive branch, in the formation of social frameworks of reference for the local collective memory. The theoretical

¹ The exhibitions analyzed from the catalogs are listed in Chart 1.

background used includes discussions from the fields of Sociology, Anthropology and History, addressing the social dimension of memory and the action of social groups in shaping collective memory based on the work of the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs and the historians Michael Pollak and Jacques Le Goff; as well as discussions on cultural heritage guided by the anthropological notion of culture, as introduced by Maria Cecília Londres Fonseca, which will be explored in more detail later.

We seek to explore the social complex of memory through which the work of constructing and reconstructing memory is carried out, addressing the social, political and economic contexts, as well as the values, meanings and representations from which such re/construction is/was operated over history and the historiography of the territory, located in the metropolitan region of the state of Rio de Janeiro.

When considering the interventions of actors from the city's past and present local elites in the production of such narratives, we understand the transformation of the building into a cultural facility and the catalogs as products of the work of "framing memory", as discussed by Michael Pollak when discussing processes and actors involved in the work of constitution and formalization of memories from materials provided by history². Appearing as social frameworks of memory³ from which individuals access past events about the territory, such narratives guide the production of remembering/forgetting, according to the interests of these groups. The dialectic between remembering and forgetting, intertwined in the process of memory constitution, is understood from the actions of dominant groups, who guide silences and forgetfulness to manipulate the collective memory, as pointed out by Le Goff⁴.

Given the interrelationships between memory and identity supported by the references adopted⁵, we also identified how such memory policies promoted the formation of an imaginary and an identity about the city that justified economic interventions and processes of revitalization of the cultural heritage of Nova Iguaçu.

² POLLAK, Michael. Memória, esquecimento, silêncio. *Estudos Históricos*, Rio de Janeiro, 1989, v. 2. n. 3, p. 3-15.

³ HALBWACHS, Maurice. *A memória coletiva*. São Paulo: Vértice/ Revista dos tribunais, 1990. 197p.

⁴ LE GOFF, Jacques. *História e memória*. Campinas: Editora da UNICAMP, 1990. 553p.

⁵ POLLAK, Michael. Memória e identidade social. *Estudos históricos*, Rio de Janeiro, 1992, v. 5, n. 10, p. 200-215.

The discussions on cultural heritage are aligned with the concept of memory and the historiography of the Baixada Fluminense. We adopted the term “cultural reference”, as presented by Fonseca, who defines heritage as social goods and practices to which individuals assign value and meaning⁶. To discuss the process of heritage-making of the Center, we resort to the dynamics of assigning value and meaning in the approach to its transformation into a cultural facility.

Regarding the discussion about exhibitions, we reflect on their “museumological, educational and communicational principles”⁷, based on specialized works in the areas of museology and exhibition design, drawing from the productions by the Instituto Brasileiro de Museus (Ibram) [Brazilian Institute of Museums] and the authors Marília Xavier Cury and Waldisa Guarnieri. From these works, we consider it important to highlight the narrative character of the exhibitions⁸, associated with the action of telling a story through the objects and other elements on display; we also pay attention to their dimension as “space of construction of values”⁹, involved in the musealization of the exhibited objects.

Considering that, the relationship with the cultural heritage dimension is also noted, as according to Guarnieri, objects are musealized and preserved from the process of attributing meanings that “enter our hierarchy of values, that is, from simple ‘things’ (res) they become goods, they are transformed into heritage (a set of goods) and into cultural heritage”¹⁰.

We understand the catalogs as “lasting records of exhibitions, temporary events”¹¹, which aim the continuity and circulation of the narratives,

⁶ FONSECA, Maria Cecília Londres. Referências culturais: bases para novas políticas de patrimônio. In: *O Registro do Patrimônio Imaterial: Dossiê final das atividades da Comissão e do Grupo de Trabalho Patrimônio Imaterial*. Brasília: Ministério da Cultura/Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional, 2006. p. 85-95.

⁷ CURY, Marília Xavier. *Exposição - Concepção, montagem e avaliação*. São Paulo: Annablume, 2006, p. 27.

⁸ INSTITUTO BRASILEIRO DE MUSEUS. *Caminhos da memória: para fazer uma exposição*. Research and text production Katia Bordinhão, Lúcia Valente and Maristela dos Santos Simão – Brasília, DF: IBRAM, 2017, p. 25.

⁹ Ibidem, p. 42.

¹⁰ GUARNIERI, Waldisa Russio Camargo. Conceito de cultura e sua inter-relação com o patrimônio cultural e a preservação. In: BRUNO, Maria Cristina Oliveira et al. (Orgs.). *Waldisa Rússio Camargo Guarnieri: textos e contextos de uma trajetória profissional*. São Paulo: Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, 2010, p. 152. Author's emphasis.

¹¹ MORESCHI, Marcelo Seravali. *A inclusão de “barroco” no Brasil: o caso dos catálogos*. 2004. Dissertation (Literary Theory and History Mater's Program) – Literary Theory and History Graduate Program. University of Campinas, Campinas, Campinas, 2004, p. 143.

objects and values displayed and constructed in the exhibition; they are also understood as a form of writing about the exhibition and, consequently, about the history of the city narrated through them. The memories about the history and culture of Nova Iguaçu, evoked from the exhibitions, were analyzed from the dialectic between remembering and forgetting, and the conflicts and disputes entangled in the constitution of this memory.

The catalog analysis presentation was systematized based on the question of which individuals, groups, historical periods and social, political, economic and cultural aspects are evoked as part of the city's history and culture. Furthermore, as a methodological resource, the narratives associated with the catalogs and the Center were examined in light of the several productions on local historiography¹². Based on such productions, we observed the emergence of a commitment of the executive branch to writing the history of the region from a narrative that praises the elites in times considered golden, denying protagonism to popular classes and to the academic historiography, a choice also observed in the catalogs.

Investigating the process of memory formation, using the city of Nova Iguaçu as a case study, implies, beyond a spatial/geographical delimitation, the understanding of the region investigated “as a process and result of political operations and, why not, academic operations that support this very reality and shape the way it is understood”¹³. The use of local, regional, national and international levels as analytical positions, as proposed by Luciano Faria Filho, enables the production of an intelligibility of the phenomena under study from the social, cultural, and political dynamics that form the territory. As a result of this theoretical-methodological operation, we identified the contours of regional history that results in heritage actions and the exhibitions produced at the Casa de Cultura Ney Alberto.

