

**Palma Farm: characteristics of a Latvian community in the
hinterland of São Paulo**

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Abstract

This text discusses the architecture and daily life of Palma Farm, established from 1923 by Latvian immigrants in the district of Varpa, Tupã (SP), emphasizing the importance of both work and life pattern based on mutual aid, rooted in primitive Christianity, and propagated by the Baptist Church, shaping the overall structure. The farm was distinct from the rural environment of São Paulo at that time, dominated by coffee farming and Catholicism. The buildings were communal and constructed, wholly or partially, from wood. After a period of decline, remains of the structures, documentation, and movable assets are being restored and opened for visitation as part of Tupã's tourist itinerary. Towards documenting and analyzing its architecture and way of life, this research involves photographic and metric surveys of the remaining buildings, interviews with individuals connected to the place, and analyses primary documents and related literature, with a focus on authors such as Milia Tupes, Osvaldo Ronis, and Henrique Manoel da Silva.

KEYWORDS: Palma Farm. Wooden architecture. Latvian immigration.

1. INTRODUCTION

This article analyzes the characteristics of implementation and architecture of Palma farm, or Evangelical Corporation Palma, through the motivations that led its builders, a group of Latvian Baptists, to emigrate to the interior of São Paulo in the 1920s and settle in the territory of the current municipality of Tupã, adopting a communal way of life very different from the local coffee agrarian structure at that time. The study relies on historical research using documents, newspapers, and books about the community, as well as interviews and metric and photographic surveys conducted in 2005 and 2008.

1.1 Latvian migrations to Brazil

The history of the Baltic countries reveals long periods of Swedish, German, Polish, or Russian domination, which did not prevent them from creating their own cultural identities. This article focuses on the Latvians, who contributed to an interesting chapter in European immigration to Brazil, particularly São Paulo. Living in feudal patterns until the mid-19th century, Latvia underwent intense urbanization and industrialization at the turn of the 20th century, thanks to high levels of education and cultural development in the late 1800s. Simultaneously, it maintained a connection with rural life, which strongly influenced the adaptation of Latvian immigrants to the interior of São Paulo (Silva, 2002, p.42). A growing movement for political emancipation from Russia and economic liberation from many German landowners also occurred and was fueled by the rise of congregational churches, such as the Baptist one, which had a "libertarian interpretation of the Old and New Testament". They found acceptance among the "discontented sectors of the population, who saw in them the flourishing of emancipatory and freedom ideals" (Silva, 2002, p.43).

After several protests against Germans and Russians in 1918, Latvia became an independent republic¹. However, this status was soon threatened by the advances of the newly

¹Latvia became an independent state after the end of World War I and amid the instabilities of the establishment of the Soviet Union. A few years later, in 1934, a coup d'état turned the recent Latvian democracy into an

formed Soviet Union - Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania formed a problematic barrier to Soviet access to the Baltic, hence, to the Atlantic. The autonomy recently gained was then under the threat of a socialist invasion. The idea of a collective emigration to a new country with enough land for everyone and freedom of religious practices emerged in particular among the Baptists. Ronis (1974, p.106) emphasized:

The political-religious oppressions and precarious socio-economic conditions in Latvia that did not allow citizens to acquire land and prosper honestly with the product of their work were fundamental reasons that gave rise to the first Latvian Baptist migration movements to Brazil.

Brazil, which had already received Latvian immigrants in the 1890s, appeared as a good alternative. Tupes (2007) and Ronis (1974) claimed the religious character, which had assisted in the Latvian independence process, was the main factor in the second migratory process towards Brazil, seen as a "promised land" for many and an escape from the "danger and darkness" that would come from the East, according to biblical words. Silva (2002, p.44) disputed the predominantly messianic nature of migration: undoubtedly, although the destruction of temples and persecution of religions in the Soviet Union were causes for concern, there were also political and economic dissatisfactions in the post-World War I period. Tupes (2007, p.31) agreed with those conditions and added the difficulty of the former Latvian serfs in obtaining land, even after the agrarian reform. "In these conditions, the search for the promised land ceased to be just a collective delusion to become a realistic alternative for security and a new opportunity for life" (Silva, 2002, p.44).

The first Latvian immigrants who came to Brazil in the 1890s had established colonies in Santa Catarina, Rio Grande do Sul, and São Paulo (RONIS, 1974, p.185), thus enabling the second wave of migration in the 1920s towards the lands of Western São Paulo, where the colonies of Letônia, Esperança, Campinho, and Varpa (where Palma farm is located) were founded.

