

**The contributions of cartography and iconography to the study of urban
transformation in colonial Rio de Janeiro**

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SUMMARY

This paper regards Brazilian colonial cartography and iconography, especially the ones related to Rio de Janeiro. It aims to establish said cartographic material as a solid record for researches on Rio de Janeiro's early urbanization. In order to achieve that, this study relies on qualitative research and it has an exploratory character. Furthermore, this is both bibliographic and iconographic research regarding the data collection. At first, there are considerations related to overseas exploration, the "Discovery of Brazil," and the founding of São Sebastião do Rio de Janeiro. Then, the article discusses the meaning of "cartography." Finally, the present study advocates for the relevance of charts, plans, and maps concerning colonial Brazilian cities as they provide aid in comprehending the Rio de Janeiro we live in today.

KEYWORDS: Cartography. Urban space. Rio de Janeiro.

INTRODUCTION

Overseas exploration is undoubtedly a landmark of modern times. It extensively promoted the Commercial Revolution and pushed the economic axis to the Atlantic. The "discovery" of America boosted the European economy. The new continent, ruled by the colonial system and the mercantilist parameters, then entered the economic history of the world.

The Portuguese monarchy was extremely influential during the Age of Discovery. Portugal even had a group dedicated to studying the art of navigation, the School of Sagres. They developed several sophisticated navigation techniques. By the same token, the Portuguese government started to encourage commercial activities very early in the 15th century as the Crown realized the importance of commerce to Portugal's general progress.

Afterward, when the Renaissance rose, society began to acclaim rationality and science. During this time, a new way of life emerged. Feudalism was no longer the organizing force like it was in the Middle Ages. People began to experience a lifestyle-related to commercial expansion, reformation, and political absolutism. Therefore, it was the perfect context for overseas expansion.

The "Discovery of Brazil" happened in 1500. Random lands were never left out, even when they were not initially desired. After all, the soon-to-be Brazil provided raw material, precious metals, and food for the metropolis at a very low cost. Conversely, the new nation consumed very expensive manufactured goods from Portugal. Brazil was officially born.

This country did not materialize by chance like many of us believe. It was not born, it was fabricated and occupied by pre-elaborated government decisions. Just think of the first attempts to reconcile administration and territory: the hereditary captaincies, pictured as parallel lines squared over a completely unknown land. This land "wanted" to be disciplined and under control, though. It collaborates in increasing the glory and wealth of the colonizers (SANTOS, 1988, p. 39).

On March 1st, 1565, the Portuguese founded the city of São Sebastião do Rio de Janeiro. Initially, the city was settled at the entrance to Guanabara Bay, on a hill called "Cara de Cão," and it remained there for only two years, until 1567. Later, the city was transferred to "Morro do Castelo," inside the bay. This was a defense strategy against foreign attacks. Rio was the head

of the southern captaincies and the seat of a bishopric until the end of the 17th century. The city was always prominent in the colonial context.

At that time, the higher bodies of the administration of the Portuguese Atlantic Empire would govern the lands of the American continent. The councils that managed Rio de Janeiro were far away. How to govern a territory that you do not know? That is why Álvarez (2001) mentions that the ability of metropolitan power to govern and intervene in the physical and political structures of the city of Rio was directly related to the information acquired through visual and mental images.

To the royal power, it was essential to own this city through maps and plans. These visual instruments provided an image that allowed the Portuguese to capture the idea of the city's spaces and its surroundings, therefore, supporting decision-making from Portugal. Diogo Ramada Curto stated that "controlling the space" was a political-administrative operation supported on knowing the space through the production of information: reports, graphical tables, news, and others. Those pieces were made by people of a practical nature, who were used to calculate and evaluate things: merchants, priests, soldiers, legal pilots, employees. **However, maps were still the most important tools in order to obtain knowledge** (ALVAREZ, 2001, emphasis added).

