# IN SEARCH OF SOMETHING NEW. CHRONICLES OF DUTCH MOBILITIES IN ARGENTINA BETWEEN 1880 AND 1914

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**Abstract:**
Religion played a pivotal role in configuring the mixture between migrant delivering and receiving countries a couple of centuries back, although today the mobility is based on secular values. The present essay explores the life of Dutch migrants in Argentina, their expectations and reason to leave their homes behind. The religious compatibility between the Protestant and Catholic matrix was more than important in selecting or discarding Argentina as a first destination. In the 19th and 20th centuries, the point of gravity between delivering and receiving countries was determined by religion. The Korstanje life story is one among the thousands of Dutch migrants, which reflects the conditions of selective migratory flows which founded Argentina. Unlike modern mobile groups, many of the migrants were driven by cultural compatibilities and religious affiliation. The material imbalances that triggered their displacement to unknown lands were not solved once they arrived. In Argentina many of them were circumscribed to work without satisfying their basic needs.

**Key Words:**
Dutch migration, Argentina, mobilities, religion, Korstanje.

## Introduction

From my childhood I remember some problems with spelling my last name during my elementary education. Obviously, this name does not seem to be very common on this side of the Atlantic. My father was acquainted with the roots of his ancestors, but had no further details about the antecedents of Dutch immigration to Argentina, neither under what conditions the arrivals of the first Korstanje in the country occurred. To some extent, at a moment in my life when I worked as a travel agent, I was surprised to discover that this name typically comes from a province in Holland known as Zealand. From that day onwards, I became profoundly



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concerned with and keenly interested in delving into the history of Dutch migration. Understanding the Korstanje biographies is a way of expanding knowledge about Dutch migratory flows. Unlike the experimental method in a lab, where the state of the hypothesis can be easily verified and validated, history should recur to a black box where the conditions and reasons of an event remains covered. There is either a bridge or a gap between what happens in the past and what people remember. To fill this gap, I started my research in order for me to gain further knowledge not only about my heritage but also about Dutch immigration in Argentina. Self ethnography is an experimental and valid method to understand social issues. My case being similar to that of many other Dutch migrants, the outcomes of my search promptly received considerable support and aroused interest from many Dutch migrant descendants who had no access to their family history. This posed some questions that guided the present research, such as: How many Dutch migrants arrived in America? How many were received in Argentina? Why this destination and not others?

From 1846 to 1932, valid dataset sources reveal that 224,000 migrants left the Netherlands on a quest for better opportunities in the United States and South America. This number can seem small when compared to the 18,020,000 British and the 10,092,000 Italians. Basically, from the entire volume of migration, the United States received 32,000,000 migrants, while Argentina only 6.405.000. To some extent, the material conditions of production seemed to be a key factor in generating a reasonable gravity between the new and old world[35]. To a certain extent, the United States monopolized almost 60% of international migration. From the whole number of Dutch migrants, 60.74% travelled to the United States, 16.82% arrived in Asia, 14% in Canada, 4.67% in South-Africa and scarcely 3.73% (representing 8.000 persons) were headed for South America (Swierenga, 1998).

Within this context, we come across some methodological limitations, since part of the historical files at Direccion Nacional de Migraciones (organism that regulates the migration to Argentina were destroyed during the last dictatorships 1976-1982. To reconstruct the traces of Dutch Migration, some alternative resources were employed instead.

[35] Source: Carr-Saunders in AM World Population, Oxford University Press,1936, p. 49.



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Furthermore, our lack of fluency in Dutch raised difficulty in the accessing of the existing literature as well as in reading the correspondence between migrants, a method often adopted by researchers whenever interviewees are no longer living. These limitations were solved by combining diverse methodologies, some of them innovative, meant to reconstruct with certain accuracy the way in which Dutch immigration evolved during 1880 and 1914. In order to resolve this scarcity of documentary resources, we resorted to the employment of self-ethnography or life-history as methods that help unearth covert or not recorded information. Due to the testimonies of descendants of the Korstanje family and other Dutch families as well, we obtained valid data sets from which to infer that this type of mobility was primarily determined by religious attachment, and, secondly, by language considerations or cultural similarities between industrial countries and their periphery. E. Stone says that everybody caries under their skin their family biography in the form of stories, which, to some extent, determines our own biography in this world (Mumby, 1993).

