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ITALIAN IMMIGRATION FROM MONTE SAN GIACOMO AND SANZA: Faithful Italians
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Italian immigration towards São Paulo after the Second World War is still a seldom discussed theme in Brazilian History, that privileged such immigration up to the '20s. A recent study performed by Facchinetti (2003) is an exception. With the purpose to contribute to the better knowledge of such a theme, two groups of Italian people that came from Monte San Giacomo and Sanza after 1945, were elected as the aim of this study.

Although the major part of the Italian immigrants who came during this period originated from urban areas, they came from small villages as well. Farm workers had to fabricate a profession either certificate to immigrate, following demands set by the Brazilian government. Some Italians attended classes, and had to wait up to three years to emigrate.

People from San Giacomo have a shared history, and spoke the same dialect. They settled themselves in the same neighborhood, developing the same professional activity, sharing the same faith and the same collective memory.

Monte San Giacomo is located in the Salerno District, in the Naples region. It is located in a valley called *Vale de Diano*¹, close to the Cilento region. The city's history registers the presence and domination of different people and kingdoms. From the Garibaldi Age (1860) and the later Italian unification, the city was named Monte San Giacomo, and numbered 400 families². The last vestiges of the city are the Campanaria Tower and the Nossa Senhora do Rosario Chapel from 700 b.C.

At the beginning of the 20th. century, Monte San Giacomo numbered 2,500 people, and it was always far from the national and regional political affairs, having its own life, with a subsistence economy.

¹ Vale de Diano is composed by the following cities: Buonabitacolo, Montesano, Arenabianca, Padula, Sala Consilina, Atena Lucana, Polla, S. Arsenio, S. Pietro, S. Rufo, Teggiano, Sassano, and Monte San Giacomo.

² Acc. to Raciopi. Op. Cit. page 67.

They made regular and low-fat cheeses from the sheep and goats, and they harvested wheat, corn, potatoes, tomatoes, grapes, and other fruits for their own consumption. Pasturing was the most profitable activity, and because of this, most families were dedicated to breeding, shearing and marketing sheep's wool. At the beginning of the 20th century the town had 25,000 head of sheep³.

Due to their hard winters, the shepherds used to take their sheep to the neighboring region of Cilento. They walked more than 30 kilometers to find forage, and in exchange, they used to give products such as cheese and wool to the locals. The shepherds were usually lonely men, always in love with Cilento's girls, but the married shepherds traveled with their whole families. Part of a very popular ancient song to the people from San Giacomo translates this situation quite well, and it was sung very emotionally by Francesco Romano, from San Giacomo:

*"Me voglio fa an casa a lo Cilento
me volio a trova uma Cilentana
Co na finestra a l'onna lo maré,
co la finestra a l'onna lo maré
E tutte lê sere la va a guardano
Quando sponta il sole sponta per tutti
E la finestra s'iluminava"⁴.*

There is a sequence of religious feasts in the region, and each city holds its own feast dedicated to a saint to whom they are devoted as well as to the city's Patron-saint. For instance, in San Giacomo a feast is held in May to *Nossa Senhora de Cerri*. In June they observe the feast of *Santo Antonio de Padua*, in July a celebration is held for the Patron San Giacomo and to the Patroness Sant'Anna. In August there is the São Roque's feast, and in September there is another for *Nossa Senhora de Lorento*. Finally, in December there is the Santa Luzia's feast added to the Christmas and Eastern celebrations.

A phenomenon of this city is the seasonal emigration, when persons go to work in Germany, Switzerland and France, and then return⁵. Attracted by the possibility of "conquering" America,

³ Acc. to Racioppi, Sabato. *Monte San Giacomo: Storia, Relata, Esperanze*. Roma. Author's Edition, 1972, page 67. Text translated by Nunziato Petrizzo, who was head of the Italian-Brazilian Recreative Society Monte San Giacomo, and today integrates the "Campania" Federation of Association's direction.