In a planned operation, eleven ships left the ports of Hamburg (Germany), Southampton (England), and Cherbourg (France) between November 1922 and June 1923, bringing approximately 2500 people, including established families, singles, widows, and families torn apart by war. Unlike other immigrants to Brazil, the group consisted mostly of professionals, many with university education (A cooperativa..., 1949, p.10-11). The goal was to establish, in a new location, a way of life consistent with the precepts of the Baptist religion, where progress through work was also possible. The propaganda in Latvia depicted Brazil as a country without wars, with fertile land, abundant nature, freedom of worship, and expression – almost a biblical paradise lost.

The procedures for the journey began long before, with the formation of a common fund among those making the transatlantic crossing. According to D. Hilda Augstroze (2008)²,

authoritarian state. On June 17, 1940, the country was invaded by the Soviet Union and annexed to its territory; only on August 21, 1991, did Latvia reemerge as an independent nation.

²Mrs. Hilda Anita Anastasija Viks Augstroze was born on July 23, 1913 and arrived in Palma with her parents in 1922 at the age of 9. During the interview on April 12, 2008, she was 95 years old and had returned to live with her son's family in Palma. She was the last surviving member of those Latvian pioneers and passed away on July 17, 2013.

the wealthier individuals sold properties and financed the costs for those who lacked resources. The fund was primarily used to cover the costs of tickets and to purchase a plot of land to be subdivided into lots and distributed equitably. Work and subsequent production would cover additional expenses and mutual aid was considered essential for the success of the undertaking, especially in the early years (A cooperativa..., 1949, p.10-11).

Those who already lived in Brazil were tasked with finding an area large enough to accommodate everyone. Regarding Varpa, a plot on the right bank of the middle valley of the Rio do Peixe, with approximately 2,000 bushels (VASSILIEFF, 1975, p. 1005), was chosen. Despite being distant from urban centers and railways and only accessible by precarious roads through the jungle, which would inevitably the population to a series of difficulties, it had an affordable price and virgin land (AUGSTROZE, 2008).

After crossing the Atlantic, the group traveled to São Paulo and, from there and by Sorocabana Railroad, reached Sapezal station, near the land that had been purchased, and which served as a temporary shelter before the final 30 km journey made on foot along precarious trails.

Some initial decisions such as choice of Pastor Andrejs Klavin as the general administrator, creation of groups for food production and camp implementation, clearing of forests and planting, and creation of paths. Gradually, Groups for transportation, health, education, artifact production, public relations, and other tasks were gradually established (RONIS, 1974, p.233). It was not an easy start and many died during the final journey, victims of tropical diseases; however, the surviving group managed to build a fairly successful community, at least in the early decades. This paper focuses on some aspects of the daily life of this established and active community, which were quite peculiar in the coffee - producing scenario of São Paulo, determining its both spatial and architectural characteristics.

First, the spatial division of the plot is addressed from information from bibliographical references and interviews conducted on-site with Dona Hilda Augstroze, the last survivor of the initial group, and João Augstroze, one of her sons, in 2008. The characteristics of the buildings and their construction are then discussed with the use of the same references and metric and photographic surveys conducted on-site on two occasions, in 2005 and 2008.

1.2 Division of lots and the emergence of two nuclei, namely Varpa and Palma Farm

The immigrants were initially divided into two groups, i.e., those forming cohesive families and those who were single or from families consisting of widows with children. The former were allocated in plots of varying sizes, according to their purpose in the Varpa colonial nucleus, a division made by Latvian surveyors among the immigrants. Regarding distribution, priority was given to the right of choice of those who had contributed to the payment of the first land installments. The remaining lots were drawn among the other families. The center of the colony was occupied by a circular square, in front of which:

(...) commercial houses would be located, and in the back, these small properties would extend. A little further from the center, one-acre lots were divided; these would be the small farms, and further still, ten-acre lots were distributed, where small properties would be established (Tupes, 2007, p.59).

The second group, consisting of "people who did not have the conditions to form their own sites in the virgin forest – young single men and women, many already in old age, childless couples, and others" (RONIS, 1974, p.267), should be subdivided into four distinct corporations, each with approximately 50 people, who would search for work to raise funds. However, such a measure would soon weaken the group as a whole, diluting the initial intention of forming a Latvian community with a strong Baptist evangelical base. The idea of collectivity then emerged, bringing them together to a single plot, inspired by primitive Christian communism. The news pleased the majority, but it was not unanimous, since some feared a new sect of a radical nature might emerge from that group. Those issues were brought to a general assembly in 1924, when the lots in Varpa were still being demarcated and, after several theological discussions, it was established that:

The said community is not a secular cooperative nor is it a new sect, but a fraternal and beneficial union or corporation that serves its time and its specific purposes (RONIS, 1974, p.269).