**Preliminary debate**

Migration as a phenomenon depends on the gap between pour and rich countries, which reflects the problems that capital generates among classes. Foreigners are channelled into the supply of informal workforce that drives the economy, but at the same time they are relegated as a secondary working class. This means that migration is actuated by economic reasons but this is not the sole motivation. Apart from this, nation-states were created by the introduction, to a major or minor degree, of specific migration policies. However, the growing level of unemployment capitalism has experienced in the last decades made migration a taboo, mostly associated to xenophobia and racism. There are many negative effects associated with migration (Marmora, 2004; Rose, 1969; Domenach and Picouet, 1995; Maguid, 1995).

Migration requires ethnic/cultural encounters and intercultural learning, but it also generates an added value for the hosting countries, in terms of technological innovation or intercultural exchange, as new ideas are adopted by both newcomers and residents. In a globalized economy, surely, the economy depends on the configuration of the global labour market; the social mobility among workers is higher. However, the



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concentration of capital does not necessarily entail forced migration or mobility. According to the logic of production, unskilled workers choose to start over in an exemplary centre, and this involves cultural and symbolic reasons (Marmora, 2004). What is important to remember today is that the material imbalance created by capitalism has generated an extreme tendency of workforce mobility (Day and Mc Manus, 1994). Migration almost always engenders social issues and the problems of concern among the local residents become are capitalized upon by politics and political messages. One of the most troubling aspects in the psychology of residents seems to be the question as to why the economic problems surfaced in other countries should be absorbed by industrial nations. This discourse nourishes a sentiment of rejection towards aliens (Enzesberger, 1992) to the extent of denying the principle of hospitality. In truth, the forced migratory flows at the beginning of the 20$^{th}$ century were programmed and guided by the states, while postmodern flows are more likely to originate in disorganized economies. Senkman (1945) considers that the fear of migration starts the moment one of the groups faces cultural change.

Culturally speaking, states have developed in the last years diverse mechanisms to encourage and discourage mobility. Hospitality, as a social institution, would be an instrument of erecting walls for aliens. One of the scholars who devoted considerable attention to hospitality, work and migration was J. Derrida (2006). He argued that foreigners shake the rein of dogmatism regarding who they are and the world they live in. Derrida considers as guests those who come accompanied by a different language and culture from that of the host community. A difference like this not only reminds us of our own prejudices but also re-elaborates a new sense for our societal institutions. Hospitality is offered, or not offered, to a foreigner and his personal properties. In the same context, we understand the world from the questioning of knowledge and experience that others bring to us. The stranger splits our world into two parts. It is often assumed that our identity is born in the heart our family, city or nation; however, for Derrida, this is not possible, since our identity is formed by the conception of "others." In this way, only outsiders know, see, and ask for an explanation about our customs and habits beyond the limits of ethnocentrism. If we look down on others who look different from us, then we also despise ourselves.



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Migration can be compared with such a questioning. Certainly, Derrida suggests that the question is conceptually linked to the foreigner. Like the foreigner, the question may (or not) be hosted; on some occasions the question would be welcomed but under another situation may be rejected. In this way, we may show hospitality before a question. But does it make sense to enquire when the host does not allow it in the first place? The foreigner is forced to adopt another tongue which is not the one he usually speaks or writes. The host's translation is part of his very own abode and, according to Derrida, it is precisely the point where the possibility of hospitality takes place. In the succeeding pages of the book, Derrida treats the notion of hospitality within the context of the rights of the foreigner. If we wish to think for an instant about the power of the name, once more, we will find a paradox, since hospitality does not apply to a foreigner without a name, patrimony, or family. To be more exact, anonymity lies excluded from hospitality because nobody offers lodging to a person who is not recognized, at least not by name. Following the same point of view, Derrida affirms that this is the strict difference between foreigners and others. It remains to be seen whether migration and tourism fall under the same category.

The rights of the foreigner are within hospitality itself. If a foreigner arrives in a country, he is immediately subjected to the host's laws, even if they are unknown to him. Each foreigner is constructed on the basis of the host country's "ethos." Based on Hegel's explanation, the Right is determined by the family, the bourgeois society, and the State; these limits create a liaison between hospitality and hostility. In a first instance, hospitality means a certain protection, whereas hostility refers to the violence directed to *xenos* (those who do not belong to our group). On the other hand, the problem lies indeed in the communication among different actors and the role of the State in that interaction. In a hotel or in a shopping complex, for instance, a guest and host may interact in private but when a crime is involved, the police takes over the scene by interrogating the actors or by tapping phone lines; under these circumstances, hospitality momentarily disappears. Privacy and hospitality are ruled by some structures like the State, Law, Justice or Police. Following Kant, Derrida sustains: "How to distinguish a guest from a parasite? Principally, the difference is in *strictu sensu* but for that it is necessary to respect the law."



