

# NAMES IN BRAZILIAN PUBLIC SPACES: A FEW WORDS ABOUT SÃO PAULO

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## **Names in Brazilian public spaces: A few words about São Paulo**

**Abstract:** Although young, when compared to European cities, the city of São Paulo is one of the oldest in Brazil (1554). Emerging as a small village, and currently characterized by neighborhoods that originate in very different times throughout its history, São Paulo is defined as a mosaic. Our specific goal is to present and discuss the main naming models superimposed on the city's public spaces (particularly roads and bridges) century by century, and arriving to the twenty-first century with the lack of public policies that regard toponymy as an essential tool to build a symbolic bridge between the past and the present.

**Keywords:** urban toponymy, São Paulo toponymy, São Paulo public spaces.

This work<sup>1</sup> outlines the toponymic<sup>2</sup> situation of a large Brazilian city, São Paulo, which during the colonial period was no more than a small village, and until the nineteenth century could not compete with the most important cities of the Portuguese empire and the colonies of Brazil, such as Rio de Janeiro and Salvador.

One cannot possibly understand the complex names of its public spaces without knowing, at least in general terms, some of the history of this enigmatic city, a fitting expression when we consider that each of its nearly thousand neighborhoods can be as different from one another as if they were small cities bound with one another.

Thus, we begin our narrative with a brief historical account of the city to illustrate some situations in which the naming changes (occurring in public spaces such as streets and bridges) bear witness to the urban evolution of this metropolis.

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<sup>1</sup> Translated into English by B. V. Young.

<sup>2</sup> Unlike the Spanish-speaking countries, in Brazil the terms *toponymy/toponymic* are used to designate the scientific discipline pertaining to the onomastic science, as well as the list of names of a certain location. Thus, if an author occasionally uses the term *toponomastic*, it is not in order to differentiate between the two aforementioned terms, but merely as a synonym.

### From the 1554 school to the great metropolis

Despite being one of Latin America's best documented cities since its foundation in the sixteenth century, with the *Atas da Câmara Municipal de São Paulo*, there are many particulars about the inception of the city and its early years in which there is no general consensus among historians and researchers. The official story, the one we learn at school, declares that the Jesuits, in order to convert the Indians residing in the plateaus of São Paulo, founded a college (which originated the city) in a location selected by the Jesuits. More recent studies, however, offer another version (Campos 2006): *Piratininga* (which means "a place to dry fish", referring to the river that left fish on its banks when the waters receded) was a village inhabited by friendly Indians not far from where the college was constructed. The same *Piratininga* toponym was applied to the stream that ran through the region (some historians say it is the *Tamanduateí* River, but the discussions leave room for doubts; for additional details cf. Dick 1997), and by 1553 the Jesuits (among which Manuel da Nóbrega is cited) consulted the Indians, who truly knew the land, and they specified the best place to set up the new center. According to Campos it was an ideal place: situated on a hill, it was cut by a crossing that was part of the pre-Columbian path, the almost mythical *Peabiru* (toponym with no etymological information until the present time) – ergo a prime location and with communication to the coast and inland, toward the South. Moving along *Peabiru* – a path of almost 1200 km – one reached the lands of Peru, according to Campos. Also some rivers, such as the *Tietê*, *Anhangabaú* and *Tamanduateí*, ran through the region of the college, providing water, food, and transportation facilities.

While Europe emerged from the Dark Ages and entered a Renaissance period, with at least fifteen hundred years of documented history, Brazil and its cities were considered merely distant and rustic places lost in faraway America. And on January 25, 1554 *São Paulo de Piratininga* was officially founded, which was only a small Jesuit college (third in the country). That is how Murillo Marx (1997: 9–10) defines the panorama outlined in the work of Dick, which to some degree summarizes the toponymic history of São Paulo:

A situação e o sítio geográfico clarificam-se sugestivamente quando flagrados pela toponímia. "Serra acima", "borda do campo" ou, simplesmente, o "campo" localizam o estabelecimento pioneiro interiorano longe do mar, na transição da mata atlântica para o descampado, encarando um vasto planalto e um desafiante destino. "Piratininga", "Anhembí", "Ipiranga" denunciam e qualificam também várzeas bem regadas, rios piscosos e caminhos múltiplos que protegem, alimentam e servem um relevo de tabuleiros e mirantes privilegiados.