Therefore, 300 bushels were separated, giving rise to a collective farm, Palma, or Evangelical Corporation of Palma, with approximately 300 people (AUGSTROZE, 2008). Pastor Andrejs Klavin was elected to manage it along with a board of seven members. According to Silva (2002, p.172) and Mulatinho (1982, p.161), the administrative form adopted was based on the organization of Baptist churches, whose diaconal bodies assisted the pastors of the churches. Mulatinho (1982, p.79) further explained such a form of organization was based on primitive Christian communism:

Palma presents itself to us as a "communist" microcosm, entrenched, circumstantially, in a capitalist market economy. Internally, according to the statutes themselves, everyone would produce "according to their abilities and possibilities and would enjoy according to their needs," within the limits established by mutual agreement. This statutory provision is a very evident approximation of the socialist postulate adopted by Marx for his classless society. However, no document or observation allows us to say that such appropriation was the result of a "Marxist consciousness" of the members of the community. Several pieces of evidence also indicate that Palma's collectivist organization is modeled after the New Testament biblical community of Jerusalem, as described in the book of Acts of a "Marxist consciousness" of the members of the community. Several pieces of evidence also indicate that Palma's collectivist organization is modeled after the New Testament biblical community of Jerusalem, as described in the book of Acts.

The capital from the groups that had been employed on coffee farms, mainly that of Dr. Carlos José de Arruda Botelho, in Dourado, SP, was of great help for Palma's beginnings. Dr. Botelho had been an intermediary in bringing Latvian settlers to Brazil, justifying its support during this period of installation in the west of São Paulo. Those hired to work on Dourado farm for three years sent a large part of their salary to Palma and when they decided to return in the mid-1930s, the landowner gave them some cows, as well as donkeys and carts.

According to Ronis (1974, p.270), upon arriving at Palma, they found much of the farm's structure already in place:

The earnings from the work of the group on the Dourado farm were sent to Palma, where more than two hundred people were firmly established, working feverishly on clearing forests, planting cereals, cotton, sugarcane, cassava; forming pastures, orchards, and gardens; setting up a mill, sawmill, and other industrial sectors; preparing facilities for cattle, pigs, and poultry farming; constructing more houses for the community, schools, warehouses, workshops, garages, tannery, saunas, etc.

In Palma, as well as in Dourado, the common goal of all prevailed over individualities, resulting in the construction of the collective rural village desired. Such common ideal is cited in an article in the Estado de São Paulo newspaper from 1949, which highlights Palma "belongs to no one and belongs to everyone. Its inhabitants are the owners of the entire farm and, at the same time, own nothing individually." Another part of the article emphasizes:

By the way, referring to Varpa or Fazenda das Palmas, the residents of the region assert that the Latvians are poor. This is because, for example, in Varpa, there is no display of luxury inappropriate for a rural community. Wealth is understood here in the broadest sense, that is, the distribution of profits, and as we have observed, a general elevation of the standard of living. It is in this sense that the word "wealth" is used (A cooperativa..., 1949, p.10-11).

2. WORK AND ORGANIZATION ON PALMA FARM

In Palma, all service divisions were based on the formation of work groups, assembled according to personal interests and qualifications, and taking into account factors such as gender and age, although women were involved in tasks considered strenuous (e.g., road construction) Hence the character of the various collectively used buildings, with no "private" buildings, whether residential, work-related, service-oriented, or recreational, as described in what follows.

Several activities were developed and sometimes a same person worked in more than one of them. Such a division aimed at optimizing time and yield, thus improving the necessary survival conditions for the group, which indeed occurred within a few years, with a significant progress by the end of the 1920s (Silva, 2002, p.177). The golden times of Varpa, hence, Palma, extended until the mid-1950s, with constant growth in production and income. From then on, the population aging and the abandonment of the colony by the younger generation led to a period of stagnation, followed by a slow and gradual decline (Colônia..., 1956, p.77).

The many daily activities related to services in agriculture, livestock, industry, as well education, health, religion, administration, and printing show the complexity and fairly equitable harmony of interests achieved in Palma, largely due to religious ideals, without which such a form of corporation would have succumbed. The collective life in Varpa and on Palma Farm was highlighted in several newspaper articles (e.g., the one from Folha da Noite, entitled "A Socialist Nucleus in the State of São Paulo", dated November 18, 1931, addressing the