⁴ "I want a home in Cilento. I want to court a Cilentan girl. With windows towards the sea waves, with windows towards the sea waves... for every night to go there and stare... for every night to go there and stare. When the sun rises, it rises for everyone... and the window is full of light ". Free translation from Italian to Portuguese by Luciana Facchinetti and Nunziato Petrizzo, and from Portuguese to English by Marcia Maluf. Petrizzo's father was sheep farmer, who knew all the Pompeii's history. He told about the Greek *paestrum* ruins from the VII Century b.C. The ancient uses, traditions, and laws were passed via oral tradition.

⁵ Acc. to Racioppi, op. cit. page 88.

immigrants in large number left San Giacomo in the '50 and '60s. Three hundred people immigrated to the United States, 260 to Brazil, 60 to South Africa, 50 to Venezuela, and others who went to Argentina and Canada. Each one of these people had an average family of five which follow him latter. At that time, "um conto, mile cruzeiros do Brazile worth thirty-three *mile Italian lire*, and such amount meant a lot of money", explained an immigrant.

*“Ma tutto, tutto nóis sonhávamo, we had a desiderio of andare in América, of immigrare nelle Americhe”, “during the Second War, we passed a lot of poverty in Italy [...] we were a little better, because noi, we produced from the ground, we produced, oggetti from the ground, we ate, but in te city, [Nápole, Roma, Milano, Torino] people were worse than us”. “At that time [after the war], everyone in my town, from my paese, from Monte San Giacomo – that I am very proud to apartener – si started thinking in coming to Brazil, since there was a quite big colony here, prima of the world war, but as le imigrazione was closed during the war years, nobody was allowed to come, so, every mundi was possi in filha, in cuoda in order to venir here. And negli anni 48, 49, 50, 51, 52 it was a boom, nói came here from my homeland, from my country with 300, 400 people. We came tutti to Brazil [...]”.*⁶

Nicola Racioppi was born in Monte San Giacomo in 1932. There, his father was a public servant. He emigrated to Brazil in 1954, following his mother's request for him did not to enlist in the military service. In his memories, he tells of the difficulties in getting food during the Second World War, when it was mandatory to join the fascist party:

*[...] it was mandatory. Otherwise, we could not to go to school, and at my age, it was mandatory to be a balila... this was a need, otherwise, we could not go any place”.*⁷

Nunziato Petrizzo was born in Monte San Giacomo in 1947, having emigrated to Brazil together with his family in 1952. His father was a sheep farmer. He explains that after the war, there was no one to buy their goods: all that was left was the exchanging of products because there was no money at all. According his childhood memories, all that remained was the cold, the snow and the wine, that he drank along with his grandfather:

⁶ Statement made to the author on February 23, 2000, during a visit to São Paulo, 41 years after he returned to his homeland in Italy. The person who makes the statement mixed the Italian and Portuguese languages.

⁷ Statement to the author in 7/17/1997.

"[...] I know that we drank a lot of wine, to not feel cold... I was just a boy, walking on those winter days... a hard winter full of snow, but all that we had was a thin shirt, and short pants, scooping snow from the ground and making a beverage with wine. On those days, the wine was drunk very quietly, and it was made by us, with our grapes, under our feet, everything was ours".⁸

That same immigrant told us why they left their city during after-war period:

"[...] the misery we faced was not simply that kind of misery of lacking food, but instead, there was no hope at all. We had good properties there, but they did not bring much return.

All that was left was the hard work under the sun, to tend the sheep, and during the winter, people had to go to other regions searching for places where there would be food for the sheep, because everything was covered with snow, and there was a serious scarcity of food. So, people were obliged to look for it elsewhere, even kilometers and kilometers away. They departed with their flocks of sheep to feed. And they had for their food their own homemade bread and cheese, and that was very good!... "⁹

The majority of immigrants were initially supported by their relatives, friends or countrymen in the Mooca district in the city of São Paulo. Many others came alone and young, and they were received by their fellow Italians, owners of a kind of boarding house that provided lodging, food and clean clothes.