Como a vida que espelha, sutil por séculos, crítica ao fim do período considerado, a denominação dos lugares paulistanos muda contudo. Muda com sua gente rude, européia, mestiça ou índia, acuada ou senhora de sua vizinhança, atirada sobre plagas e gentios sempre mais distantes ou exaurida em seu ímpeto, desfalcada de seus membros, empobrecida. Muda com a sua história e a de seus contatos com tantos outros rincões, línguas e costumes, em seus diferentes momentos de aculturação e de convivência entre senhores, agregados e escravos. (...) A denominação dos logradouros, responsabilidade municipal, ponderada em seu evoluir pode indicar para os municípios o desejável equilíbrio entre sua espontaneidade e sua sistematização. Pode e deve valorizar a sua identidade e memória comum, consubstanciadas pelo ambiente de todos. (...).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> [The situation and geographical location are suggestively clarified when perceived by

São Paulo is not a planned city, like most Brazilian cities, although some neighborhoods were initially planned and gradually became part of its surroundings, though dissociated, just as the roots of a plant can thrive until covering up a wall, hiding it. Accordingly, the formation of each neighborhood also differs from one another. There are some that were part of large land grants or farms, others originated from indigenous villages, others began to be populated by the influx of devout groups to a chapel erected there, and others originated from the expeditions of troops. The modern São Paulo, born in the nineteenth century, grew disorderly from the center to the peripheries, circularly. The old centers expanded and new districts were formed, and the interstices between them were gradually filled. The major natural obstacles, the rivers, were overcome in the modern city by the numerous bridges built. For this reason, we chose not to limit this brief outline on the public spaces depicted only by its streets, but also included in this lucubration the bridges of São Paulo.

The city, in 1775, is displayed as a small burgh with alleys and a maze of small streets:

Para proceder ao levantamento anual dos habitantes da Cidade de São Paulo, a mando do Morgado de Mateus, a partir de 1765, os recenseadores naturalmente procuraram localizar a população através de suas moradias situadas na confusa rede de ruas, becos, travessas ou servidões de passagem estabelecida desde o século XVI e que, com o tempo, foi sofrendo lentas alterações ou acomodações visando não só facilidades para o tráfego, mas a garantia de um “endereço” (...). Naqueles dias, eram muito poucas as ruas já delimitadas através do uso constante, sobretudo aquelas nascidas dos caminhos de saída do burgo bandeirante. Não devemos esquecer que ainda não havia compacidade no adensamento populacional; a Cidade era rarefeita, mercê de grandes quintais. Ruas com casario contínuo de ambos os lados, as mais populosas eram muito poucas, como a Rua Direita, a do Rosário, a São Bento na altura dos “Quatro Cantos” ou a “Quitanda”, nome assumido pela rua da Misericórdia ou do Comércio nos primeiros tempos. (...) Enfim, essas ruas já bem definidas cercavam grandes bolsões de propriedades, acessíveis unicamente por vias ou passagens sem nome e, daí, seus donos, outrossim, serem arrolados como moradores de “travessas” das vias “oficiais” mais próximas. Tais bolsões, ou “ilhas”, eram relativamente grandes e, dentro delas, as azinhagas de passagem obrigatória tiveram alterações conforme as conveniências, inclusive, topográficas. (...). (Lemos 2004: 177).<sup>4</sup>

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toponymy. “Serra acima – High Sierra”, “borda do campo – edge of field” or simply “campo – field” locate the pioneer backwoods establishment far from the sea, in the transition from rainforest to open fields, facing a vast plateau and a challenging future. “Piratininga”, “Anhembí”, “Ipiranga” refer to and also qualify well watered plains, fish rivers and multiple pathways that protect, nourish and offer privileged landscapes and observation locations.

As the life it mirrors, subtle for centuries, argumentative at the end of the period regarded, the names of locations in São Paulo change, anyway. It changes with its rude people, European, Indian or crossbreed, those repressed or master of its vicinage, thrown on ever more distant lands and scarcity or exhausted in its impetuosity, deprived of its limbs, impoverished. It changes with its history and its contacts with so many other areas, languages and customs, in their different moments of acculturation and coexistence between landlords, aggregates and slaves. (...)