Thus, we realize that cartography, as records of cities, deserves special attention. For architects and urban planners, it is practically impossible to work without graphic representations of cities. Benevolo (1999) presents an enormous iconography (maps, plans, views, and other forms of representation) that complements the text and speaks for itself. The present work may be a good example of how cartography and iconography contribute to the construction of the history of cities.

OBJETIVE

In this article, the main goal is to highlight the colonial cartography, especially the Portuguese ones, as a form of a historical record that contributes to understanding the urban formation of Rio de Janeiro. It seeks to point out the relevance of cartography for the history of this city. During the Colonial Period, the instruments of record were limited to writing and drawing. The Portuguese interest in nautical arts then enhanced the development of cartography.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this article relies on qualitative research and it has an exploratory character. Furthermore, this is both bibliographic and iconographic research regarding the data collection. The present work also chose the narrative literature review.

In this research, we sought to correlate the relevance of cartography as a memory record and its contribution to the understanding of the urban transformation processes from the past to the present. Given that, the time frame in this study extends from the founding of the city of São Sebastião in Rio de Janeiro by the Portuguese to the Proclamation of the Republic in Brazil, that is, from the 16th to the 19th century.

The spatial profile is limited to the city of Rio de Janeiro since the research object is the set of cartographic and iconographic data from the colonial period of that city.

RESULTS: CARTOGRAPHY AND REPRESENTATION

According to Argan (2005, p. 225), "it has not yet been decided whether urbanism is an art or a science, it may be sociology, economics, politics, technology." Cartography must be understood as a hybrid result of science and art, just like urbanism. Joly (1990, p. 8) states that cartography is

the set of studies and scientific, artistic, and technical operations that come from the results of direct observations or the exploration of documentation while aiming the elaboration, the use and the establishment of maps, plans, and other models of expression.

Novo and Martín-Merás (1992, p. 12) write:

By cartography, we understand the art, science, and technology of making maps and the study of them as scientific and artistic documents. Correspondingly, the map is any type of representation of the earth or any celestial body on the scale. This definition includes all kinds of maps, plans, charts, architectural drawings, sections of buildings, three-dimensional models, and globes.

The interest that man has in knowing the world where he lives seems to be prior to the advent of scientific thought, and, above all, it is a question of survival. Nevertheless, said intellectual concern is accompanied by other interests: profit, domination, and appropriation of the space. According to Novo and Martín-Merás (1992, p. 11), as humans increase their knowledge of the world, cartographic representations develop.

The design of maps precedes, in most human societies, the writing and use of numbers, although they were not considered targets for study and preservation until the Italian Renaissance (NOVO; MARTÍN-MERÁS, 1992, p. 11). Again in accordance to the same authors, "making a map is an innate activity for the man." They point out that the natives of some places indicated new directions for travelers by drawing schemes on the ground with sticks. Sometimes they would even add branches or stones to highlight a landmark.

In effect, maps were born as elements of communication; they are a record of the controlled space. Novo and Martín-Merás (1992, p. 11) further state that "even primitive peoples, who lived as nomadic warriors and hunters, needed to know the direction and distance of their paths. They also felt the urgency to communicate their knowledge about the territory to each other."

Ultimately, the map is also an iconography since this word is not specifically related to any particular area of study. According to the Michaelis Virtual Dictionary, one accurate meaning for “iconography” is the “art of representing by images.” The main aspect that brings cartography closer to iconography is the representation of reality. Both maps and images are generally simplifications of the real world. However, we cannot overlook the fact that images create new worlds.

A map can represent reality with top accuracy or it may act as an illustrative tool that helps to present a theme or a fact. For the latter, there is greater creative freedom, and graphics can subvert the fundamental rules for mapmaking (RAHY, 2002, p. 41).

Quéau (1995) refers to virtual images and points out that through them the real world is transformed into an image. Then, those images become real. This biunivocal relationship has always been true and it is extremely relevant to the study of cartography, especially when considering the Colonial Period.