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If we analyze this matter from a Kantian perspective, we must also admit that morality is constituted internally in relation to the ego, and therefore the police are legitimated to investigate us even in psychological terms. Derrida clarifies this issue by arguing that hospitality is due to "the Right", which is always conditional. For instance, a guest may be very well accommodated under the principle of hospitality even when he remains as a foreigner but he is obliged to respect the laws of the locale where he is currently lodging. If not, the reciprocity between the guest and the host will be "breached." Apart from this point, Derrida affirms that "the relationship with a foreigner is ruled by the right, for being the right part of justice."

How do we fully understand Derrida when he claims that "there is no hospitality? Moreover, how do we interpret his concept of justice? If the right lies within us, then we may reckon justice according to our own views. If such is the case, why does Derrida claim that there is no such thing as hospitality? On the one hand, the sense of hospitality invites us to break the rules by marking powers, limits and authorities while, on the other hand, the other transgresses these laws. It does not mean that the foreigner should be jailed and considered a criminal unless the unconditional hospitality contradicts the foundation of his own reception. In other words, hospitality works paradoxically in two different senses: one by affirming social order through the law, and, by not subjecting the law to common citizens, it transgresses the notion of universal citizenship. Lastly, Derrida decides to tackle hospitality from the standpoint of the philosophy of language. The author maintains that there are two senses of speaking: a *strict* and a *wide* one. If we think of our tongue in a wide sense, Derrida says an Israeli intellectual bourgeois has to do with me more than a French policeman. In this case, the language does nothing to do with the nation.

Otherwise, if we apply the strict sense (conditional hospitality), an Israeli bourgeois will be more apt for an occasional meeting to Derrida than a French worker. Not only does this example help Derrida in explaining how hospitality may be applied, but it also delineates the different classifications that come from such an application. But this looks as the surface expression of a much more deeply-seated issue; in fact, a the comparison between a hospital and a hotel synthesizes both types of hospitalities. Whereas at hospitals patients (strangers) are usually seen without any restrictions with regard to patrimony or origin, at hotels



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consumers or guests are welcomed within a time-frame wherein they should vouch for their stay by their patrimony (conditional hospitality). Another example that explains the difference between unconditional and conditional hospitality is the Nation State's treatment of migrants and tourists, respectively. In the case of migrants, they are subject to strict and arbitrary laws being sometimes jailed and deported when the demands of the host state are not met. While tourists are encouraged to stay and enjoy them, but this is not to say that they are not subject to some laws; in this case, the status of the host country matters (e.g. First World or Third World). Throughout the globe, Nation States promote the return of tourists for its economic benefits.

**Europe and Holland**

The history of Holland may be described by recourse to the homology of life and death. The history of this country encompasses rise, stagnation and decline. Some historians have convincingly argued that the history of immigration in the 19$^{th}$ and 20$^{th}$ centuries show the advance of industrialism. It is important to note that the hegemony of Holland set the pace for the advance of Great Britain, after the legal disputes between two opposite doctrines, "mare clausum" (covert sea), and "mare liberum" (overt sea). Given the previous background, England encouraged the idea of opening the doors to commerce and the liberty to create factories, while Holland developed a more restrictive and conservative policy. Although Holland colonized many points during 1630 to 1700, soon after the civil war, their commercial hegemony starts to experience some important problems (List, 1979). If the Methuen covenant obliged Holland to cede its colonies before England, internally the decline of economic prosperity led to civil wars between the detractors and proponents of William III. These internal disputes obliged Holland to accept the loans of external powers such as Russia and France. Years of fighting and disorder caused Holland's independence to be finally ended by its indexation by Bonaparte's Empire after the French revolution. With the passing of years, Holland experienced a gradual fall, descending from being an international power to the status of a dominated nation. J. B. Duroselle (1991) explains that from 1830 a new civil war will resurface between Catholics and Protestants.