The designation of public areas, municipal responsibility, weighted on its progress, indicates to the municipalities the desirable balance between spontaneity and its systematization. It can and should have their identity and collective memory, embodied by the surroundings of all. (...).]

<sup>4</sup> [To undertake the annual survey of the inhabitants of the City of São Paulo in 1765, at the

Currently, there are still some toponyms applied to public spaces, illustrative of this colonial São Paulo, even if only hydronymy is the main representative of the indigenous view of the land, toponymy maintained by tradition, however with a meaning unknown by the inhabitants that imprint a new meaning to the indigenous toponyms – not the etymological meaning, but rather a resemblance of various symbolic representations associated with the name.

One can say without doubt that in the early days of São Paulo the toponymy of Portuguese origin was a way for to assert political power, given that the entire population, including European and African, did not use the Portuguese language for communication, but used the *língua mais falada da costa* (“most spoken language of the coast” in the words of Anchieta), which was Tupinambá (according to Rodrigues 2002). Thus, many of the early Brazilian toponyms used in the early centuries do not necessarily portray the indigenous worldview, since Tupinambá was the communication language used among all the inhabitants, and it was that language that effectively served all speakers in the effective colonization actions, including catechizing the Indians by the Jesuits. What Dick termed “direct naming” (actually indigenous toponyms, in other words, used by them before the Europeans arrived in 1500, and which to this day remain in use) is only seen when a parallel is drawn to detect the physical presence of those groups in the territory, as when comparing the number of toponyms of Tupi origin in the coastal region – original place of residence of indigenous peoples whose languages belong to the Tupi-Guarani family, from which Tupinambá originated.

Thus, the toponym applied to one of the oldest streets of São Paulo can be either the result of a legitimate indigenous name or from non-indigenous inhabitants in general: The street *Tabatinguera*. The Tupi word meaning “white old clay, extinct”, the current street emerged from a path that led to *tabatinguera*, which was where the white clay was extracted to produce pottery, to build the artifacts for the village people – namely dishes, cups, pots, and other goods. It is one of the few streets of the old center whose toponym remains unchanged since the sixteenth century and possibly the only one with an indigenous linguistic affiliation.

The study conducted by Dick (1997), which verifies the changes of names on streets, bridges and other public spaces of São Paulo, from 1554 to 1889, makes it very clear that

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behest of Morgado de Mateus, the census takers obviously sought to locate the population through their residences situated in the confusing network of streets, alleys, lanes or passageways set up since the sixteenth century and that over time has undergone slow changes or accommodations not only for transit facilities, but also the certainty of an “address” (...). In those days there were very few streets delimited by constant use, especially those that emerged from the exit paths of the burgh’s pioneer expeditions. We must not forget that there was still no population density compactness: the city was smaller, on account of the large backyards. Streets with continuous rows of houses on both sides, and there were very few populous ones, such as the street called Rua Direita, Rosário, São Bento at “Quatro Cantos” or “Quitanda”, a name taken on by the street Misericórdia or Comércio in the early days. (...) In any case, these already well-defined streets encircled large patches of properties, accessible only by unnamed roads or passages and, hence, its owners were listed as residents of the “bystreets” nearest to the “official” roads. Such pockets or “islands” were relatively large and, within them, the required passing lanes were altered according to convenience, including topographical convenience. (...).]

the predominant factor in the first names has always been the spontaneity and the use of concrete references: a church, a market, a business or social activity, or a striking feature of the land for the people who lived there. Therefore, the overlapping of toponyms is diachronically verified, almost always associated with the changes undergone by the urban characteristics of the city, adapting the referential names to the new urban concrete referent that emerged with the expansion of the city. In short, what characterizes this initial spontaneous and informal naming process is the communication necessity between residents and visitors.

There are other toponyms that help us detect which naming mechanisms were incorporated during the first centuries of São Paulo's history (and, to some extent, recurring in major Brazilian cities) as the city government underwent transitions, resulting in the simple formalization of public spaces (making public what was founded by private initiative) up to the systematic city planning attempts and eventually regulating the names of its public spaces. As the mentality of the governing bodies underwent changes and the city was no longer a small village, becoming a big city, in the early twentieth century, the types of names assigned to public spaces also changed, and it can be stated that if democratically the representative is an individual name giver with collective power, in reality the power of names is now an exchange of political favors.