¹² Os trabalhos: BEZERRA, Nielson Rosa. A historiografia tradicional e a invisibilidade da escravidão na Baixada Fluminense. In: NASCIMENTO, Álvaro; BEZERRA, Nielson (Orgs.). *De Iguaçu à Baixada Fluminense: Histórias de um território*. Curitiba: Editora Appris, 2019. p. 85-104. DIAS, Amália. O centenário e a “vocaç o agr cola” de Iguaçu: opera  es de hegemonia e enquadramento da hist ria. In: BEZERRA, Nielson; NASCIMENTO,  varo (Orgs.). *De Iguaçu   Baixada Fluminense: Hist rias de um territ rio*. Curitiba: Editora Appris, 2019. p. 129-152. LAURENTINO, Eliana. *Tens es e concilia  es: a escrita da hist ria local e o Instituto Hist rico da C mara Municipal de Duque de Caxias (1971-2008)*. Thesis, Social History Graduate Program of the Teacher Education College of the State University of Rio de Janeiro, 2021. 250p.

¹³ FARIA FILHO, Luciano Mendes de. Hist ria da Educa  o e Hist ria Regional: experi ncias, d vidas e perspectivas. In: MENDON A, Ana Waleska Campos Pollo et al. (Orgs.). *Hist ria da Educa  o: desafios te ricos e emp ricos*. Niter i: Editora da Universidade Federal Fluminense, 2009, p. 72.

The mansion of the perfume-city (1930-2004)

The Casa de Cultura Ney Alberto is located at Rua Getúlio Vargas, n.º 31 [31, Getulio Vargas Street], in the center of Nova Iguaçu, close to the train station. It is part of the Complexo Cultural Mário Marques [Mário Marques Cultural Complex], along with three other artistic-cultural spaces, namely, Teatro Sylvio Monteiro [Sylvio Monteiro Theater] and the Biblioteca Cial Brito [Cial Brito Library], located in the Annex, built in 2003, and the Quintal das Artes [Art Yard], which is located in an external area. The Casa de Cultura occupies a mansion built in the 1930s as the residence of the Italian citrus grower Ângelo di Gregório and his family, and it is the oldest part of the Complex, while the Annex is the more contemporary part. The works on the mansion were carried out through restoration aiming to preserve the original architecture of the residence, such as doorbell, doors, windows, materials of Italian origin such as stained glass and even the paintings of that time, with Italian frescoes. The color of the exterior is also the same as in the 1930s (see figure 1).

Figure 1: Casa da Cultura Ney Alberto.



Source: Municipal Culture Secretariat of Nova Iguaçu webpage¹⁴.

According to Silva, the inauguration as a cultural facility occurred on September 30, 2004, during the administration of then-mayor Mário Marques

¹⁴ Available at: <https://semcultnovaiguacu.wixsite.com/semcult/services-8>. Access on: 03/04/2026.

(2002-2004), named Casa de Cultura Nova Iguaçu. In previous periods, it had been used as a medical clinic, as the Education Center School of Rio de Janeiro, and the city's Courthouse. After its opening in 2004, the space underwent a series of renovations and reopenings, with changes according to the interest of different administrations¹⁵. In early 2023, the space was revitalized and reopened under the name Complexo Cultural Mário Marques, as a tribute to the mayor who created it¹⁶.

The creation was officialized by Decree-law n° 9,271 of January 9, 2012, which also established its institutionalization and link to the Municipal Culture and Tourism Secretariat. The same decree provided for the space's competences, as follows: the promotion and cultural integration of the city; offering cultural workshops for the population; production and presentation of shows, exhibitions and debates; its use in projects of the public and private sector; and the allocation of structural agencies of the Municipal Culture and Tourism Secretariat, temporarily or permanently¹⁷.

Used as an art gallery, where free exhibitions are held, the Casa de Cultura, which is part of the Complex, consists of two floors and eight rooms, where the works are displayed, one of which is a more open space, like a covered veranda. The second floor shelters the Galeria Mauro Azevedo [Mauro Azevedo Gallery], in homage to the visual artist Mauro Lemos de Azevedo, who died in 2006. He is introduced on the plaque affixed at the entrance of the room, as great reproducer of the historical heritage of Nova Iguaçu and the Baixada Fluminense, using the pen-and-ink technique.

The naming of Casa da Cultura after the historian Ney Alberto Gonçalves de Barros took place in 2013, one year after his death. Born on September 27, 1940, in the city of Nova Iguaçu, Ney Alberto was a teacher, historian, researcher, composer, poet and writer, being one of the founders of the Instituto Histórico e Geográfico de Nova Iguaçu (IHGNI) [Historical and Geographical Institute of Nova Iguaçu]. He is described on the plaque in his honor as one of the most illustrious citizens of Nova Iguaçu and great defender

¹⁵ SILVA, Amanda Lopes da. *A Casa de Cultura Ney Alberto e suas relações com identidade, lazer e o turismo*. 2016. End-of-course work (Bachelor of Tourism undergraduate course) - Multidisciplinary Institute, Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro, Nova Iguaçu, 2016, p. 28-33.

¹⁶ Available at: <https://www.novaiguacu.rj.gov.br/2023/04/28/complexo-cultural-de-nova-iguacu-e-revitalizado-e-recebe-nome-do-ex-prefeito-mario-marques-criador-do-espaco/>. Access on: 13/05/2026.

¹⁷ SILVA, Amanda Lopes da. *A Casa de Cultura Ney Alberto e suas relações com identidade, lazer e o turismo*. 2016. End-of-course work (Bachelor of Tourism Degree) - - Multidisciplinary Institute, Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro, Nova Iguaçu, 2016, p. 30-31.

of the memory of the Baixada Fluminense, which marks his contribution to the promotion and preservation of the city's history.

Based on verbal information provided by Nelson Freitas, secretary of culture and tourism in the Mário Marques administration, Silva also presents the motivations that led the then-mayor to choose both the street where the facility should be built and the property to be occupied. According to Amanda Silva's research, the street was chosen first, selected by the mayor due to its history and the fact that it had been inaugurated by President Getúlio Vargas. The Di Gregório family home was not mayor Mário Marques's first option, as he was interested in another house on the same street, considered "for being spacious, of old and very beautiful architecture, having a great plot of land and a privileged location with greater visibility in all directions of the street". However, the owners did not want to sell that property. Knowing this situation, Ney Alberto would have indicated the Di Gregório family home to Nelson Freitas. After negotiations with the family, the house was acquired through an amicable expropriation carried out by the city hall of Nova Iguaçu on November 12, 2002¹⁸.