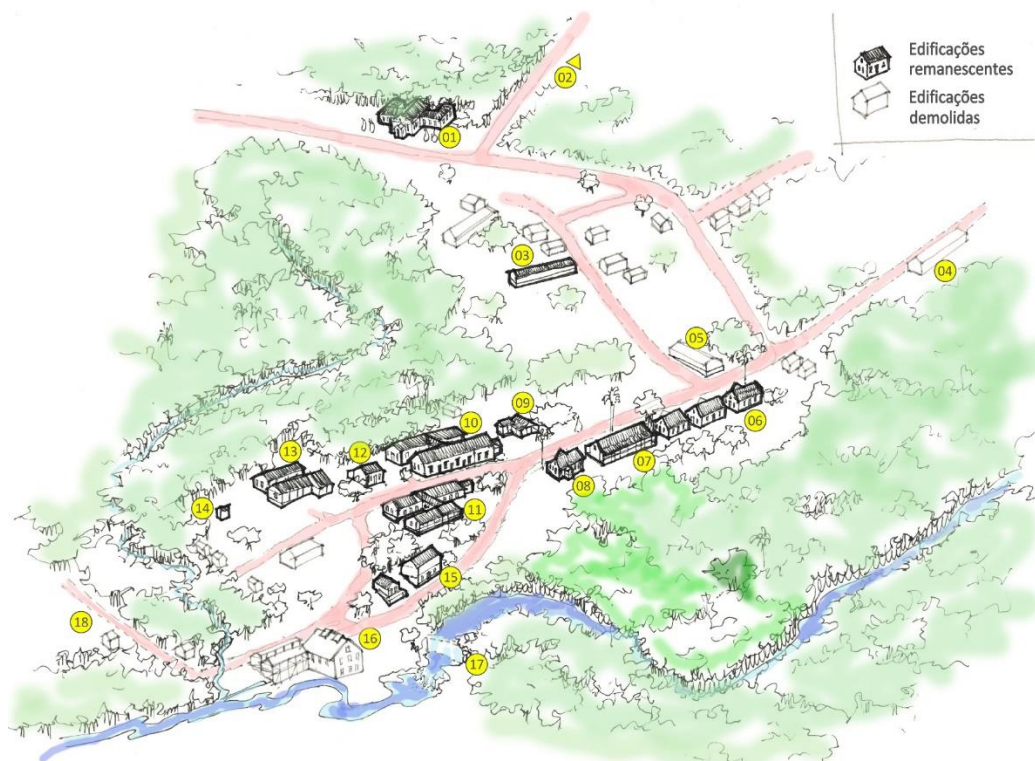
"collectivism" practiced by its inhabitants). Despite the strangeness it aroused, the newspaper pointed to positive results, concluding the article with the following paragraph:

From this, it is concluded that the beautiful colony, formed by people belonging to an almost unknown race, serves as an example to elements of more progressive races that immigrate to Brazil. Varpa achieves a true miracle of collective harmony. Who knows if it even serves as an example to Brazilians..." (Um núcleo..., 1931, p. 1-2).

3. CHARACTERISTICS OF PALMA FARM'S LAYOUT AND ARCHITECTURE

Figure 1. Layout of the central core of Palma Farm.

Legend: 01. Baptiste Temple; 02. Stables; 03. Hen houses and pigsty; 04. School; 05. Blacksmith and saddlery workshop; 06. Family lodgings; 07. Singles Lodgings; 08. Printing press; library; dental office and administration; 09. Bakery; 10. Kitchen and dining hall; 11. Lodgings built in the 1970's; 12. Infirmary; 13. Laundry and communal sauna; 14. Communal latrine; 15. Workshops; 16. Sawmill; 17. Dam; 18. Sugar and cassava mills



Source: Mateus Rosada, 2020.

The headquarters of the Evangelical Corporation Palma (figure 1) were installed on an elevation between the Picadão das Araras stream and a small creek, which is its tributary. The guiding axis of the disposition of the main buildings was created on the ridge between the valleys, in the southwest-northeast direction, and grouped into dwellings, typography, administration, library, dental office, post office, weaving, several workshops, kitchen and dining hall, infirmary and dining room for the sick, bakery and butcher shop, laundry, and sauna.

Another axis derives from that main path towards the Picadão das Araras waterfall, where a warehouse with its mills, a blacksmith shop, a sawmill and carpentry were installed. Following this secondary axis and crossing the creek towards the next hill, according to information on the farm, were the sugar mill and the cassava factory, where flour and tapioca were produced.

The path bifurcated in the direction opposite to the main axis - one axis climbed the hill, northward and the other climbed it northeastward. The first led to Varpa and was surrounded by animal husbandry units and the Baptist temple, a little further up, whereas the second led to the school. According to the accounts of Mrs. Hilda and Mr. João Augstroze and old photos, the existence of small storage rooms, warehouses, and collective latrines that supported daily activities were evident along all paths and around the buildings.

Except the Baptist temple, which was made of brick, the other buildings were entirely constructed with wooden structures and enclosures, bearing similarities to Baltic farm architecture.