Thus, compared to the rest of the city, the old center is the only region that keeps its streets<sup>5</sup> with names from the colonial era, though few. Among the oldest we cite the aforementioned *Tabatinguera* Street, with indigenous linguistic affiliation and the Portuguese *Direita* Street. Let us not forget the names of rivers and other smaller watercourses that automatically named, by reference, streets, districts and regions, such as the toponym *Anhangabaiú*, the name of one of the main rivers of São Paulo, which became a valley (*Vale do Anhangabaiú*), the Park and the subway station; it is a toponym routinely used by São Paulo's residents, but hardly anyone today recognizes the flow channeled in the nineteenth century. Another toponym that seems out of place or pointless in the old center, currently almost entirely covered by concrete where the rich river flow of *Tamanduateí* is channeled, is a toponym related to a hill now known as a major subway station exit, the *São Bento* station (whose main referent is the monastery in this city since its early years and whose toponym also extended to the street and vicinity by reference) and also well known by people who are on the constant lookout for the popular shopping streets situated there: *Ladeira Porto Geral*. Those who know the modern São Paulo can hardly believe that at this location, where thousands of people currently move about, less than two hundred years ago was a typical rural area. Although the main river port of Rio *Tamanduateí* no longer exists, where canoes came to town with products from Fazenda São Caetano, then a property of the Benedictines, the toponym remains intact, even though people do not know the reason for the name "Porto Geral" and consider it meaningless, that is, they believe the criteria for naming this street are the same as for so many other streets in São Paulo and did not take into account the ancient physical references:

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<sup>5</sup> Evidently, what we know today as neighborhoods or large districts of São Paulo, as well as cities in the metropolitan region, have toponyms dating from the early years of the emergence of São Paulo, in the sixteenth century, such as land grants and outlying villages: Carapicuíba, Tatuapé, Butantã, Barueri, and others.

O Beco dos Barbas, hoje Ladeira do Porto Geral, terminava próximo ao Rio Tamandateí, que então passava pela atual Rua 25 de Março, dando muitas voltas, sendo, no final do mesmo beco, o lugar onde era costume atracarem antigamente as canoas, vindas da Fazenda de São Caetano, pertencente ao Mosteiro de São Bento, e de outros lugares mais próximos da Capital, as quais traziam cereais, canas, frutas etc. Nesse mesmo beco, em 1818, só existia uma casa, e nela residia, com a sua família, o Coronel Antonio Maria Quartim, que fez parte do governo provisório (...). (Martins 2003: 98–99).<sup>6</sup>

This single paragraph has many types of names, most of them spontaneous: *Beco dos Barbas*, a probable reference, according to some, to the boatman in charge of the Tamandateí river crossing in that stretch, who was nicknamed that way; Dick (1997: 294), however, one can refer to the commenter of the Book *Livro do Tombo do Mosteiro de São Bento*, which asks whether it was a reference to Figueiredo Cardoso Barbas (1801), the Registrar of orphans João Soares, connected to the Monastery.

In any event, even if it is an *anthroponomastic* reference, there is no homage expressed, just reference. Another known name of the same slope was *Beco do Quartim*, with reference to a small farm which existed in that location in 1801 and in the following years. The name is also indicative of a well-used referential designation in the city in the nineteenth century, before the rectification of Rio Tamandateí, *Sete Voltas*, and also of a name by means of which homage is paid to the anniversary of the country (March 25, when the First Brazilian Constitution was enacted, later a street on the Rio Tamandateí).

As that small town, where everyone knew each other, began to slowly wane, the need to have better organization and control of the names given to public spaces also emerged. The naming spontaneity that had once been used in the small town was no longer feasible for the future metropolis, and thus the practice of paying homage emerged as the main semantic rationale in designating streets, analogous to patriotic dates.