In those immigrants' memories, the Mooca district had plenty of effervescence and ethnic diversity, where Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Hungarian, and Northeastern Brazilian citizens lived, among others. However, more than any other district, the presence of the Italian people was quite noticeable, and some of their traditions are still kept, such as the San Gennaro, Casaluce and San Vito feasts.¹⁰

The district is described as a wonderful and extraordinary place, full of immigrants, full of Italian people, where they helped each other, and everything was easier. They were always together, and when they gathered, it was a special party.

A public place often frequented was the Jockey Club on Hipodromo Street, which was used by the Government for civic activities, such as aerial and parachute shows. The public swimming pool made of concrete was inaugurated by Governor Adhemar de Barros with "a bit of soft drinks and a bit of

⁸ Statement to the author in 7/22/1997.

⁹ Nunziato Petrizzo, already mentioned statement.

sandwiches". They tell that there were more than 10 movie theaters in the district: Cine Icarai, later called Ouro Verde, Imperial, Roma, Santo Antonio, Moderno and Safira:

"(...) the Safira Cine on Hipodromo Street was inaugurated with the movie "The Ten Commandments", which was spectacular... There they presented only epic movies, such as "Ben Hur" and "El Cid".¹¹

Mooça watched the growth and development of some big industries such as Cotonificio Crespi – considered the biggest – Moinhos Santo Antonio, Moinho Gamba, Companhia Antártica Paulista, Alpargatas, Fundação Brasil.

Some people from San Giacomo worked for Antartica, São Paulo Alpargatas and Fundação Brasil, among others. Many of them started working selling lottery tickets. For instance, the father of Nunziato Petrizzo became a street shoeshiner. After a while, he gathered some money to buy a shoeshine store on the 11 de Agosto Street, but he ended up working with lottery tickets. This activity became typical to that community. The more experienced helped the newcomers to begin working in that business, thus showing a sense of solidarity. More than 200 people from Monte San Giacomo became lottery tickets vendors.

At that time, the city had plenty of bohemian life, and due to this, they worked selling lottery tickets up to late hours in the evening. Afterwards, they started to establish themselves officially. At the time Janio Quadros was the President of the Country, the lottery business was still a private activity. During his government, the lottery started to be managed by the Caixa Econômica Federal, a State bank that regulated the stores. At this point, the Italian immigrants, the majority of vendors, left the streets and established themselves in stores.

Among the Italian people who became owners of lottery ticket stores, were those from San Giacomo. The store "Joia da Barão" was owned by Nunziato Petrizzo; "Centro Loterico Paulistano" belonged to Nicola Raccioppi; "Gaiola Dourada Loterias Ltda" was owned by Angelo Calabrese and Pasquale Buccino; "A Emocionante Loterica" belonged to Pasquale Marotta; and "Estrela da Sorte Loterias", to Giuseppe Raccioppi and Giuseppe Calicchio.

¹⁰ Since the last decades, the Mooça district is losing its features very quickly. From a typical worker district, it changed to a commercial district.

¹¹ Nunziato Petrizzo, in an already mentioned statement.

There were more than 40 stores legally certified by the Caixa Econômica Federal, and more than 90% of the San Giacomo's people were vendors already established.¹² Several people from San Giacomo distinguished themselves as major wholesalers of the Brazilian Federal Lottery: among them the pioneers João Luongo and Antonio Castella, and more recently, Nicola Racioppi and Pasquale Petrizzo.

The community had grown, and it was very supportive. They felt the need to have a space to fraternize with their countrymen, a place where men could play a game named *bocha*, and where women could pray. There they also could hold their traditional religious feasts which were held in their own homes before. Then, on October 1st, 1965, the Club was born at Giuseppe Calicchio's home on the Mooca Street, in front of the Piratininga Street:

"His house became the club. Afterwards, with our savings, each one paid a monthly fee, gathering some amount of money to buy an old property at 421 Cuiabá Street. We demolished that¹³ property, and with much sacrifice we built our own headquarters. It was Giuseppe Calicchio's nephew, Nicola Racioppi, that went on with that work with much sacrifice... sometimes even using money from his own pocker in order to pay the bills".

[...] After that, in 1979 they bought a property in the city of Aruja... that is our country Club [...] where our two major feasts are held for our Patrons... where we reproduce our traditions [...]