Regarding the appreciation of Getúlio Vargas street, it is worth highlighting the points made by Maria Lúcia Alexandre, who addresses the actions of the remaining agents of citrus farming in the formation of the Arcádia Iguassuana de Letras [something like an Academy of Letters of Nova Iguaçu] in 1955, analyzing the work of two members of that institution, namely, Ruy Afrânio Peixoto and Deoclécio Dias Machado Filho, who influenced the construction of the writing of the municipality's history. In Machado Filho's work, that author observes that, based on his memories, he presents an appreciation of Getúlio Vargas street and characters who lived there, who belonged to the elite. The author himself also lived in the neighborhood. As regards this specific street, that author reinforces its relationship with the citrus farming elite:

The street described by the writer is located in the center of the municipality of Nova Iguaçu to this day. The area brought together the residences of the agrarian elite during the 1920s and 1940s, and its formation was shaped during the consolidation of citrus farming in the city. It was delimited by the railway

¹⁸ SILVA, Amanda Lopes da. *A Casa de Cultura Ney Alberto e suas relações com identidade, lazer e o turismo*. 2016. End-of-Course work (Bachelor of Tourism undergraduate course) - Multidisciplinary Institute, Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro, Nova Iguaçu, 2016, p. 57-59.

line, on the one side the homes of “founding” families of Nova Iguaçu, and on the other the commercial center and residents of the more working-class neighborhoods¹⁹.

Therefore, it is interesting to note how the previous actions of local elites in establishing a narrative about the municipality’s main district reverberated – and still reverberates – in the actions of local political actors in more recent times. Beyond the creation of a cultural facility on the aforementioned street, preserving its status and the historical and cultural importance ascribed to it by the remnants of the citrus growing elites, it is worth mentioning that other urban interventions and (re)qualifications have been carried out based on narratives constructed about the history of the city, aiming at the maintenance of the ideal of a “golden age”. Such “golden age” seeks to downplay the transformations that have occurred since the territorial emancipations of the 1940s²⁰, the end of citrus farming in the 1950s, the subdivision of land and the migration of working-class families to the region during the same period.

In the formation of the Nova Iguaçu history and society, the uses of historical writing by the elites as a way of framing local history and memory, according to their political and economic interests, have been known since José Matoso Maia Forte’s book²¹, published during the centennial celebration of the municipality of Nova Iguaçu in 1933, during the government of mayor Sebastião de Arruda Negreiros. According to Dias, the productions and celebrations carried out in the context of the commemorations of the 100th anniversary of the city produced frames of local history and memory by the dominant local groups “engaged in the production, processing and commercialization of oranges”, the main economic activity of the district, with the aim of building “consensus in the cultural and social field about the economic importance of that activity”²².

¹⁹ ALEXANDRE, Maria Lúcia Bezerra da Silva. Nova Iguaçu segundo a literatura: as representações de uma cidade a partir da Arcádia Iguassuana de Letras (AIL-1955-1970). In: SIMPÓSIO NACIONAL DE HISTÓRIA CULTURAL, 7, 2014, São Paulo. *Anais...* São Paulo: USP, p. 8.

²⁰ Called the mother-city of the Baixada Fluminense, the history of the municipality of Nova Iguaçu is closely related to the history of the region. Until the 1940s, the municipality territory included what is currently the area of the municipalities of Duque de Caxias, São João de Meriti, Nilópolis, Belford Roxo, Queimados, Japeri and Mesquita. The emancipations of these municipalities occurred between 1943 and 1999.

²¹ A obra *Memória da Fundação de Iguassú. Comemorativa do Centenário da Villa Iguassú em 15 de janeiro de 1833*.

²² DIAS, Amália. O centenário e a “vocaç o agr cola” de Igua u: opera  es de hegemonia e enquadramento da hist ria. In.: BEZERRA, Nielson; NASCIMENTO,  lvoro (Orgs.). *De Iguass     Baixada Fluminense: Hist rias de um territ rio*. Curitiba: Editora Appris, 2019, p. 129.

According to that author, “Ressurreição” [Resurrection], the final chapter of Maia Forte’s book, “highlights its significance as a product of the municipality’s centennial celebrations”²³. It addresses the achievements and development of the city from the early 20th century to the 1930s, emphasizing its agricultural wealth²⁴. Thus, Maia Forte’s book presents a narrative about the city’s colonial past with the purpose of promoting a rural identity to the territory, reinforcing the agricultural “vocation” of the municipality and projecting its continuity into the future²⁵. In the 1930s, the city’s agricultural “vocation” was defended through citrus farming, introduced by the government of Nilo Peçanha. The economic recovery and modernization of the city were conveyed by local newspapers as aspects linked to citrus farming, thus reinforcing the importance of this economic activity.

Another analysis, carried out by Laurentino, points out that these first writings about the past of the city were also related to the creation of an identity to the territory, aiming at overcoming the invisibility of the region in comparison to the city of Rio de Janeiro, which reinforces the use of this facility for the creation of a regional identity based on the political and economic demands of that period²⁶. Such identity is created by highlighting the city’s geographical aspects, effect of the strong influence of Geography as the science that guided the studies and productions on regional history. According to that author:

With an emphasis on geographical conditions, the production represented the importance of the region for the transport and circulation of people and goods, while elaborating an identity reference in order to counter the complementary condition to the city of Rio de Janeiro which, according to the center-periphery logic, ascribed invisibility to the Baixada Fluminense²⁷.

Considering that, that author discusses how narratives about routes are recurrent in the works and emphasizes the importance of roads, rivers and railways for the economic development of the city in different historical periods.

²³ Ibidem, p. 145.

²⁴ Idem.

²⁵ Ibidem, p. 146.

²⁶ LAURENTINO, Eliana. *Tensões e conciliações: a escrita da história local e o Instituto Histórico da Câmara Municipal de Duque de Caxias (1971-2008)*. 2021. Thesis (Social History Doctorate Program). Social History Graduate Program, Teacher Education Colledge, State University Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 2021. 250p.

²⁷ Ibidem, p. 83.

The writings that followed²⁸ reproduced the same narrative, with little changes. In general, among memories and omissions observed in those works, we encountered a historiography that, being (re)produced based on narratives of subjects linked to the dominant elites, relates the history of the region to illustrious individuals belonging to that same class to their interests, experiences and political actions.

As understood from the analyses that focused on the study of those works²⁹, also presenting a temporal delimitation, the regional history built by those subjects includes the formation of parishes in the colonial period; from them, the creation of Vila Iguassú during the Empire; the social and economic dynamics of Vila Iguassú in its golden age, focusing on the routes for the outflow of goods; the decline of the Vila and the change of the headquarters to Maxambomba, motivated by the railway construction; and a return to the golden age based on citrus farming. Following the vision of the old rural landowners with fond memories of the orange groves, the social life of the city after the end of citrus farming, laden with a negative representation, is not taken into consideration.

Not surprisingly, considering these interventions, the Vila de Iguassú – established as the starting point for the formation of the municipality in 1833 – and citrus farming, which was expressive in the 1920s and 1930s, appear as the main historical identities/elements of the city in the public power narratives. The nickname “perfume-city”, referring to the pleasant smell of the orange groves, is frequently repeated, related to the city’s economic past, preserved through official symbols such as the anthem and the coat of arms, in various narratives about the history of the city. Regarding Vila Iguassú, we see this aspect addressed in a large part of the exhibitions produced at Casa de Cultura, which we will discuss based on the catalogs.