To conclude this account of São Paulo's urban and toponymic evolution, we quote Byron Gaspar in the presentation of Martins' reedited book, originally published in 1910 (2003: 7):

Em *São Paulo Antigo* não há viadutos de concreto, passagens de nível, avenidas radiais, trevos, anéis viários, metrô. Nem transeuntes sem nome e sem rosto, sempre correndo, correndo. As vias públicas ali são acanhadas, com pouca ou nenhuma iluminação e, não raro, sem calçamento de pedra. Muitas têm nomes curiosos, como Beco Sujo, Ladeira do Acu, Caminho das Sete Voltas – tudo isso no coração da Cidade! Na sociedade, as pessoas se conhecem pelo nome e sobrenome. (...).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> [The Beco dos Barbas, currently known as Ladeira do Porto Geral, ended near Rio Tamandateí, which then passed through the street currently known as Rua 25 de Março, with many turnabouts, and at the end of this alley the place where the canoes coming from Fazenda de São Caetano which belonged to the São Bento Monastery used to moor, and also from other locations closer to the Capital, which carried grains, sugarcane, fruits and so on. In 1818 that alley had only one house, in which Coronel Antonio Maria Quartim and his family lived in, he was part of the provisional government (...).]

<sup>7</sup> [In the *Old São Paulo* there were no concrete overpasses, level crossings, radial avenues, interlinked traffic arrangements, road circles, or subway stations. Nor were there any nameless and faceless passers-by always running, running. The roads here are narrow, with little or no lighting, and often without stone paving. Many have unusual names like Beco Sujo, Ladeira do Acu, Caminho

## Naming policies of public spaces in São Paulo

The town, a small urban settlement, had such a limited number of streets, bridges and other public spaces that there was no need for nameplates, as observed by Camargo (sd a):

Até o século XIX, não existem quaisquer referências sobre o emplantamento de ruas na cidade de São Paulo. De certa maneira, as placas não eram necessárias, pois a cidade era muito pequena. Nesse sentido, as poucas ruas que existiam eram imediatamente identificadas “de memória” pelos moradores, não havendo a necessidade de qualquer sinal gráfico afixado nas mesmas.<sup>8</sup>

As the city grew, the need emerged for rules and criteria, but it was only in 1929, with Law No. 3.427 of 19/11/1929 (known as Código de Obras Arthur Saboya) that for the first time a few rules were set in place for choosing new names for streets:

Art. 584º – Para a denominação das vias e logradouros públicos serão dados de preferência nomes que se relacionem com os factos da cidade ou da historia Pátria.

Paragraphe único – Fica expressamente vedado dar-se ás vias publicas nomes de pessoas ainda vivas.<sup>9</sup>

It is difficult to determine when the referential toponyms began to give way to those that expressed paying homage, which today account for most of the names attributed to public places in São Paulo. It appears that the first legally recorded action was proposed by the councilman Cândido Gonçalves Gomide in May 4, 1831, whose goal was to indelibly mark the political process that determined the change from a monarchist regime to a Republican regime, bequeathing to the *people*, in a way, the power of decision for the abdication of D. Pedro I, in a section highlighted by Camargo (sd b):

(...) *para perpetuar-se a memória da gloriosa victoria conseguida no Rio de Janeiro pelo povo contra o poder injusto e iniquo, victoria que liberta a pátria do pesado jugo que a opprimia, se denominasse d’ora em diante a rua do Rosário – rua 7 de Abril, a de Santa Thereza – rua da Abdicação, o largo do Curso Jurídico – Praça da Liberdade, e o de São Gonçalo – Praça do Povo...*<sup>10</sup>

The proposal had to be examined by a committee of other councilors (same criteria used to this day), who were responsible for issuing an opinion – with the following opinion:

das Sete Voltas – all in the heart of the City! In society, people know each other by their name and surname. (...).]

<sup>8</sup> [Until the nineteenth century, there are no references on nameplates for the streets in the city of São Paulo. To some extent, the plates were not necessary because the town was very small. Therefore the few roads that existed were immediately recalled “by heart” by the locals, without the need for any address signs posted in the streets.]

<sup>9</sup> [Article 584 – To designate the public spaces and streets, preference will be given to names related to the facts of the city or the history of the Country.

Single paragraph – is expressly forbidden to give public roads the names of people who are still alive.]