"*Sociedade Recreativa Ítalo-Brasileira Monte San Giacomo*" received the contribution of 200 founding members. The community's meetings, the *bocha* games, the card games are held at the Cuiabá Street headquarters. During the San Giacomo and Sant'Anna feasts women perform a nine day-prayer that ends with a celebration for the Patrons-saints.

There, the feast is performed every year and according to statements with plenty of pomp. San Giacomo is São Thiago, the apostle that was Zebedeu's and Salome's son – brother of John – the future evangelist. As to the origin of the feast in Monte San Giacomo, it would have begun between the 8th and 9th Centuries in the city-state of Diano. Racioppi states that it has no relationship with the San Thiago de Compostela's sanctuary in Galicia, Spain, and that the apostle was venerated all over Europe during that days.¹⁴

¹² Statement already mentioned made by Nunziato Petrizzo.

¹³ Already mentioned statement by Nunziato Petrizzo.

¹⁴ Acc. to Racioppi, op. ment. Pages 27 and 28.

We had the opportunity to record statements from the people of San Giacomo, and to record on videotape the San Giacomo and Sant'Anna's feasts held in the community's country club in 1997. It was quite an enriching experience to watch the emotion and devotion of all those "*nonas*" [grandmothers] and "*nonos*" [grandfathers] from the Mooca district, as well as their sons and grandsons. Their dedication and enthusiasm were remarkable, even among those immigrants that came to São Paulo still in their childhood at 5 or 10 years of age or in their first generation descendants. Even those immigrants that came in their childhood had a strong accent, while the adults that live in Brazil for more than 40 years still mix their dialect, with Italian and Portuguese languages.

The San Giacomo's feast in Italy happens every July 24 and 25, and it is constituted by a mass, a religious procession, fireworks, and distribution of candies. The feast in São Paulo generally occurs in a date close to the Italian one. In Brazil, they also celebrate a mass and a procession. There are fireworks, typical Italian foods that are tasted while they listen to the *tarantella*, and romantic Italian songs. There also the presence of a band brought from the Mooca district enliven every moment of the celebration. While in San Giacomo women perform the nine day-prayer in July, here in Brazil it is held at the Club's headquarters during the week before of the feast.

During the 1997 religious procession, each of the 15 women carried heavy adornments full of candles called the *cinto*. Those women carrying the bigger *cinti* had the privilege of going next to the saint. According to the statements, they follow the tradition, paying for the graces they have received.

These payers had to beg for money to make their *cinto* and to donate to the church of their Patron saints. A participant of the 1997's feast in Monte San Giacomo made an indignant statement commenting that year there was only one *cinto* and in the July, 2000's feast there were only two *cinti*.

Thanks to the massive amount of money sent back by immigrants to their relatives, Monte San Giacomo has been modernized, their houses were remodeled and a sewerage and water system was built, before this people there had to get water from a public fountain. These things resulted in great improvement to the quality of life of the people of San Giacomo. Now, they are allowed to have appliances, electronic products and computers. Consequently, they have access to other cultural expressions produced outside the region, to other information, and to the Italian politics, finally

keeping up with national life.¹⁵ A portion of the state road between Monte San Giacomo and Piaggine received the name Brazil Avenue by a City Decree on 2/16/1970.

Francesco Romano, who lived a few years in São Paulo and started selling lottery tickets, having worked after that in the wholesale business of lottery tickets to lottery stores, claims that young people are not interested in the habits and traditions "due to computers, the Internet, foreign music, and American songs."