Alvarez (2001) reminds us that

as well as the bold representation of gender in classic Japanese engravings, the cities in ancient maps are intentionally gigantic. In the colonial context, the colonizer dictates the city over the tropical nature. Hence, the city needs special stress. The map, a constructed representation, is imagined through analogical urban constructions such as houses, convents, churches, manor houses, and forts. All of those offer know-how to the metropolitan power. These bodies are sometimes as large as the landforms where they are inserted.

Finally, it is important to remember that the 16th century is known as “the golden century of Portuguese cartography.” It is reasonable to take Portuguese cartography as a reliable source of images since Brazilian colonial cities developed during that century. The Portuguese cartography in special was rich in symbolic representations, some still linked to medieval thought. Cartography is an important source of research on the first episodes of Brazilian urban evolution.

THE RELEVANCE OF CARTOGRAPHY FOR UNDERSTANDING THE URBAN EVOLUTION OF BRAZILIAN COLONIAL CITIES

World maps from the 16th and 17th centuries reveal the wonders of the “discovered” (or dominated) lands. In the Portuguese maps that picture Brazil, images of parrots and giants as decorative elements are recurrent. This cartography “constitutes an emblematic example of an overloaded and rich decoration in which the exotic scenes and the vegetation of the areas discovered next to the golden of the wind roses stand out” (NOVO; MARTÍN-MERÁS, 1992, p. 13).

Reis (2000, p. 8) states that “the knowledge we have of Colonial Brazil is almost entirely based on written documents. The students, like the vast majority of the population, have no idea what the towns and cities would have looked like in the first centuries of colonization.”

Textual records are undoubtedly resources for investigating the space of cities in the past. However, according to the Center of Urbanism and Architecture Studies, “Cartography is a privileged documentary source for understanding our urban past and for the study of urban history.”

In this context, Reis's work (2000) deserves special consideration as it gathers illustrations from several Brazilian cities, which were collected in Brazilian and European libraries and archives. Rahy (2002, p. 27) mentions that Reis's work

can contribute to new interpretations of Brazil's urban history. She also points to the research possibilities that this collection provides, either on the planning of the Portuguese-Brazilian world or on renewal in the learning processes of the history of Brazil at all levels of education.

Rahy (2002, p. 30) mentions that the cartography of colonial cities is an object for a variety of investigations,

from the reasons for choosing the site for the implantation of urban centers to theoretical concepts underlying the urban designs. For example, the representation of a building may disclose its institutional importance, the power relations that governed society, and the governmental strategies of defense. The technical aspects implicit in the representations are equally relevant.

The author also comments that,

the analysis of the cartography of cities that had a metropolis/colony allows the investigation of their urban development and their culture. Concerning Portugal, the urban plans of the colonies, in some cases, were experiments for later use in the metropolis (RAHY, 2002, p. 30).

THE CARTOGRAPHY OF COLONIAL RIO DE JANEIRO

The cartography of Colonial Rio de Janeiro is dispersed in assorted publications. In his work, Faria (2005) points out two relevant maps that feature the city of Rio de Janeiro: (1) the Pirê Reis planisphere, from 1513, that rests in the Topkapi Palace, in Istanbul, and (2) the Tabula hec regionis magni Brasilis, or Terra Brasilis, attributed to cartographers Lopo Homem and Pedro e Jorge Reinel. This one is a part of the well-known 1519 Atlas Miller, which belongs to the National Library of France.

In the first map, there are

mythical figures such as the unicorn and other headless creatures, or even sacred ones, such as that of Saint (São) Brandão: while in his trips across the Atlantic, he once anchored on top of a whale. Two localities appear on the Brazilian eastern coast for the first time: Cabo Frio (Kav Fryio) and Rio de Janeiro (Sano Saneyro) (FARIA, 2005).

The second map is considered the first Brazilian economic card and features the first image of deforestation in the country. The Brazilian National Library has a reproduction of it as part of a work published in 1965 and entitled "The very loyal and heroic city of Rio de Janeiro".