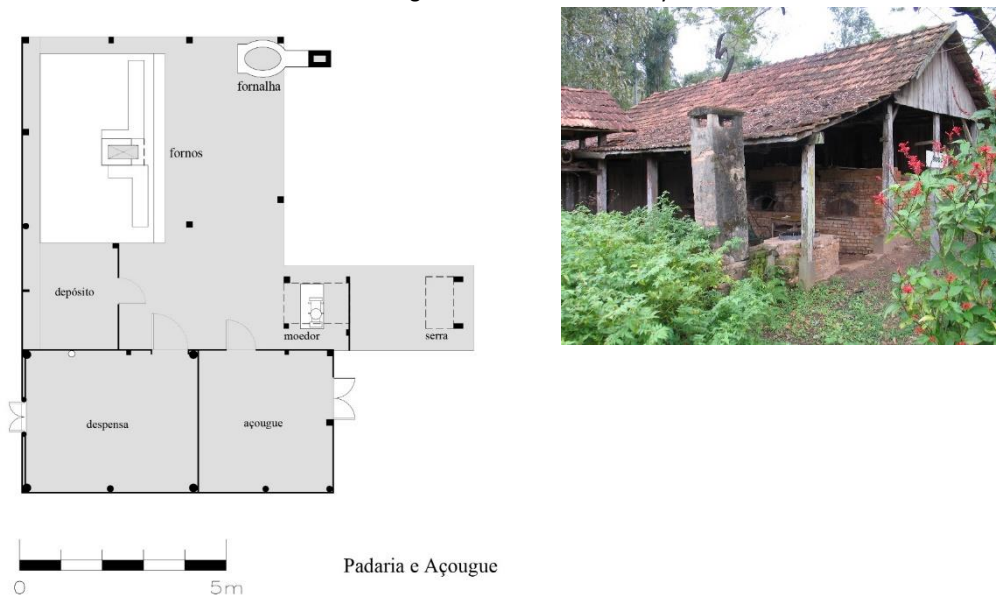
All wood for the construction of buildings and furniture was extracted from the farm's forests and processed in a large three-story shed that existed by the Picadão das Araras stream waterfall. Apart from the sawmill, the shed was comprised of carpentry and joinery workshops, a corn mill, a corn sheller and crusher, and rice processing machines, all powered by a water wheel. The turbine of the farm's small hydroelectric power plant was further installed there. Water came from a dam made with wooden beams and sealed with boards, which was next to the shed, just above the waterfall. Unfortunately, both dam and sawmill building no longer exist—only a few photographic records remain.

Also, above the waterfall, a building that served as a blacksmith shop, or forge, as they call it on the farm, still remains - there was a forge in it for handling metals.

The collective way of life that aimed at the autonomy of the group led to the creation of numerous objects and equipment to meeting several daily needs. Almost everything was produced in the sawmill, joinery, carpentry, or blacksmith shop, (e.g., preparation of wood and ironwork (springs, hinges, locks, handles, horseshoes, nails, rivets, etc.) for buildings and animals, production of furniture (cabinets, chairs, shelves, tools, household utensils, and even vehicles like carts), and repairs to agricultural implements and tools.

Another item produced by the Latvians was bricks, only for local use and never for commercialization. They were used for the construction of the temple and also in some equipment such as forges, ovens, and stoves.

Figure 2. Butcher and bakery shed



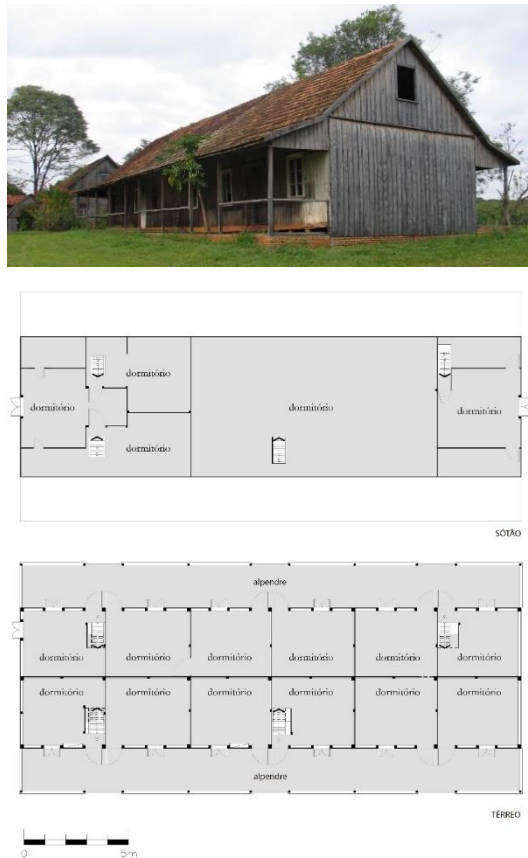
Source: Drawing by M. Rosada (2008) and photos by V. Benincasa (2005 and 2008, respectively).