In this sense, the narratives conveyed by the mansion and the catalogs of exhibitions largely confirm those “official” memories. The analysis of the

²⁸ The work *Imagens Iguaquanas* (1968) by Rui Afrânio Peixoto and the works *A Mudança da Vila: História Iguaquana* (1970) and *Cana, Café e Laranja: História Econômica de Nova Iguaçu* (1977) by Waldick Pereira.

²⁹ BEZERRA, Nielson Rosa. *A historiografia tradicional e a invisibilidade da escravidão na Baixada Fluminense*. In: NASCIMENTO, Álvaro; BEZERRA, Nielson (Orgs). *De Iguassú à Baixada Fluminense: Histórias de um território*. Curitiba: Editora Appris, 2019. p. 85-104. DIAS, Amália. *O centenário e a “vocação agrícola” de Iguaçu: operações de hegemonia e enquadramento da história*. In: BEZERRA, Nielson; NASCIMENTO, Álvaro (Orgs). *De Iguassú à Baixada Fluminense: Histórias de um território*. Curitiba: Editora Appris, 2019. p. 129-152. LAURENTINO, Eliana. *Tensões e conciliações: a escrita da história local e o Instituto Histórico da Câmara Municipal de Duque de Caxias* (1971-2008). 2021. Thesis (Social History Doctorate Program). Social History Graduate, Teacher Education Colledge, State University Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 2021. 250p.

historical building occupied by the Casa da Cultura and the catalogs of some exhibitions that were held between 2019 and 2022 allowed us to observe the continuities and new ways of writing the history of the region produced from that space.

Created in 2000, the Casa de Cultura, as well as the whole Complexo Cultural, expresses the process of remodeling the city and the new political projects developed in the territory, meeting cultural and economic demands. Established and managed by the public power, the Casa de Cultura is understood as an action for the re-signification of the city, with the valorization and enhancement of its historical and cultural dimension. The historical character of the building and its use as a cultural facility by the city hall of Nova Iguaçu are in line with governmental policies of “heritage recycling” through the implementation of cultural centers, aiming at the preservation of old buildings³⁰.

According to Kiefer, in the national context, those actions of restoring and recycling buildings in defense of historical-architectural heritage date back to the late 1970s, as a response to the excesses of demolitions carried out during the military dictatorship, becoming a strong social mobilizer at the time³¹. According to the same author, “along with the vigor of protection of the historical heritage came the need to develop projects to reuse those buildings” thus resulting in proposals to transform the properties into museums or cultural centers.

Although the building occupied by the Casa da Cultura is not officially listed as a heritage site, we understand that its creation – resulting from a legal expropriation process, promoted by the city hall in choosing a space to be transformed into cultural facility – aligns with those processes of repurposing historical buildings. As producers of meaning, representatives of the public power, involved in its creation, promoted the heritage-like identity of the building by assigning values to the property as a historical and “cultural reference” of the city, resulting in the appreciation and preservation of the history linked to that space.

Therefore, being consecrated as a “place of memory”, as discussed by Pierre Nora³², the space gives shape and selection to the city’s “past”,

³⁰ SILVA, Mario Fernandes da, et. al. A produção de teses e dissertações sobre centros culturais. *Revista Brasileira de Pesquisa em Turismo*, [S. l.], 2014, v. 8, n. 1, p. 79.

³¹ KIEFER, Flávio. De Edifício Força e Luz a Centro Cultural CEEE Erico Verissimo. *arq.urb*, 2008, n. 1, p. 21-47.

³² NORA, Pierre. Entre memória e história: a problemática dos lugares. *Projeto História: Revista do Programa de Estudos Pós-Graduados de História*, São Paulo, v. 10, dez. 1993, p. 7-28.

preserving aspects of the memory that one wants to preserve, disseminate and remember. The works on the mansion were carried out through restorations, aiming to preserve the original characteristics of its construction in the 1930s, with materials imported from Europe. Because it was the residence of the Italian citrus farmer Ângelo Di Gregório, its history is closely linked to that figure and to the city's historical and economic background.

In this approach to the history of Nova Iguaçu, it is possible to grasp the continuity of a narrative set by the first works on the city's history, which reinforces the influence of such works on the creation and consolidation of a social framework of the local memory and in the processes of heritage preservation. The history and architecture of the building engender a way of writing and narrating the city's history, allowing for the preservation and appreciation of these aspects.

Having presented some narratives promoted from the Casa de Cultura, with the historical building as a reference, it is also worth noting the continuity of the alignment and dissemination of this historiographic tradition through the contents selected and taught in the exhibitions produced between 2019 and 2022. In the analyses of catalogs, we observed the creation of new support for the remembrance of the city's past.

The exhibition catalogs and history framing (2019-2022)

In the chart below, we list the titles of catalogs that were given to the public during the exhibition visit, the period in which the exhibitions were on display, the curator, and the number of pages of each catalog.

Chart 1: Exhibitions and Catalogs

Exhibition and Catalog Titles	Exhibition period	Curatorship	Catalog number of pages
“Olhares sobre os Lares – A vida doméstica na “Velha” Iguassú – Séculos XVII, XVIII e XIX” [A Glimpse into Homes – Domestic life in “Old” Iguassu – 17th, 18th and 19th century]	June-September / 2019	Marcus Monteiro	28 pages
“Africanidades na Baixada Fluminense – A Contribuição do Negro na Formação da Identidade Brasileira” [Africanities in the Baixada Fluminense – Black People’s Contribution to the Formation of the Baixada Fluminense]	November 2019 / January 2020		28 pages
“A cultura Tupi nas Terras do Guaguassú – Fragmentos da História Iguacuana da Pré-História ao Século XVI” [Tupi culture in the Lands of Guaguassu- Fragments of Nova Iguacu History to the 16th century]	September / December 2020		28 pages
“Pesos e Medidas, Artes e Ofícios – A vida comercial da Vila de Iguassú” [Weights and Measures, Arts and Crafts – The commercial life in Vila de Iguassu]	October / November 2022		24 pages
“A Estrada Real do Comércio. Iguassú - Vale do Paraíba – Minas: 1822 - 2022” [The Royal Road of Commerce. Iguassu – Vale do Paraíba – Minas: 1822 -2022]	October / November 2022		73 pages
“Viajantes Estrangeiros na Baixada Fluminense no Século XIX” [Foreigner Travelers in the Baixada Fluminense in the 19th century]	November / December 2022	Cátia Helena	27 pages

Source: Elaborated by the author based on the catalogs and the Municipal Culture Secretariat of Nova Iguaçu social media.