<sup>10</sup> [(...) To perpetuate the memory of the glorious triumph achieved in Rio de Janeiro by the people against the unjust and inequitable power, a victory that liberates the Country from the heavy oppression, from this day forward it names the Rosario Street – Sete de Abril Street, the Santa Thereza – Abdicação Street, the width of the Curso Jurídico – Liberdade’s Square, and São Gonçalo, as the Praça do Povo (People’s Square)...]

(...) reconhecendo o quanto é digna de se assinalar por maneira que faça perpétua a gloriosa Victoria conseguida no Rio de Janeiro no dia 7 de abril do corrente anno, por isso julga que merece ser tomada na devida consideração a indicação do senhor Gomide, não concordando contudo na parte que diz respeito ás novas denominações das ruas do Rosário, e Santa Thereza, e Praça de São Francisco, e São Gonçalo, pela dificuldade que de ordinário se encontra em o povo deixar as antigas e arraigadas denominações; sendo portanto de parecer á Comissão que os títulos para as ruas e praças mencionadas em dita indicação, sejam applicados para as primeiras ruas, praças ou obras públicas magestosas que de novo se fizerem. Paços da Câmara 11 de maio de 1831.<sup>11</sup>

With the negative opinion to the proposal, the Council approved the following regarding the toponymic change:

(...) foi aprovada com uma emenda do mesmo senhor Gomide para se denominar o chafariz existente no Largo do Curso Jurídico – Chafariz da Liberdade, a ponte outr’ora chamada ‘do Marechal’ – Ponte da Abdicação, a de Lorena – Ponte 7 de Abril; e ponte que se pretende construir na rua da Constituição – Ponte do Povo; ordenando-se ao fiscal para mandar affixar os competentes rótulos.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, in this case, a new bridge was bequeathed, named “do Povo”, since other designations apparently paying tribute (as “do Marechal”, “da Abdicação<sup>13</sup>”, “do Lorena<sup>14</sup>”) were not necessarily so, but seemed to point to a reference (“bridge ordered to construct/renovate”). Other names are also registered for the same bridge:

<sup>11</sup> [(...) acknowledging how dignified it is to perpetually mark the glorious Victory achieved in Rio de Janeiro on the 7th of April of this year. Due to the difficulty that the people will have in leaving behind the old and deep rooted names, the opinion of this Commission is therefore that the titles for the streets and squares mentioned in the previous statement, be applied to the first future streets, squares and solemn public works to be constructed. Town Hall May 11, 1831.]

<sup>12</sup> [(...) It was approved with an amendment by Mr. Gomide to name the existing fountain in Largo do Curso Jurídico –the Chafariz da Liberdade (Fountain of Freedom), the bridge formerly called ‘Marechal’ – Ponte da Abdicação, the Lorena – Ponte 7 de Abril, and the bridge to be constructed in the Constituição street – Ponte do Povo; ordering the supervisor to put up the designated labels.]

<sup>13</sup> In the footnote, the presenter of the book *São Paulo Antigo*, Byron Gaspar comments (Martins 2003: 137): “A Ponte da Abdicação, de pedra, foi levantada sobre o Rio Anhangabaú em 1786–88, durante a proveitosa interinidade de capitão –geral em São Paulo Frei José Raimundo Chichorro da Gama Lobo. Teve também a denominação de Ponte do Marechal e do Acu. A canalização do Rio Anhangabaú e o solevamento do local (...) fizeram-na desaparecer pelos idos de 1906. (...)” (*Acu* é forma ligada ao topônimo *Yacuba*, nome de um córrego que dominou a região e trasladou-se para vários espaços circundantes, nomes desaparecidos com a canalização dos cursos de água.). [“The stone bridge Ponte da Abdicação was raised over the River Anhangabaú in 1786–88, during a profitable interim as general captain in São Paulo of Frei José Raimundo Chichorro da Gama Lobo. It was also named Ponte do Marechal and Acu. The channeling of Rio Anhangabaú and the elevation of the location (...) made it disappear by 1906. (...)” (*Acu* is the form associated to the toponym *Yacuba*, the name of a stream that dominated the region and moved to various surrounding locations, both names having disappeared with the channeling of the watercourses.)]