In the 18th century, the governors of the captaincies of the Southeast and Northeast regions hired cartographers and military engineers to conduct surveys and manufacture maps of the areas under their administration. Manuel Vieira Leão produced the map of the Captaincy of Rio de Janeiro. In addition to these maps, Faria (2005) mentions José Fernandes Portugal's nautical charts, such as the Rio de Janeiro Plan and the (reduced) Atlantic Ocean Chart; the nautical chart by Antônio José de Araújo, named Part of the Coast of Brazil; and other cartographic documents by travelers like La Perouse (FARIA, 2005).

The CD-ROM "RIO 500: Rio de Janeiro in the 16th century" is another great piece of information on Colonial Rio de Janeiro. According to Raminelli (2000, p. 13), this CD-ROM assembles specialists on the history and the "natural world" of Rio de Janeiro. He states that one of the objectives of this work is to popularize researches that would hardly leave the academic circuits. "This product used a huge variety of images: prints, canvases, maps, sculptures, and films that were made at the time of the Age of Discovery."

Another contribution to the study of the colonial city of Rio de Janeiro is the CD-ROM designed by researchers from the Urbanism Program of the Federal University of Rio De Janeiro (PROURB/FAU /UFRJ). This CD is a result of the research "Rio de Janeiro: the evolution of the symbolic systems of Latin American cities." According to Kós (1998, p. 7), "the objective of this work is to create a model that allows multiple forms of access to various levels of information with elements that allow this access in a clear and efficient way." The dynamic combination of text and image (whether two or three-dimensional) makes this product a playful research tool.

Thus, these two multimedia products are also research sources for the study of the city of Rio de Janeiro during the Colonial Period. Pereira (2004, p. 326) says "the adoption of digital representations through geographic information systems and computer graphics technologies allow new ways of visualizing and representing spatial information." Both works are a great contribution to the scientific community.

ASPECTS OF COLONIAL RIO DE JANEIRO IN CARTOGRAPHY

As mentioned before, the city of São Sebastião do Rio de Janeiro was founded in 1565, near the entrance to Guanabara Bay. However, at the end of the 16th century, Morro do Castelo was slowly being abandoned since foreign attacks seemed to cease. Besides, it was much easier living in the floodplain, close to the sea.

One of the factors that enhanced the occupation in the floodplain was the construction of the São Bento Monastery, at the beginning of the 17th century. However, the Dutch invasion

threat, in 1623, led the government to rebuild the walls in the Castle and to reinforce the fortifications, and postpone the transfer of the Cadeia and Casa da Câmara.

The layout of the initial nucleus, developed in the 16th century, was irregular since it was adapted to the site. The plain, on the other hand, had a more regular layout, with some cross streets nearby Morro de São Bento. Even so, the tortuous and organic layout prevailed, which was very different from the Spanish colonial cities. "Like in Lisbon or Porto, the place shapes the city and not the other way around" (PORTAS, 2000, p. 164).

Lamas (1992, p. 63) affirms that the urban form cannot be disconnected from its geographic set and that the "original site already has the genesis and the generating potential of the constructed forms by a path or an expression of a place." This relationship between the original site and the urban form is precisely discussed by Lamas, who says this is very evident in the layout of the city of Rio de Janeiro.

The city of Rio de Janeiro, when it changed places — from the Cara de Cão hill to the São Januário hill — was also founded on the top, in a medieval fashion with its castle, like Lisbon. But when the city spread into the floodplain, at the beginning of the 17th century, it almost had a regular layout, which was not very different from the one that appears on João Massé's map (SANTOS, 2001, p. 48).

That was how the city expanded, by occupying a strip of solid land on the coast. Furthermore, the increasing sugar economy and port activities made the population grow and then the demand for land also expanded. While the state of Minas Gerais was bubbling with mining activity in the last decade of the 17th century, the port of Rio then became responsible for forwarding the gold to the Metropolis.

In the middle of the 18th century, Rio was elevated to the capital of the colony. Brazil was prospering with mineral exploration. With the expansion of the urban administrative and commercial functions plus the control and export of all the gold produced in the colony, the limits of the city expanded and were now quadrilateral, enclosed by the hills of Castelo, São Bento, Santo Antônio and Conceição. At the end of the century, the "old city" was set and it extended itself to the Campo de Santana. There were only small urbanization centers inland, both in the North and in the South (VAZ, 1996, p. 3).