As observed from the themes and temporal and spatial frameworks presented in the titles of six exhibitions, the influence of the social context of local memory is noticeable, formed by the first written works on the history

of the city in the narrative of the catalogs, focused on Vila de Iguassú, its “opulence”, its routes for the outflow of production, extraction, and trafficking of people, and other aspects of the colonial/imperial past. Thus, we situate the production of exhibitions and their respective catalogs as a way of writing regional history, used to continue memory and heritage projects established in the city of Nova Iguaçu through the use of new communication resources such as exhibitions and catalogs.

Curator of five exhibitions held in the period, Marcus Antônio Monteiro Nogueira is the secretary of culture of the municipality of Nova Iguaçu, occupying the position since January 2019. He is a historian, collector, and art curator, a member of the Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro (IHGB) [Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute] and the Instituto Histórico e Geográfico do Rio de Janeiro (IHGRJ) [Historical and Geographical Institute of Rio de Janeiro]³³. His role as secretary of culture and curator of the exhibitions confirms the political commitment of the municipal government to initiatives in the narrative of regional history.

Based on the exhibitions of that period, we identified the significant attention given by the municipal government to approaching aspects of regional history, mainly related to Vila Iguassú. Considering that, it is worth highlighting that, beyond the exhibitions, Marcus Monteiro's work in the production of regional history is widely recognized in the cultural and political scenario of the municipality of Nova Iguaçu, as well as in other cities of the Baixada Fluminense. According to information found on the Nova Iguaçu Municipal Culture Secretariat webpage, in addition to being the city's secretary of culture, Monteiro was also secretary of culture in the municipality of Nilópolis (1999-2000). At the state level, he was Superintendente Estadual de Cultura da Baixada Fluminense (2001-2002) [State Superintendent of Culture of the Baixada Fluminense], general-director of the Instituto Estadual do Patrimônio Cultural (INEPAC) [State Cultural Heritage Institute] (2003-2009) and president of the Conselho Estadual de Tombamento (2005-2009) [State Council for Heritage Listing], positions he occupied again between 2017 and 2018. The Secretary of Culture and curator is also involved in several actions. Therefore, the intervention of this political actor in local history production is a permanent and recognized presence.

³³ Information obtained from the Municipal Culture Secretariat webpage. Available at: <https://www.novaiguacu.rj.gov.br/semcult/>. Access on: 13/05/2026.

Thus, it is worth pointing out that the use of exhibitions/catalogs as writings of the history region by the curator is not limited to exhibitions and the time frame represented in the research. Based on Enne's work, we see Marcus Monteiro's involvement in the production of the catalog and in the curatorship of the exhibition "Devoção e esquecimento – A presença do Barroco na Baixada Fluminense" [Devotion and Oblivion – The Presence of the Baroque in the Baixada Fluminense], held at Casa França-Brasil [France-Brazil House] in 2001³⁴. According to Enne, this exhibition was, at the beginning of the 21st century, among the fundamental "initiatives for the consolidation of the current context in which *history and memory* are being thought about and produced in the '*Baixada Fluminense*'"³⁵. The exhibition is also introduced as "a milestone in the projection of the name of the Baixada [Fluminense] associated with a positive image for the region", also promoting certain projection and recognition of Marcus Monteiro³⁶.

Resident in Nilópolis, descended from a traditional family from the region, and grandson of a baron, as he himself emphasized in an interview with Enne³⁷, Marcus Monteiro is also a collector of art and historical objects. According to an article found in the newspaper *O Globo* about the exhibition "Cartografia da Africanidade Brasileira: lugares, expressões, saberes e celebrações" [Cartography of Brazilian Africanity: places, expressions, knowledge and celebrations], held in Casa França-Brasil in 2018 and of which he was the curator, his collection has more the 30 thousand pieces³⁸. Some of these pieces were used in the composition of the exhibitions reproduced in the catalogs analyzed, mainly in the exhibition "Africanidades na Baixada Fluminense" [Africanities in the Baixada Fluminense], which featured pieces presented in the exhibition held at Casa França-Brasil.

The historian and cultural producer Cátia Helena da Silva is the curator of the exhibition "Viajantes Estrangeiros na Baixada Fluminense no Século XIX" (2022) [Foreign Travelers in the Baixada Fluminense in the 19th century], held in commemoration to the bicentennial of independence. Other activities

³⁴ ENNE, Ana Lucia Silva. Lugar, meu amigo, é minha Baixada: Memória, *Representações Sociais e Identidades*. 2002. Thesis (Social Anthropology Doctorate Program) - Social Anthropology Graduate Program, National Museum, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 2002. 502p.

³⁵ Ibidem, p. 190.

³⁶ Ibidem, p. 196.

³⁷ Ibidem, p. 189.

³⁸ Available at: <https://oglobo.globo.com/rio/exposicao-na-casa-franca-brasil-conta-historia-do-negro-no-rio-23215580>. Access on: 13/05/2026.

of the cultural producer in actions aimed at disseminating local history and memory can be seen in the curatorship of the exhibition “Ney Alberto: o guardião da memória” (2024) [Ney Alberto: the guardian of memory], carried out by the company Art na Colina Cultural [Art on the Hill], for which the curator is responsible³⁹. The exhibition took place at the Casa de Cultura and was inaugurated in September 2024. According to the information found in the catalog, the exhibition was sponsored by the city hall of the city of Nova Iguaçu, through the Secretaria Municipal de Cultura de Nova Iguaçu (SEMCULT) [Municipal Culture Secretariat], da Fundação Educacional e Cultural de Nova Iguaçu (FENIG) [Educational and Cultural Foundation of Nova Iguaçu], the Ministry of Culture and the Federal Government, through resources from the Paulo Gustavo Law.

Other similar activities relate to the production of three documentary films: “Expedição Estrada Real do Comércio – de Iguassú Velha à Santana das Palmeiras” (2024) [Royal Road of Commerce Expedition – From Iguassú Velha to Santana das Palmeiras], in which she worked on research, direction and executive production; and “Viajantes Estrangeiros na Baixada Fluminense no Séc. XIX” (2024) [Foreign Travelers in the Baixada Fluminense in the 19th century], in which she also worked as director and executive producer. All these films were sponsored by the city hall of Nova Iguaçu, through the SEMCULT and FENIG, and were made with municipal resources from Paulo Gustavo Law. They were launched in October 2024 at the Sylvio Monteiro Theater, which is part of the Complexo Cultural Mário Marques⁴⁰.