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Undoubtedly, Gellner adds, the problem of international migration between the 19th and 20th centuries depended on the dichotomy *imperialism / slavery* simply because these movements have not entailed only genuine displacement, but the need to consider the others in view of conquest and dominance. The real reasons of colonialism remain questioned by scholarship. For some scholars, it was triggered by economic factors which drove countries to colonize and make trade with new peoples. This economic exploitation allowed the expansion of capital beyond European boundaries. Marxist and neo-Marxist intellectuals adopted this stance, considering that colonialism paved the way for the advent of capitalism (Duroselle, 1991). Others prefer to indicate that this phenomenon was the result of the prestige and status these nations gained by indexing new lands. The idea of a centre in opposition to the periphery was not economic but cultural. Beyond this debate, the truth remains that thousands of Europeans were pauperized by industrialism, being forced to abandon their homes in quest of better fortune and luck. The 19th and 20th centuries witnessed mass-migration as a result of three combined aspects: a) the poverty of rural areas and peasants who were obliged to migrate to the cities and work in factories, b) the conquest of America, which encouraged the belief in exploration and adventure, c) the structural need of European nations for expanding their markets abroad. Besides, the demographic imbalances produced by the previous prosperity of the 18th century, followed by the wars caused by religious intolerance, caused thousands of Hollanders (just as many other ethnicities too) to leave their home for other countries. The old monarchies rested on shaky foundations and did not provide solutions to the social problems people experienced. The advent of nation states was not only troublesome but also traumatic for peasants and thousands of migrants.

**The Dutch Migration**

Dutch migration is very complex to define. It is important to focus on the reasons that made thousands of farmers abandon their homes. The diverse kinds of material deprivation led to the discontent in farmers and peasant in pour province as Friesland or Frisian. Some agrarian countries such as the United States, Argentina, Canada and India, which saturated the European market with their grains, were paradoxically transformed in fertile destinations for an obliterated workforce. G. Oberman (1993) points out that the crisis in farms, emerging from 1877 to 1891 as a result of the needs



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of industrialization, induced movement and mobility among peasants. Many of them went to the greatest cities, while others to other peripheral countries. It is important here that the national context in Argentina was a fertile reason in receiving these unemployed workers. After Pavon's battle, three presidencies played a pivotal role in the configuration of Argentina as a nation: B. Mitre (1862-1868). D. F Sarmiento (1868-1874) and N. Avellaneda (1874-1880).

One of the proponents of national unity, Mitre argued that after years of conflicts and dispute, Argentina should be imagined as an all-encompassing reality based on a shared constitution under the rule of law. This project called for a re-organization of local resources, implanting the European ideals of progress and fraternity (Winter and Rins, 1997). This process demanded not only selective migration policies that preferred Anglo-Saxon workers to Mediterranean ones, but also needed a specific and accurate design that facilitated a new perspective on the nation. European workers coming from industrial countries such as Holland, England or Germany were better than Italians or Spaniards for the needs of Argentine aristocracy (Ramella Susana). This triggers a hot debate between J. B Alberdi and D. Sarmiento. The former wanted to install the European legacy because it would bring the industrial single-mindedness necessary for reorienting the old post-Hispanic feudal structures. In other words, Alberdi thought that European supremacy was not cultural but material. They had access to new forms of production after the industrial revolution, while other countries were certainly excluded from the resulting benefits. On the contrary, for Sarmiento advancement was rooted in the cultural supremacy of the Norse Spirit (Halperin Donghi and Di Tella, 1969; Korn 1977:130). Civilization, according to Argentine aristocracy, was to depend on how many Englanders may migrate and settle in the country. Great Britain and France embodied the ideal of civilization and education. From many perspectives, Norse migrants chose to settle in the United States because of a deeper ethnic affinity than Argentina did not provide. Following the previous argument, in 1871 the fist migration office in Antwerp, Belgium is opened by the Argentine government. This will create a mass-movement to Argentina not only of Belgians but also Dutch people, from 1880 to 1910 (Swierenga R, 1998). This migration was certainly accompanied by the issuance of a legal structure that received and



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reorganized geographically the induction of these workers to the lands (Gaignard R, 1989). Most certainly, General J. A. Rocca, as Security Minister, organized a military expedition to push aborigines beyond the boundaries of Rio Colorado. This campaign, known as the "Campaña del Desierto", exterminated the aborigines, thus facilitating the access of investors to taking possession of these colonized lands. More than 15,000 hectares were given to a few aristocratic families who had financed the Government in the past (Ferns, 1968; Chiaramonte; Luna, 1990; Gainard, 1989).The new landowners monopolized for centuries the destiny of government, its interests and international policies. Even for European migrants, the access to these hectares was restricted. Thousand of migrants were obliged to work as subordinated to the already settled landowners (Giberti, 1986). The problem with the State's goals was that Norse migrants ultimately chose to travel to the United States, while only Spaniard and Italians arrived in Argentina. In spite of the thorough planning to captivate Englanders, Argentina received other ethnicities. This poses two interesting questions: What can be said about the international migrant flows that selected Argentina as a primary option? What were the reasons to select one destination over antoher?