Central points of the farm were the collective kitchen and the dining hall, which also served as a space for meetings and celebrations. Initially, the kitchen consisted of a partially open shed entirely made of wood. However, in the 1950s, this primitive kitchen was dismantled to making way for the current one, built with brick and connected to the old dining hall, and for another building that includes two refrigerated rooms operated by an electric motor for storing meat, dairy, and other types of food. Meals were served at several communal tables in the dining hall (Augstroze, 2008).

The large two-door brick oven covered by a shed still stands in the bakery (figure 2) and, next to it, in the old butcher shop, some equipment such as saw and meat grinder and furnace remains. Two enclosed compartments appear at the back of this small space; they served as a pantry and storage for supplies and utensils. According to Mrs. Augstroze, the building is still the original one.

Health was also considered. Palma had a complete infirmary and dental office. More comprehensive medical assistance was available in Varpa, which once had its own hospital with doctors and nurses from the community, some of whom either came with medical training from Latvia (e.g., Dr. Margo Anderson), or were trained in São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro (A cooperativa..., 1949, p.11; Augstroze, 2008). Palma also included watchmaking, a photographic studio, and a shoemaker's shop, where the residents' footwear was made and repaired.

Figure 3. Accommodation for bachelors and widowers.



Source: Photos by V. Benincasa (2008) and drawing by M. Rosada (2008).

One of the workshops, still in existence with almost all of its original equipment, although deactivated, is the printing press (figure 4), where Latvian magazines, such as Miera Vests (or Novas de Paz, between 1924 and 1930, with a religious character), Jaunais Lihdumneeks (The New Farmer, various themes), Kristīgs Draugs (The Christian Friend, with religious content)³, Bernu Draugs (Children's Friend, with poems and stories of a religious nature), as well as Drujiskoi Slovo magazine (Word of the Friend)⁴ in Russian and Boa Semente children's book, in Portuguese, were edited. Such a small printing press played a fundamental role in maintaining communication among the several Latvian communities worldwide.

³ This was the main magazine edited in Palma and had international circulation: it was sent to 15 countries in the Americas, Europe, Oceania, and Asia. Until the 1960s, it was still edited in the typography in Palma, but later, its editing operations were moved to São Paulo.

⁴ It had content similar to Kristig Draugs and circulated in virtually the same countries between the 1930s and 1940s.

Figure 4. Typography, library, dental office, and administration: building on the right



Source: V. Benincasa (2008).

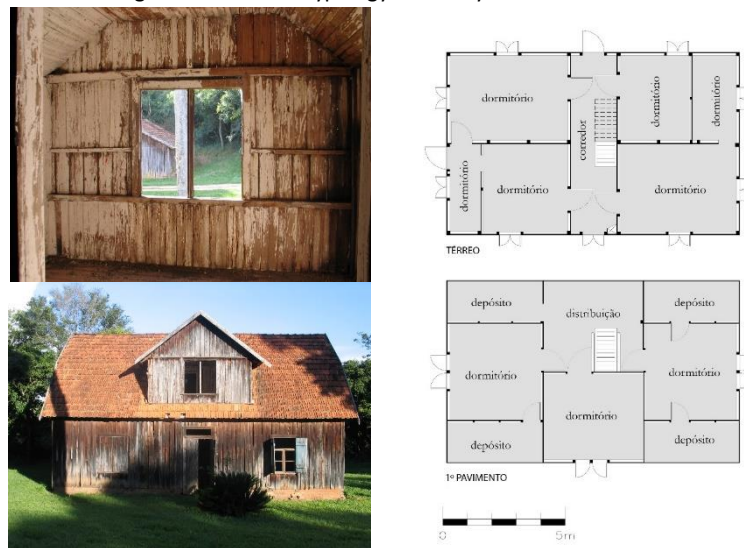
In general, regarding the physical aspect, the buildings of Palma bear similarities to traditional rural architecture in Latvia, i.e., rectangular layout, steeply sloped roof due to winter snowfall, in two waters, covered with wooden shingles or peat and with a ridge parallel to the facade line, eaves almost always adorned with fretwork, and the peculiar social entrance protected by a small porch, also in two waters, but with a ridge perpendicular to the facade, and projecting in relation to the main body.

Following this Baltic tradition, the main characteristics of Palma's buildings include the steep slope of the roofs and their coverage with wooden shingles⁵ (later replaced by French tiles due to difficulties in obtaining suitable wood and a lack of technically skilled professionals), the use of the attic, with dormer windows for ventilation and lighting, and the elevated floor from the ground, supported on "aroeira" logs (on the external perimeter of the buildings, the gap between the ground and the building's floor was closed with wooden boards, preventing the entry of animals – the gap is currently closed with bricks, since they are more durable and readily available).