In addition to the curators, according to the technical specifications presented in the catalogs, the exhibitions had a technical team comprising general coordination, administrative support coordination, monitoring, educational project, museography, photography, graphic design, assembly team, and dissemination/communication, functions that appear in all exhibitions. In the catalog of the exhibitions “Viajantes Estrangeiros na Baixada” and “A Estrada Real do Comércio”, the technical specifications also have the function of research and text, which was the responsibility of Marcus Monteiro in both productions. These are the catalogs with the greatest volume of texts in relation to the other catalogs analyzed. The other functions are also presented with the name of the team/person in charge, making it possible

³⁹ According to the company register information. Available at: <https://cnpj.biz/22356217000171>. Access on: 13/05/2026.

⁴⁰ Information obtained from the advertisement material of the documentaries found on the producer's Facebook. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/ArtnaColinaCultural>. Access on: 13/05/2026.

to notice the participation of some of the team members, such as the person in charge of museography, in all the exhibitions held by the city hall. By identifying this set of agents involved in the production and execution of exhibitions, we can highlight the curator's role and function as the main responsible for the definition of the content of exhibitions⁴¹ and author of the exhibition presentation text⁴² – an issue observed in the catalogs of the exhibitions that we analyzed.

Regarding the organization and funding of the exhibitions and catalogs, based on the information retrieved from the materials, we see that, except for the exhibition “Viajantes Estrangeiros na Baixada”, carried out by the production company Art na Colina Cultural, sponsored by the Secretaria de Estado de Cultura e Economia Criativa do Rio de Janeiro [State Secretariat of Culture and Creative Economy of Rio de Janeiro], via the “Retomada Cultural RJ 2” public notice, the others were carried out by the city hall of Nova Iguaçu in partnership with SEMCULT and FENIG. The catalogs of the exhibitions “Pesos e Medidas, Artes e Ofícios” and “A Estrada Real do Comércio” also list the Parque Histórico e Arqueológico de Iguassú Velha [Historical and Archeological Park of Iguassú Velha] among those responsible for carrying out the exhibitions.

The exhibition on the Estrada Real do Comércio, held in commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the construction of the road, finished in 1822, was supported by other municipal secretaries and public agencies, materialized in the publication of a catalog-book which, in comparison with the other catalogs, shows better graphic and research quality. According to the catalog, in addition to public support, the project also had private funding, and was “carried out in partnership with Danone through an agreement signed on August 01, 2018”⁴³.

The catalogs produced are the main sources of information for the analysis of the narratives about regional history produced in the exhibitions. In addition to being a source, the catalogs also appear as objects of study in the investigation of actions seeking to form and preserve local collective memory from the use of the Casa de Cultura Ney Alberto as a space for the production and dissemination of such memory. We also understand that, as writings of

⁴¹ DESVALLÉES, André; MAIRESSE, François (Ed.). *Conceitos-chave de Museologia*. São Paulo: Comitê Brasileiro do Conselho Internacional de Museus, 2013. 100p.

⁴² INSTITUTO BRASILEIRO DE MUSEUS. *Caminhos da memória: para fazer uma exposição*. Pesquisa e elaboração do texto Katia Bordinhão, Lúcia Valente e Maristela dos Santos Simão. Brasília, DF: IBRAM, 2017. 88p.

⁴³ FUNDAÇÃO EDUCACIONAL E CULTURAL DE NOVA IGUAÇU. *Catálogo de exposição: A Estrada Real do Comércio*. Iguassú - Vale do Paraíba - Minas: 1822 - 2022. Nova Iguaçu, 2022b. 73p.

the exhibitions, history and culture, the catalogs enable the consolidation and durability of the narratives produced by the exhibitions, appearing as support for the history and local memory engendered in this process. Below, we present a comparative analysis of the catalogs, addressing aspects such as graphic material, organization, and the regional history recorded in those materials.

The history of Iguassú among covers, objects, memories and oblivion

The catalog of the exhibition “Olhares sobre os Lares – A vida doméstica na “Velha” Iguassú – Séculos XVII, XVIII e XIX” has 28 pages, filled with texts, pictures of objects, among others, some of them exhibited on the catalog cover (Figure 2). Its focus is the parish of Nossa Senhora da Piedade de Iguassú [Our Lady of Piety of Iguassu], which was then seat of the territory during the period depicted by the exhibition, the catalog shows images of the domestic utensils found in the homes of the Vila, between 1600 and 1891, when the municipal seat was moved to Maxambomba, thus presenting a narrative that encompasses 300 years of domestic life in that place. According to the catalog’s introduction, “the idea is to show how the residents of Iguassú lived, especially their daily lives within their homes”⁴⁴. The narrative is organized around the following titles: Glimpses of homes; Portuguese earthenware, Chinese porcelain; English tableware; pewter objects; glassware; wooden objects; slave quarters objects and a photo album.

⁴⁴ FUNDAÇÃO EDUCACIONAL E CULTURAL DE NOVA IGUAÇU. *Catálogo de exposição: Olhares sobre os Lares – A vida doméstica na “Velha” Iguassú – Séculos XVII, XVIII e XIX*. Nova Iguaçu, 2019a, p. 3.

Figure 2: Cover of the catalog of the exhibition “Olhares sobre os lares”



Source: FUNDAÇÃO EDUCACIONAL E CULTURAL DE NOVA IGUAÇU, 2019a. [Educational and Cultural Foundation of Nova Iguaçu]

The same cover design is followed in the catalog for the exhibition “Africanidades na Baixada Fluminense – A Contribuição do Negro na Formação da Identidade Brasileira”, which also contains 28 pages. Divided into modules, it presents the following itinerary: African art; Cartography; Atlantic trade and human trafficking; Celebrations and parties; Work and suffering; and Abolition. It also presents various objects such as masks, reliquaries and sculptures, such as those seen on the catalog cover (Figure 3), referring to several cultural aspects, historical periods, and African territories. Other objects presented are instruments of work and torture, related to the colonial/enslaving period.

The most contemporary aspect appears at the end of the catalog, on the back cover, with the presentation of names and photographs of some Black personalities from the Baixada Fluminense region, as follows: the poet Solano Trindade; the composer and singer João do Vale; the Ialorixá Mãe Beata; João Cândido, sailor and the leader of the Revolta da Chibata [Revolt of the Lash], also known as Almirante Negro [Black Admiral]; the composer and samba musician Aniceto do Império; José Luiz do Espírito Santo, translator of the Allan Kardec’s work; the Babalorixá Joãozinho da Gomeia; among others. The presentation states the objective of “highlighting and showing the importance of the African culture” in the Baixada Fluminense region, also aiming “to meet

the demands of a line of cultural action with the perspective of contributing to strengthening the population's memory ties and valuing cultural identity [...]”⁴⁵.