**Dutch Migration in figures**

Based on to the Migration direction records, we have successfully reconstructed a part of the traces of Dutch migration from 1880 to 1910, though only of those arrivals computed from Darsena Norte port. Other sources of information were destroyed during the dictatorship 1976/82. Therefore, this dataset is compared and contrasted to bibliographical testimonies extracted from books or papers and from the Korstanje biography provided by Alberto Korstanje, who kindly offered to work as our key-informant. The combination of all these resources allowed us to bring forward a clear understanding about Dutch preferences in terms of migration.

Table 2 & 3 show that in Argentina, Dutch migration was more intensive from 1881 to 1890, representing 4,698 arrivals and 1,028 returnees home. This leaves 3,670 remaining workers. This means that Dutch migration was insignificant compared to other ethnicities. The rate of migrants who returned to Holland was approximately 46.11%. In any case, this sample of migrations does not represent more than 1% of the total



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arrivals. W. Velez said that religion was a key factor for workers to select a country and disregard others. This thesis suggests that Catholic countries such as Spain and Italy chose, besides more compatible languages, countries with a Catholic matrix such as Argentina, while Hollanders chose to migrate to the United States, more rooted in Protestant traditions.

**Table no 2 – Nationalities in Argentina 1900/1910**

| NATION | IN | | OUT | | % IN | REMAINING | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Italians | 2.341.126 | | 1.231.635 | | 52.61 | 1.109.491 | 47.39 |
| Spaniards | 1.602.752 | | 682.965 | 42.61 | 919.787 | 57.39 | |
| French | 221.774 | 114.230 | 51.67 | 106.844 | 49.33 | | |
| Russians | 163.862 | | 68.209 | 41.63 | 95.653 | 58.37 | |
| Hungarians | 87.266 | 36.726 | 42.08 | 50.540 | 57.92 | | |
| Germans | 69.696 | 39.595 | 56.81 | 30.101 | 43.19 | | |
| Englanders | 60.477 | 41.315 | 68.32 | 19.162 | 31.68 | | |
| Suisse | 34.363 | 13.342 | 38.82 | 21.021 | 61.18 | | |
| Portugueses | 30.729 | 14.625 | 47.59 | 16.104 | 52.41 | | |
| Belgians | 23.549 | 6.387 | 27.12 | 17.162 | 72.88 | | |
| Dutch | 8.111 | 3.740 | 46.11 | 4.371 | 53.89 | | |
| **TOTALES** | **4.643.005** | | **2.252.769** | | **48.52** | **2.390.236** | **51.48** |

Source: Eguileor De Ochoa Jorge y Valdés Eduardo - *¿Dónde durmieron nuestros abuelos? Los hoteles de inmigrantes en la Ciudad de Buenos Aires.* 2000. Centro Internacional para la Conservación del Patrimonio.

**Table no 3 – Dutch Migration – Argentina – Arrivals and Departures**

| DUTCH | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| YEAR | ARRIVALS | DEPARTURES | REMAINING |
| 1857/60 | 42 | 28 | +14 |
| 1861/70 | 111 | 50 | +61 |
| 1871/80 | 94 | 36 | +58 |
| **1881/90** | **4.698** | **1.028** | **+3.670** |
| 1891/00 | 323 | 147 | +176 |
| 1901/10 | 1.579 | 873 | +706 |
| 1911/20 | 1.264 | 1.578 | -314 |
| **TOTAL** | **8.111** | **3.740** | **+4.371** |

Source: Eguileor De Ochoa Jorge y Valdés Eduardo - *¿Dónde durmieron nuestros abuelos? Los hoteles de inmigrantes en la Ciudad de Buenos Aires.* 2000. Centro Internacional para la Conservación del Patrimonio.