The doors have leaves that rotate to the external side, ensuring a gain in internal area, while the windows have blind leaves with external rotation, and glass leaves separated by pinazions with internal rotation.

⁵The wooden shingles are made with planed shavings of local woods used in constructions, such as cedar, peroba, ipe, aroeira, jacaranda, among others.

Figure 5. Collective typology of family accommodation.



Source: Photos by V. Benincasa (2008) and drawing by M. Rosada (2008).

The construction system adopted was a wooden structure, in which the main supports were initially built, such as pillars and beams, in addition to the entire roof structure. Later, using wooden boards, the floor, ceiling and walls were created. A batten was added between the boards of the external partitions for better sealing. And, in some rooms, these external partitions were duplicated, at a short distance, forming empty spaces to provide more thermal comfort.

Regarding the internal layout of the residences, it is necessary to consider the lifestyle on the Palma farm. Not only was work collective, but all living arrangements were communal. As an example, the dwellings consisted of only bedrooms - there were no kitchens, laundry rooms, living rooms, or bathrooms. The bedrooms could be occupied by groups from a same family or not and the rearrangement of occupants in each bedroom was not uncommon and was made due to reasons such as deaths, births, marriages, or relocation of members to other cities. Nothing was very stable or fixed and, since almost all furniture was communal, those rearrangements and changes did not cause significant disruptions.

Small wooden shelves or cabinets were embedded in the structures of all buildings for accommodating a few personal items and items of clothing, increasing both comfort and practicality of the rooms.

Given the communal nature of life, food was processed in the communal kitchen and served in the adjoining dining hall, a space that also used for group celebrations, meetings, and assemblies

Figure 6. Infirmary with a view of the dining hall in the background



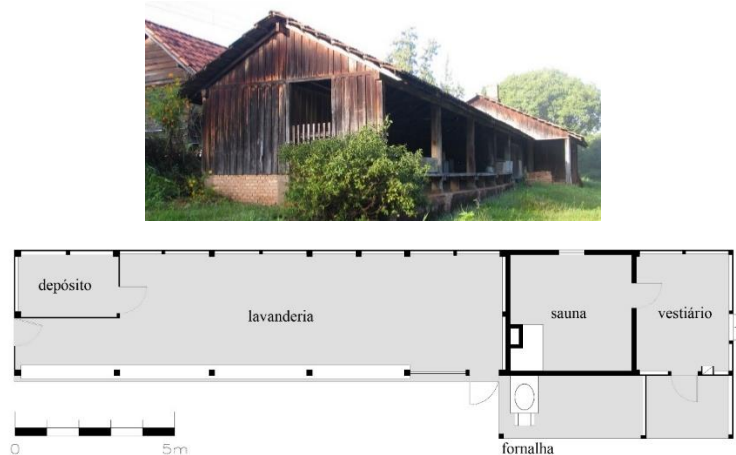
Source: Photo by V. Benincasa (2008) and drawing by M. Rosada (2008).

Since infirmaries (Figure 6) were reserved for people with contagious diseases, they were housed and fed right there, avoiding the risk of contagion, which might harm the community. Therefore, these infirmaries were a little far away, just behind the main refectory.

Latrines were small external wooden structures, also communal, divided into female and male sections. They consisted of a small room with a trench on which a seat with several openings was placed above a common pit that was periodically cleaned. The waste was used as fertilizer. Several latrines were scattered throughout the complex, of which only a male one near the old sauna remains.

Similarly, individual laundries were not necessarily due to the existence of a communal laundry, where a group of laundresses worked (figure 7). Adjacent to the laundry was the sauna, one of the community's essential services and a tradition of the peoples of northern Europe. Water plumbing was used and the space served not only for personal hygiene and health, but also for socializing among users, typically operating once a week.

Figure 7. Communal laundry and sauna.



Source: Photo by V. Benincasa (2008) and drawing by M. Rosada (2008).

Although deactivated, the sauna retains a significant portion of its equipment and belongings. Except the sauna room itself, which is constructed with brick, the building is mostly