Francesco Romano, a San Giacomo citizen, came back to São Paulo 41 years after his departure with a 60 person group from Monte San Giacomo to participate in the 1st International Meeting of People Born in Monte San Giacomo, together with representatives from the United States, Italy, Germany, Switzerland and Brazil, which was held on February 10 to 27, 2000. He says:

"The old ones like me are not lottery ticket vendors on the street anymore, no we are not. We sono businessmen, sono artigiani, sono imprenditori, their sons some attorney, doctor, engenheire, professioniste, queste is reason to be proud of, and I think this is very interesting and quite satisfactory that il progress that i nostri Sangiacomese, those from Monte San Giacomo, who stayed here in Brazil hanno caminato with pare pace with el progresso de São Paulo, naturally São Paulo is big and they're small, fair, they are small, but mas some evolute, they are quite well".¹⁶

People from the *Sociedade Recreativa Monte San Giacomo* gave me the opportunity to interview and recorder a group that came from Sanza. The city is located in Monte Cervati, a 1,899 meter high Cilento's massif, that is covered by snow most of the year. The place is consecrated to *Nossa Senhora das Neves*, whose worship is held between the chapel which is Sanza's property and the cavern inside the Monte Cervati, a territory belonging to the city of Piaggine.

Both Sanza and San Giacomo speak the Neapolitan dialect with few variations, with are the characteristic expressions of each city. Overall, the city has the same economical features as Monte San Giacomo, that is, subsistence agriculture, and sheep breeding, besides viticulture.

Also, the Sanza immigration occurred between the '50s and the '60s, and in their majority, its immigrants were established mainly in the region of Penha and São Miguel Paulista districts,

¹⁵ Statements, video and photos of the feast are found in the documentation sector of the Immigration Museum.

¹⁶ Statement to the author on 2/23/2000.

besides of Ema and Maria districts. Today, those immigrants are involved in small commerce, such as bazaars.

The point of reunion of that group is the *Nossa Senhora das Neves's* feast promoted by the Confuorto Family from 1979 on, with participation of the 25 Sanza families. The Confuorto brothers became rich, establishing themselves in the business and manufacturing of automotive parts. They were encouraged by the M.S. Giacomo group, that is also devotee of *Nossa Senhora das Neves*.

The feast is held on a small farm, which is a property acquired in 1976 by the Confuorto family, and the purchasing agreement was managed "through a miracle on the Lady's day". There, a church was inaugurated in 1988. The feast starts with the celebration of a mass by Father Jorge Cunial¹⁷, followed by more than 9,000 fireworks. Ribbons with Italy and Brazil's colors, are released into sky along with the fireworks, coloring it. Suddenly, an helicopter appears that lands bringing a singer – the biggest attraction of the feast. Then, the eating and dancing begin along with a succession of typical songs, such as the *tarantella* and romantic Neapolitan songs.

The origin of the worship of *Nossa Senhora das Neves* in the cavern dates from to the age of the Byzantine invasion in the region around 700 b.C. The legend holds that the shepherds hid the statue of *Nossa Senhora* in Monte Cervati, and afterwards, they saw that the statue was incrustrated in the rock and not removable. She became Patron-saint of the city, being celebrated every year on August, 5. As devotion, they perform a nine day-prayer from July, 27 to August 4, and on August 5 the San Giacomo's people take the andor (wooden framework) with the saint on their shoulders in a procession from the cavern towards the chapel.

A curious fact related to *Nossa Senhora das Neves* is that the spot – the top of the Monte Cervati – was disputed by three adjoining cities: Sanza, Piaggine and Monte San Giacomo. Their devotion is still so strong that, during the feast of 2000, the 'carabinieri' needed to intervene to restrain the animosity between the people of San Giacomo and Piaggine.

Between Monte Cervati – where the Saint remains – and Sanza, the procession passes along a portion of the way pertaining to M.S. Giacomo. Along that stretch, they had to run, because there was a fight, the people of Sanza ended up losing badly. Around 30 years ago, the Church decided

¹⁷ Father Giorgio has been participating in several celebrations of the Italian community.

that the Saint's protectors would be the Sanza people (there was a contest between the three cities, to know who would be the ones who could ring their church bells the loudest: the winning city would be the one where the Saint would remain). It is said that the one who is taking care of the Saint will have seven years of abundance and wealth.

Those immigrants frequently return to their homeland, whether physically or symbolically. Thus, the people from San Giacomo and Sanza re-create their traditions and their ethnic identities from their feasts, mixing their cultural origins with the Brazilian culture.

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