Figure 3: Cover of the catalog of the exhibition “Africanidades na Baixada Fluminense”



Source: FUNDAÇÃO EDUCACIONAL E CULTURAL DE NOVA IGUAÇU, 2019b.

The catalog of the exhibition “A cultura Tupi nas Terras do Guaguassú – Fragmentos da História Iguaçuana da Pré-História ao Século XVI” also has 28 pages. Held in partnership with the Instituto Brasileiro de Arqueologia [Brazilian Institute of Archeology], it exhibited some pieces of that institution’s collection. The narrative is organized according to the following topics: Pre-history of the Baixada Fluminense – Synthesis; Lithic artifacts; Ceramic artifacts; Tupinambá settlements in the Iguaçuana lands; Ethnographic artifacts; French and Portuguese people and the foundation of the city of São Sebastião do Rio de Janeiro; Society of Jesus – Cross and sword in the conquest of the territory; and Rediscovering Indigenous Culture in the 19th century. The material gathers several elements in the construction of the narratives, images of objects, engravings, maps, among others. As in the other catalogs presented, part of the elements was also displayed on the catalog cover.

⁴⁵ FUNDAÇÃO EDUCACIONAL E CULTURAL DE NOVA IGUAÇU. *Catálogo de exposição: Africanidades na Baixada Fluminense – A Contribuição do Negro na Formação da Identidade Brasileira*. Nova Iguaçu, 2019b, p. 3.

The catalog for the exhibition “Pesos e Medidas, Artes e Ofícios – A vida comercial da Vila de Iguassú” has 24 pages and the central axis of its narrative is the formation of the Vila de Iguassú and the territory’s commercial aspects. In its initial pages, it presents the foundation, commercial life and the routes used for the flow of goods, objects of work, local establishments and members of the local political and economic elite, and the decline of the Vila de Iguassú. There is also a section portraying objects related to Arts and Trades and a section showing objects related to Weights and Measures, some of them also found on the catalog cover. According to the text written by the curator, the exhibition “is yet another initiative by the city hall of Nova Iguaçu to rescue, disseminate and value the history and memory, as well as the Cultural Heritage of Nova Iguaçu”⁴⁶.

For the exhibition “A Estrada Real do Comércio. Iguassú - Vale do Paraíba - Minas: 1822 - 2022”, a catalog-book was produced that differed from the other catalogs in the number of pages, 73 in total, in the greater number of written texts, and for being the only one to present bibliographic references. It is also larger than the others and shows a different graphic composition on the cover (Figure 4). Another difference is the insertion of the research and text function, which was the responsibility of the curator. The narrative is organized as follows: Historical background; The Royal Board of Commerce, Agriculture, Manufacture and Navigation of the state of Brazil and overseas dominions; The Royal Road of Commerce; The Vila de Iguassú; Troops and muleteers; Uses and customs – objects used by the muleteers.

In addition to the texts, the catalog-book includes iconographic elements, such as maps, images of objects and photographs. The exhibition and the production of the catalog-book were carried out in commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the conclusion of the Royal Road of Commerce work, in 2022. According to the curator, in a text on the catalog’s cover, the material publication aimed at “contributing to the emergence of more substantial publications in the near future”⁴⁷. Besides the curator’s text, the catalog also presents texts by the former mayor of Nova Iguaçu, Rogério Lisboa (2016-2024) and the IHGNI president, José Luís Teixeira.

⁴⁶ FUNDAÇÃO EDUCACIONAL E CULTURAL DE NOVA IGUAÇU. *Catálogo de exposição: Pesos e Medidas, Artes e Ofícios – A vida comercial da Vila de Iguassú*. Nova Iguaçu, 2022a, p. 7.

⁴⁷ FUNDAÇÃO EDUCACIONAL E CULTURAL DE NOVA IGUAÇU. *Catálogo de exposição: A Estrada Real do Comércio. Iguassú - Vale do Paraíba - Minas: 1822 - 2022*. Nova Iguaçu, 2022b. 73p.

Figure 4: Cover of the catalog for exhibition “Estrada Real do Comércio”



Fonte: FUNDAÇÃO EDUCACIONAL E CULTURAL DE NOVA IGUAÇU, 2022b.

Finally, the catalog for the exhibition “Viajantes Estrangeiros na Baixada Fluminense no Século XIX”, produced in commemoration of the bicentennial of Brazil’s independence, addresses the impressions of foreigner travelers who passed through the Baixada Fluminense territory during that period. The catalog has 27 pages and also features a greater presence of written texts. The research and text were the responsibility of Marcus Monteiro. The narrative is built based on texts that introduce the travelers, reporting their perceptions of the territory, excerpts from their writings, engravings of maps of the region and drawings of local landscape.

Given that “the periodization of history is never a neutral or innocent act”⁴⁸, it is important to observe the use of the bicentennial of Independence and the conclusion of the Royal Road as opportunities to reaffirm, reintroduce, expose and produce catalogs of themes and periodization of regional history, monumentalized in this project by the Culture Secretariat, which even mobilized the simultaneous exhibitions set up in the space of the Casa de Cultura. From this perspective, the assignment of dates and periods are acts of power aiming at demarcating units, continuities and ruptures. Periodization, as a resource is “artificial and provisional” and has the dual purpose of “better

⁴⁸ LE GOFF, Jacques. *A história deve ser dividida em pedaços?* São Paulo: Editora Unesp, 2015, p. 29.

controlling past, but also underlining the fragility of this human knowledge that is history”⁴⁹.

The analysis of the catalogs must be attentive to individuals, groups, historical periods and social, political, economic and cultural aspects evoked as part of regional history. Thus, based on these aspects, the predominant narrative in the materials, observed in 4 of the 6 catalogs, promotes the permanence of a historical culture in the approach to regional history, started with the Portuguese colonization in the 16th century and that values events of the 19th century. Among them, the construction of the Estrada Real do Comércio, finished in 1822, and the elevation of the Freguesia de Nossa Senhora de Iguassú to the category of town, in 1833, stand out in a narrative about the period proposed as one of “progress”. Taking these aspects as a starting point for the approach and remembrance of the city’s history, the narrative of the catalogs, for the most part, ends with the “decline” of the Vila de Iguassú and the transfer of the municipal seat to Maxambomba, in 1891.

In this narrative about local “opulence”, there is an emphasis on geographical conditions, highlighting the importance of roads, rivers and railways for the flow of goods and economic development in different historical periods. Based on the analysis of the regional historiography previously presented, we observe how this approach reproduces the frameworks promoted by the first works on the city’s history, which followed a historiographical regime established in dialogue with Geography.