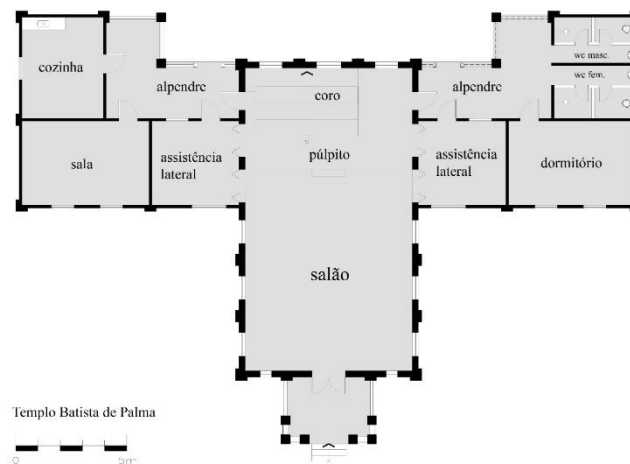
made of wood (figure 7). It consists of a porch where the furnace and wood supply are located, a changing room with several hangers fixed to the wooden structure, and the steam sauna. The operation was simple, i.e., the external furnace heated the water, creating steam release through pipes inside the sauna. There was also a cold shower inside for a contrast bath. The sauna was primarily used by men, with separate operating hours for men and women. However, according to Mrs. Augstroze, there used to be another sauna exclusively for women, which is now gone (Augstroze, 2008).

The only building in the original complex constructed entirely of brick was the temple (figure 8), perhaps due to its symbolic importance to the group. As a result, it stands out with its distinctive, symmetrical floor plan in an art deco style.

A small front porch provides direct access to the ceremony hall, which is subdivided into congregation area, pulpit, and a wooden platform at the back for the choir. The central section, at the back, has two side wings, each with two small rooms to expand the congregation area and porches at the rear. One wing includes a pantry-kitchen and a meeting room, serving as the temple's office, and the opposite wing contains two bathrooms (male and female) and a dormitory.

Several Christian sacraments were officiated in the building and religious and music classes were held. Its importance and significance are evident in both architecture and location, for it is situated on one of the highest points in the architectural complex of Palma, at the entrance to the community.

Figure 8. Baptist Temple of Palma.



Source: Photo by V. Benincasa (2008) and drawing by M. Rosada (2008).

4. POSSIBLE RESSURGENCE

After the decline caused by the departure of descendants seeking new forms of life and the aging of the pioneers, the activities of the Evangelical Corporation Palma underwent a period of decline. The solution was to hand over the property to the Executive Board of the Brazilian Baptist Convention, in 1964, which transferred it to the Board of Religious Education and Publications (JUERP), also from the Convention, in 1971. Agreements were made, defining the inhabitants who decided to stay in the property would be allocated eight hectares of land, among other privileges. The Board would also be responsible for the proper maintenance of the facilities in Palma. Unfortunately, perhaps due to inexperience in rural administration, much of this heritage was lost, unused, and unmaintained, for almost 40 years.

In the early 21st century, João Augstroze Jr., a descendant of the pioneers, repurchased the property and, along with family members, began to restore the architectural complex, understanding the importance of preserving the history and legacy of the community. He continued this work until his death on March 14, 2015 and, since then, the Evangelical Corporation Palma has been led by his wife.

Consolidation works, as well as the reorganization of the productive area in the buildings are underway. Less profitable activities, such as dairy and animal breeding, have been discontinued and the production of bee honey and sugarcane cultivation has been prioritized. Another activity currently explored is tourism - the farm is open for daily visits and also accommodates guests and conventions in the new lodgings built during the JUERP administration.

Apart from the typical architecture, whose morphology and uses differ from those in the São Paulo interior at that time, and the unique history of the pioneers, the main attractions are the trails in the woods and the waterfalls of the Picadão das Araras stream. The farm also has an extensive collection of documents and iconographic material, as well as original objects and equipment.

For the descendants and also for the city of Tupã (SP), the complex is part of the regional collective memory. Palma and its buildings and Varpa district were and still are spaces of striking experiences, creating what Halbwachs called "holistic rhetoric," i.e., places capable of referencing large common narratives that consolidate the collective identity of a group of people (Matheus, 2011, p. 304).

Focusing on the issue of heritage, Jöel Candau (2011, p. 131) treated it as "less content than the practice of memory." Therefore, stories from the past join those of the present and identity is asserted or weakened. The reuse of an abandoned property is important for its history to endure and gather other experiences, giving rise to new memories. Everything leads to its revaluation, as well summarized by Silva (2000, p. 219):

[...] the determining element that defines the concept of heritage is its ability to symbolically represent an identity. And since symbols are a privileged vehicle for cultural transmission, humans maintain through them close ties to the past.

Revitalized Palma has found a path to continue existing through the Augstroze family and collaborators (Augstroze Jr., 2008), as well as its through the visitors, who begin to retell

and relive it in their personal experiences. Tourism alone does not sustain the location; however, as the pioneers taught, the variety of activities makes the agricultural enterprise less vulnerable to crises. The dedication of the Augstroze family has yielded results, being an experience worth sharing so that other communities also feel motivated to fight against oblivion. Furthermore, by perpetuating its history, Palma farm represents a unique case in the history of immigration in the state of São Paulo, both due to the motivations and the agents involved.

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