<sup>14</sup> Bernardo José de Lorena, Count of Sarzedas, 13th governor and captain general of the Captaincy of São Paulo between 1788 and 1798. His name was also given to a road that unites the capital to the city of Santos, on the coast, the *Calçada do Lorena*, a work so representative for the time that John Mawe, in the book *Viagens pelo interior do Brasil*, declares: “Poucas obras públicas, mesmo na Europa, lhe são superiores (...)”. [Few public works, even in Europe, are superior (...)]. (Amaral 2006: 135 and 395).



A Ponte do Piques, que se chamou também do Caminho de Pinheiros e do Lorena (...), em 1831, foi denominada Sete de Abril, para celebrar a abdicação de D. Pedro I, mas o nome não pegou (Nota do apresentador). (Byron Gaspar in Martins 2003: 136).<sup>15</sup>

A case in which the reference to the owner (Visconde de Mauá) is patent is represented by one of the names of the current square *Praça Princesa Isabel* (which, yes, pays homage), initially *Campo Redondo*:

O Campo Redondo era também conhecido por Chácara Scharpp. (...) O Campo Redondo chamou-se, ainda, do Mauá, por ter sido propriedade do Visconde de Mauá, e mais tarde Campos Elíseos (Nota do apresentador). (Byron Gaspar in Martins 2003: 41).<sup>16</sup>

What appeared to be common in the early centuries of the history of São Paulo was the multiplicity of toponyms spontaneously formed for the same reference, a phenomenon recorded in the *Atas da Câmara Municipal de São Paulo* and cited by Dick (1997: 81) on several occasions, of which we mention only one regarding the oldest bridge of São Paulo, the *ponte grande do Tietê* (1724 to 1734, approximately), the current bridge *Bandeiras*:

A ata de 12/5/1732 registra uma outra forma de chamamento de ponte do Tietê: “mandado contra Manuel de R... para que dentro em seis dias va retificar a Ponte do Theathe de noça Senhora da Luz (...)” (*Atas*, IX, 173). Em 1743, aparece, novamente, o mesmo acidente denominado de “ponte grande de Goarê”, ou, então, em uma fórmula mais extensa, como a denunciada em 25/9/1734: “ponte de Nossa Sra. de goarê no rio Thiathe suburbio desta cidade” (*Atas*, X, 362).<sup>17</sup>

If, on the one hand, this toponymic overlapping process is inadmissible to the current government, on the other hand, the historical record of these numerous forms allows to reconstruct the way in which the names of public spaces are formed spontaneously; nevertheless, there is a need to distinguish repeated elements in the urban landscape, such as bridges. On another level, we can mention the other Tietê bridge, then called *ponte pequena da Cruz das Almas*. The bridge *ponte pequena*, contrary to *ponte grande*, was the name that persisted in São Paulo until the twentieth century, in a toponym applied to a subway station (*Station Ponte Pequena*, Blue Line subway train station, currently *Armênia*, in honor of the Armenian colony established in a nearby neighborhood).

The chronology of the legislation regarding the designation of public spaces in São Paulo provided by Camargo (sd b) informs citizens in a timely manner that since the early nineteenth century there was concern by the Provincial government (whose status was

<sup>15</sup> [The (Bridge of) Ponte do Piques, also called Caminho de Pinheiros and Lorena (...), in 1831, was named Sete de Abril, to celebrate the abdication of D. Pedro I, but the name was not well accepted and was rejected (Presenter's footnote).]

<sup>16</sup> [Campo Redondo was also known as Chácara Scharpp. (...) Campo Redondo was also called Mauá, as it had been owned by the Viscount of Maua, and later Campos Elíseos (Presenter's footnote).]

<sup>17</sup> [The *Ata* of 12/05/1732 registers another way of calling the Tietê bridge: “injunction against Manuel de R... to rectify the bridge Ponte do Theathe de noça Senhora da Luz in six days (...)” (*Atas*, IX, 173). In 1743, the same accident appears again called “ponte grande de Goarê”, or, in a more extensive wording, such as the accusation in 25/9/1734: “the bridge Nossa Sra. de goarê in the river Thiathe suburb of this city” (*Atas*, X, 362).]

equivalent to the current State) to regularize the nameplates of streets and the numbering of buildings, obviously for the purpose of control, inspection and tax collection, as well as to inquire about the needs of the residents. According to the document, the Councilmen received on February 16, 1846, a Decree from the President of the Province (an office equivalent to the current governor of the state), recommending "(...) a numeração dos prédios e denominação das ruas públicas (...)"<sup>18</sup>, similar to an ordinance of 1809.