To test Velez's approach, one might realize that diverse censuses in 1909/10 revealed that in Buenos Aires, the majority of foreign dwellers



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were Italians (22.5%) or Spaniards (14.2%). Both nationalities represented almost 45.5% of the total population. R. Swierenga examines the family scaffolding of Dutch migration, noting the following relevant aspects:

A) A 74% of the families arrived between 1882 / 1890 were married.
B) During 1891-1901 this percentage fells to 55%.
C) Until the First World War, this decreased to 45% and 37% up to the World War II.
D) The majority of migrants that selected Argentina were Catholics.
E) Almost 70% of Dutch migration went directly to the USA or Canada.

The points mentioned above validate the idea that religion was a key factor determining the destination of migration, without being the only one. In Buenos Aires, the first settlements and hotels that lodged migrants were constructed in 1820 and inaugurated for 1834. Many Churches were recycled or re-built to give assistance to these travellers. This not only compromised the official commitment but also generated a serious dichotomy between life in rural and urban areas. (Eguileor and Valdés, 2000:116). Unlike in Europe, where governments encouraged the migration from farms to cities, in Argentina, new dwellers were rechanneled to rural zones. Whereas the Argentine government overtly boasted about European migration, they did not provide any resources or instruments for working the land. The workforce was undoubtedly pushed between the devil and the deep blue sea. On the one hand, they were unable, in some circumstances, to go back home, and on the other, the situation in Argentina was not ideal, as they originally thought. Of course, the first Dutch migrants were brought to give an incentive to the bovine industry, even by creating a new race, Holando-Argentino (Giberti, 1989). However, many workers did not only face linguistic barriers in relating to their partners, but were also confronted with other problems, such as the lack of instruments and tools for parcelling the lands. This dependency on the landowners resulted in the return home of many Dutch pioneers.

Until 1888, as shown by the figures extracted from the International migration board offices in Buenos Aires, many migrants arrived in ships whose ownership or flags were not Dutch. This seems to be the example of



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the Snike family, who were bound for Buenos Aires in Ohio's ship. Other vessels such as Gironde and Niger transported the Vander family between 1882 and 1886. However, for 1890, the Schiedam ship arrived fraught with Dutch families such as Wabeke (6 members), Balkenende (3), Breddles (4), Denhof (4), Elst (7), De Bacet (4), Kool (6), Mandero (6), Staal (6), Van Lijst (5) and Van Koon (4). Aditionally, in 1890, another Dutch vessel, Edam, brought other contingents of workers, Breudel (10), Engwerda (4), Jans (4), Slimmer (8), Van Deijk (4), Bosters (2) and Van Der Werff (6). Other families, such as Bruxeberg (7), Hoogendyk (2), Huyer (5), Krekelaar (3) arrived on board of the Zaandam. Particularly, these details bring evidence that the 1880/1890 period is characterized by an official intervention in protecting Dutch migration. In order to learn more about their professions and religion, we have drawn a sample made up of 152 migrant biographies who reached Buenos Aires from 1882/1888. This information was served by the Migratory Office Museum.

While 58.55% professed the catholic religion, 21.05% were Protestants and 15.13% were mixed families. Regarding their occupations, 28.94% were children with no specific profession, while 71.05% were workers skilled as farmers -26.85%-, merchants -11.11%, and 3.7% technicians. Ultimately, in terms of age, we find that 37.5% were 21-30 years old while 19.07% were 31-40 years old. Unlike other nationalities, most Dutch migrants came with their wife and children. Although this sample illustrates to some extent the features of some Dutch migrants, they are not statistically representative and do not provide very accurate information about the expectances of these travellers or their attitudes to adapting to a new culture.

**Hollanders in Argentina, hither and thither**

Buenos Aires, the capital of the country, was the first destination for many migrants because it was being an exemplary centre for trade and mobilities. From here many Hollanders were delivered to other towns such as Tres Arroyos, San Cayetano and 9 de Julio. In this respect, it is important to understand that these flows were represented by people who were not settled successfully in Buenos Aires or were skilled professionals. In this view, Oberman (2001) explains that these migrants were only farmers in quest of a better place to live. Many of them faced the serious economic problems surfaced in 1890, under the presidency of Juarez-Celman.



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Unemployment rose to worrying figures while thousands of migrants were forced to wander from one region of the country to another. Throughout 1891 – after the collapse of Colonia Cascallares, a Dutch colony – a woman wrote to a well known Dutch journal: 'our master has not delivered the food for us to survive for two month, our master said that he was poor and their lands should be transferred to new masters. This means undoubtedly, new customs, new laws, we suffered in Europe but our shadows remain (Oberman, 2001, p. 3).