In short, in those catalogs, the Vila de Iguassú receives greater centrality, with narratives about its social, economic, political, and geographical/environmental aspects. Although through the thematic cuts present in the catalogs, it is possible to understand a certain diversity in relation to the groups presented, since the narratives refer to different African ethnic groups, indigenous peoples who occupied the territory, free and enslaved workers, and members of the military, political and economic elite of Iguassú. It is the latter that gain prominence, particularly owners of farms and sugar mills in the region, who appear related to the “main” elements of the municipality’s history – Estrada Real do Comércio and Vila de Iguassú.

The exceptions are the catalogs “A Cultura Tupi nas Terras do Guaguassú” and “Africanidades na Baixada Fluminense”, which present themes, characters, temporal frameworks and/spaces different from those evoked from the social context established by the first historiographical productions reproduced in

⁴⁹ LE GOFF, Jacques. *A história deve ser dividida em pedaços?* São Paulo: Editora Unesp, 2015, p. 29.

other catalogs. However, it is worth highlighting that what seems to innovate starting from the centrality of indigenous peoples and the African Brazilian population, (re)produces subalternation, observed from the erasure of the contributions of these groups to social and economic dynamics related to the “opulence” of the Vila de Iguassú, despite the exploitation of the labor of these segments in the production and transportation of goods. Other examples are related to the excess of torture objects presented in the catalog as reference to the African history in the region.

Thus, in the framing of Nova Iguaçu’s history produced by the catalogs, we observe the persistence of a narrative centered on the Vila de Iguassú and the events of the 19th century, associated with a past of “opulence” of that territory. In this framework, the non-participation or lack of relevance of the Black and indigenous populations in this history is instilled, and landowners, politicians and military figures become the prominent characters.

As a support for the reconstruction of these memories/oblivion, the catalogs enable these narratives, symbols and representations to be maintained in social environments, (re)producing and transmitting the hegemonic values and ideologies that guide recognition and selection of what is worthy of being remembered and what can be forgotten. In addition to (re) producing a framing of the Nova Iguaçu’s history, based on the first written works about the territory, they also promote the formation and preservation of a social framework of local memory, updating the narrative from other ways of writing regional history, namely, exhibitions and their long-lasting records.

It seems important to emphasize that, for being produced by the municipal public power, those catalogs and narratives gain certain legitimacy, thus contributing to the formation of a historical culture that follows official guidelines. Following a political project, we understand that in the narratives of the catalogs, the historical past is also remembered in relation to present interests. Thus, in addition to reinforcing a single history/memory of the city, related to the interests, actions and experiences of the life of dominant elites of the past, such narratives also respond to/justify current political demands. Identified from the actions of the local public power in conjunction with recent cultural politics, at the state and federal levels, these demands are related to funding of restoration projects and heritage listing in the space of Vila de Iguassú and the Estrada Real do Comércio.

As an example, we cite the restoration of the Conjunto Urbano da Extinta Vila de Iguassú [Urban Complex of the Extinct Vila de Iguassú], in 2020, conducted by the city hall, supported by INEPAC, aiming at the implementation of the Parque Histórico e Arqueológico de Iguassú Velha, established through article 2 of Decree nº 12,789, of June 22, 2022⁵⁰. In its article 1, the decree also creates the Área Especial da Estrada Real do Comércio [Special Area of the Royal Road of Commerce], which encompasses the entire area of the Vila, listed by the INEPAC, and the limits of the archeological site registered by the Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional (IPHAN) [National Institute of Historical and Artistic Heritage] – related to the São Bernardino Farm – with the “purpose of preserving the historical, archeological and landscape heritage”. Another project is the revitalization of part of the ruins of the São Bernardino Farm for the creation of the Museu Vila Iguassú [Vila Iguassú Museum], supported by IPHAN⁵¹.

Final Considerations

When analyzing the intervention of the Nova Iguaçu elites in the political reconstruction of the municipality’s territory past based on their interests, disseminating values and worldviews that affect the processes of formation and preservation of a collective memory about regional history, we return to Le Goff who points out the collective memory manipulation by groups that hold power, in the fabrication of an official history for the maintenance of their domination⁵². In this way, we draw attention to the destructive and uniformizing character⁵³ of the official memory related to dominant groups, which, in the formation of a single memory/history about Nova Iguaçu, relegates to oblivion the participation of popular classes in the formation of the city’s history and culture or, even includes them in a subordinative way.

Within the framework of memory, as understood from the narratives produced by the Casa de Cultura, we see the role of municipal public power in the two aspects addressed – the transformation of the old mansion into

⁵⁰ NOVA IGUAÇU (RJ). *Decreto nº 12.789*. Cria a Área Especial que especifica, institui o Parque Histórico e Arqueológico de Iguassú Velha e dá outras providências. 22 de junho de 2022. Nova Iguaçu, 2022.

⁵¹ Available at: <https://www.gov.br/iphan/pt-br/assuntos/noticias/edificacoes-da-fazenda-sao-bernardino-em-nova-iguacu-rj-serao-restauradas>. Access on: 13/05/2026.

⁵² LE GOFF, Jacques. *História e memória*. Campinas: Editora da UNICAMP, 1990. 553p.

⁵³ POLLAK, Michael. Memória, esquecimento, silêncio. *Estudos Históricos*, Rio de Janeiro, 1989, v. 2. n. 3, p. 3-15. Available at: <https://periodicos.fgv.br/reh/article/view/2278/1417>. Access on: 10/04/2023.

the Casa de Cultura and the contents of the catalogs of exhibitions held in that space. The mansion, with the vestiges of orange groves, is considered memory of the region's economic progress period, even more so for being located at Rua Getúlio Vargas, the residential area of the remaining citrus-growing elites. The catalogs, in turn, consolidate a history/memory focused on the Vila de Iguassú and its "opulence" during the colonial period, mainly due to the implementation of the Estrada Real do Comércio.

The persistence of a historical narrative that reproduces a dichotomy between "golden" ages, related to the rural/agrarian past, in opposition to the land subdivision process started in the 1950s, and the consequent urbanization of the city, marks "of its decline", promotes the exclusion of great part of the region's history, marked by the migration of working-class, Black and northeastern families, belonging to the popular strata. As an instrument of power, it is relevant to highlight the uses of memory to reinforce – or weaken – identities and social places in the reproduction and maintenance of capitalist society, justifying the domination and accumulation of wealth by elites in different historical contexts.

Finally, it is also worth pointing out the greater diversity of historiographical productions about the city of Nova Iguaçu and other municipalities of the Baixada Fluminense, thanks to public university campuses, community museums and other spaces and agents that raise new themes and question official documents and narratives. Such production could have been used to support other themes for the exhibitions, addressing other versions of regional history. However, the difficulty of publishing and circulating these works prevents a wider dissemination of these and other narratives as a way to counter the single history/memory of Nova Iguaçu, created from the narratives established by the elites who choose what and who should be remembered and what and who should be forgotten.

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