Colchete Filho (2003, p. 87) mentions that some constructions between the 16th and 18th centuries were decisive for the consolidation of the city in the floodplain. The gradual abandonment of Morro do Castelo, the original center, was also a consequence. "Monastic architecture, promoted by four important religious orders, stood out in the midst of civil architecture, quite crude, with single-story terraced houses or townhouses, set in narrow terrains" (COLCHETE FILHO, 2003, p. 87).

Vaz (1996, p. 3) mentions that the particular set of the lots is a result of the attitude of demarcating the largest possible number of field tests. They were almost always obtained through the "long and intense landfill work to make the flooded fields into buildable land."

Under those circumstances, the land was formed by rectangular lots, with great depths and narrow field tests, which, according to the author, further accentuated the old Portuguese land structure.

As for the urban residential architecture of the colonial period, Reis Filho (2004, p. 22) states that it was established on a lot type with very defined characteristics. It took the best of the old urban traditions of Portugal. He mentions that “our towns and cities had streets with a uniform aspect. The residences were built aligned with public roads and the side walls were right on the boundaries of the land.”

While Napoleon's troops were conquering Europe at the beginning of the 19th century, the Portuguese court officially moved to Rio and opened the Brazilian ports for trading with “friendly nations,” thus promoting greater urban development and a strong commercial expansion. Vaz (1996, p. 3) writes that

the small colonial city, which had about 60,000 inhabitants, mostly slaves, had to adapt to the court's costumes, the luxury of the European capitals. There were many general improvements: robust buildings in compliance with the new capital of the empire and new urbanized areas. The city grew towards the North and the South and followed these urbanization vectors.

Slavery in Brazil was extinguished in 1888 and a year later, in 1889, they proclaimed the Republic. Until then, the slaves were in charge of the various services linked to the domestic economy, like water supply and sewage removal. Benchimol (1985, p. 599) reminds us that these activities would later become profitable “public” services and that foreign companies would be responsible for the administration of those.

According to Benchimol (1985), some facts that marked the beginning of the modernization of the city of Rio de Janeiro, in the second half of the 19th century, were: the abolition of the slave trade in 1850, the political consolidation of the Empire, the expansion of coffee, demographic expansion, urbanization, and the gradual enhance of free labor. Thus, Rio de Janeiro, little by little, had part of its history destroyed because its architecture and public spaces were also destroyed. The colonial-style is no longer welcome. The architectures are gone but the records stay.

CONCLUSION

Starting from the idea that maps constitute communication processes, we must consider that there is no neutrality from those who elaborate them. The speech of the issuer is confused with their own life experience, that is, they are directly dependent on pre-established concepts. The readers, or receivers, read the map also through their own lenses. According to Rahy (2002, p. 42), this is how “the communication cycle is established: when the understanding of the real world reaches the reader through the information selected by those who draw up the map.”

Therefore, in order to understand colonial cartography, we must wear bifocal lenses. They should allow us to dive into the context in which maps were produced and add values to

that iconography while considering contemporary studies. The International Situationist movement took the old maps in a contemporary manner, without a specific commitment to the fidelity between the actual physical set and the representation. Rahy (2002, p. 44) also mentions that Situationists present this new concept of expression — cognitive mapping — while reinforcing the old practices: spreading “information about space in a playful way, but not necessarily incorrect or incomplete.”

Nowadays, with advanced graphic representation systems, especially digital ones, there are already several instruments for the photorealistic representation of space. Through electronic resources it is possible and relatively simple to obtain accurate representations of portions of the Earth. But how can we know the data of the spaces that housed our cities? As we have already mentioned throughout this work, the verbal language of these historical documents is a source of memory. However, for us, who deal with non-verbal language, cartography is undoubtedly a relevant tool for acquiring information about the Colonial Period, a time when there was no photography at all.

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