As a consequence of this crisis, many Dutch dwellers were obliged to migrate again towards other colonies such as Tres Arroyos or were repatriated to Europe. Following this, almost 320 families came back to Buenos Aires to claim from the consul L. Van Riet concrete steps for resolving their situation (Oberman, 2003). Van Zeijl is not wrong in affirming that the social fragmentation experienced by Hollanders in Argentina doubled the number of prostitutes. In Buenos Aires, for instance, throughout the 19th century there were only 10 brothels, but while this number tripled until the end of 1910. D. Guy infers that almost 320 women worked as prostitutes in Buenos Aires (Gutman and Reese, 1999). The hard conditions of these migrants in Buenos Aires facilitated the foundation of the first Reformed Church, originally intended to protect and give assistance to poor farmers. The Nederlandse Vereniging – the Dutch Association – envisaged helping all those Hollanders who needed financial assistance or food. Out of the shadows, the first pillars of the Dutch community were erected. Religion somehow soothed the material privations these new dwellers experienced.

Other contingent was arbitrarily directed to the cities of Santa Fe and Rosario. Unlike in Tres Arroyos, in urban centres the migrants adopted the Argentine style of life, abandoning not only their beliefs but also their culture and language. Most of them married local women and never returned home. It is hypothesized that only those who kept their religion also conserved their habits and cultural customs. In Rosario, for example, the Dutch community was consolidated up to 1930, when the internal conflicts between the members weakened the action of the Reformed Church. Without religion, they dropped their language and pride, trying to pass for Argentines. By means of the Tango dance, football and school, the sons of these immigrants forgot their roots and rejected their Dutch identity.



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In this context, religion played a pivotal role in revitalizing the social bond that allowed the success of the communities. Ranging from epidemics to economic problems, religion was the only cocoon protecting the migrants, as their faith worked as a mechanism of cohesion, preventing their acculturation and assimilation with the rest of country (Korn, 2004, Durkheim, 2004). The success of the Tres Arroyos colony depended not only on the three waves of Dutch and Danish migrants that reinforced their cultural belonging, but also on the Church in this little town, which was stronger than others. Perhaps, the history of the Korstanje families in Argentina illustrates better than a thousand words the problems and expectances of Dutch the migratory inflows into the country. Biographies and self-ethnographies are valorised in relation to other methods simply because they unravel the secret life of family units which helped in connecting the self with its history (Mumby D, 1993: 71). Therefore, family biographies correspond to valid research resources in expanding our current understanding of migration.

Older records of the Korstanje family come from Zeeland, a Dutch province. Claes Korstanje from Vlake was in 1555 the first registered member of this clan. Claes lived in Kappelle town, located in zuid-Beveland but little is known about his trajectory or destiny. The first Korstanje arrived to Argentina was Marinus, married with Cornelia Oelle. Their arrival, together with 9 children – Pietr, Elizabeth, Jannetje, Jan Jacobus, Lowrina, Johanna, Adrianna, Jacobus, Leendert and Cornelius Jr. – looked promising. Because of the conditions in Europe, two of their daughters died before arriving in Argentina. Undoubtedly, this family was not specially invited by the Argentine government, as their descendants believed; they were urged to emigrate by misery and hunger. Argentina represented for them an alternative relief from their situation. Of course, many migrant names were badly registered upon arrival because of linguistic barriers. For non Spanish names, there were many cases of misspelling and migration officers made many mistakes when processing the new entries. This does not seem to have happened to Korstanje and other Dutch migrants. Whenever the arriving ship was under a Dutch Flag, the captain provided the officers with a crew list to be registered in the Migration records.



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On arriving at the Buenos Aires port, the Korstanje family was hosted at two migrants' hotels where they lodged for more than 2 years. Although they would have been repatriated immediately, there was a big economic crisis during Juarez Celman's administration that wreaked havoc in the local economy to the extent that it slowed down the progress characterizing earlier times. As a result, many workers were stranded in the country, suffering from the consequences of bad administration, aggravated by the conflict between Celman and Roca (Botana N, 1998: 94). Whilst 5 Korstanje clans chose to migrate to the United States, only one clan chose Argentina as their primary destination.

Originally, Marinus, at a certain moment, selected Quilmes to settle down, while some other of their children remained in 25 de Mayo in the Buenos Aires Province. One of his sons, Jan, met Neeltje Van der Bliek there, a newly arrived lady who had been forcefully sent to Argentina as a punishment for defying the Real Protocols by trying to marry a plebeian. In this new world, the nobility disappeared together with their privileges. Neltje, who was in Chaco, travelled to Buenos Aires, plagued by a Typhus epidemic that had killed part of her companions, and met Jan in Buenos Aires. Their daughter, Elise, was married some decades later to Arturo Klynjan, manager of Shell Oil Company. In quest of better opportunities, Neltje and Jan moved to La Boca Borrough where they had 7 children, Marinus, Cornelia, Pedro, Juan, Elisa, Jacoba, and Santiago. Although originally Jan and Neltje observed all the protestant duties, the conventillo was the centre where their descendants lost their attachment to Dutch archetypes. One of Jan's sons, Juan, had 2 sons and 2 daughters. Ultimately, Juan Santiago, my grandfather, had three sons, Carlos, Claudia and Fabian.

Concerning their religious affiliation, the family preserved its protestant roots at least until the two first generations, but once their descendants married Argentine women, their faith was radically altered. With their religion, the Korstanjes abandoned their language, culture and lore. Living in La Boca Borough, Buenos Aires the family embraced Spanish and Catholicism as their two primary values. Many years later, the Korstanje descendants travelled to Holland to visit the sites and towns where their ancestors lived. Tourism, in this vein, paved the way for an ethnical reconnection with the roots. Both forced migration and tourism share similar natures, actuating people to go beyond their familiar



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surroundings in quest of something new. One is based on material needs while the other derives from humdrum routine and hedonism.

**Conclusion**

The Korstanje life story, one among the thousands of Dutch migrants, reflects the condition of selective migratory inflows which founded Argentina. Unlike modern mobile individuals, many migrants were motivated by cultural compatibilities and religious affiliation. The material imbalances that had triggered their displacement to unknown lands were not solved once they arrived. In Argentina many of them were circumscribed to working without making ends meet. Although many workers returned to Europe, the Korstanje chose to settle down in the host country, adapting their customs to those of the local population. The colonies where religion played a vital role, like Tres Arroyos, preserved their cultural legacy and idiom, while others, as Buenos Aires or Rosario, where internal disputes predominated, failed to do so. This means that even if the migratory flows were determined by economic factors, religious and cultural ethnic values exerted an influence at time of selecting a destination. Today, Dutch descendants know Holland through the media and tourism. Fortunately, they did not face the suffering of the pioneer settlers. Tourism plays a crucial role in connecting citizens with their heritage and roots, distilling displacement into stories, landscapes and places. What is important to note here is that faith and religion accompanied the first migrants as guiding lights in adapting to an alien environment.

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**Rezumat:**

***În căutarea noului. Cronici ale imigraţiei olandeze în Argentina între 1880 şi 1914***

Religia a jucat un rol crucial în configurarea relaţiei dintre ţările care dădeau şi cele care primeau imigranţi cu două secole în urmă, deşi astăzi aceste mișcări se bazează pe valori laice. Eseul de faţă are ca obiect viaţa imigranţilor olandezi din Argentina, aşteptările lor şi motivele ce i-au determinat să-şi părăsească ţara natală. Compatibilitatea religioasă dintre matricile protestante şi catolice a fost foarte importantă în alegerea sau evitarea Argentinei ca primă destinaţie. În secolele al XIX-lea şi al XX-lea, axa de referinţă dintre ţările ce livrau sau primeau imigranţi a fost determinată de religie. Povestea familiei Korstanje este una dintre miile de istorii ale imigranţilor olandezi, care reflectă condiţiile de selecţie ale valurilor de imigranţi care au populat Argentina. Spre deosebire de grupurile specifice migraţiei moderne, mulţi dintre imigranţi au fost motivaţi de compatibilităţi culturale şi afinităţi de natură religioasă. Privaţiunile materiale ce au determinat exodul lor către tărâmuri necunoscute nu au fost rezolvate imediat după sosirea lor. În Argentina, mulţi dintre ei au fost supuși unor condiţii de muncă limitative, ce nu le satisfăceau nevoile de bază.

**Cuvinte cheie:**

Imigraţia olandeză, Argentina, mobilităţi, religie, Korstanje.



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