After the proclamation of the Republic in 1889, there was a reorganization of the municipal government and the naming and regulation of making official the names of public spaces was placed under the charge of a Superintendent, elected from among the councilmen. With this reorganization an administrative routine was set in place with regard to the names of public spaces, which is still in place (Camargo sd c):

(...) No início do século XX, toda a estrutura do governo municipal já estava montada. No que toca aos logradouros, tanto o Prefeito (através de Atos e Decretos), quanto a Câmara Municipal (através de Projetos de Leis que se transformavam em Leis) poderiam legislar a respeito das denominações, sendo que esse modelo persiste até os dias de hoje. (...) <sup>19</sup>

However, despite the efforts to make public spaces official, some parallel toponyms competing with the official ones go beyond the isolation of small geographic areas and extend to the entire city. These are new references that emerged from communication needs (regarding the primary function of the toponym, which is to individualize and spatialize) found in parallel and unofficial toponyms, which although not recognized by the government, possess great force on the people and also on the media.

We can then quote the example of three major arteries of the city, comprising several avenues whose official toponyms are absolutely innocuous, as they consist of anthroponyms that are difficult to identify unequivocally: the set of avenues bordering the main rivers, Tietê and Pinheiros, known as *Marginal Tietê* and *Marginal Pinheiros*, and *Radial Leste*. The *Avenida Octavio Alves de Lima*, *Avenida Assis Chateaubriand*, *Avenida Condessa Elizabeth Robiano*, *Avenida Morvan Dias de Figueiredo*, *Avenida Embaixador Macedo Soares*, *Avenida Presidente Castelo Branco* and *Avenida Professor Simon Faiguenboim*, a group of avenues that make up what we all know as *Marginal Tietê*, are toponyms that can be applied to other spaces as well, and thus do not satisfactorily individualize, which is why the parallel toponyms are preferred. The same situation occurs with the *Marginal Pinheiros*, which designates the following set of avenues, but the parallel toponym is used for the entire set of avenues: *Avenida das Nações Unidas*, *Avenida Engenheiro Billings*, *Avenida Magalhães de Castro*, *Avenida Major Sylvio de Magalhães Padilha* and *Avenida Guido Caloi*. Similarly, the aforementioned *Avenida Radial Leste* is the parallel toponym used for the set of avenues *Alcântara Machado*, *Avenida Conde de Frontin*, *Avenida Antônio Estêvão de Carvalho*, *Avenida Doutor Luís Aires*, *Avenida José Pinheiro Borges* and *Rua Mello Freire*.

<sup>18</sup> [(...) the numbering of buildings and names of public streets (...).]

<sup>19</sup> [(...) In the early twentieth century, the structure of the municipal government was fully established. With regard to public spaces, both the Mayor (through Acts and Decrees), and the City Council (through bills that turned into Laws) could legislate with regard to the names, and this model is in place to the present day. (...).]

The bridges connecting the avenues over the Pinheiros and Tietê rivers also exhibit the same phenomenon. Many of them received spontaneous referential toponyms or attributives later made official, such as for the aforementioned bridge *Ponte Grande*, toponyms that were gradually replaced by names that paid homage. The old wooden bridges, throughout the twentieth century, were replaced by modern concrete bridges, retaining their original toponyms – after all, the bridges served to unite old paths –, but recently some of them had their names (widely known by São Paulo residents) replaced by “anthroponymic tributes”, such as the Bridge *Ponte Cidade Jardim* (currently *Ponte Engenheiro Roberto Rossi Zuccollo*), saliently named to establish a connection with the avenue that bears the same name. Toponymic replacement caused so many communication problems between the citizens and public agencies that nowadays it is common to find the old toponym and the new one, even on official nameplates. When this does not occur, it is common to keep the old toponym along with the official one in orality, marking it linguistically: The Portuguese language admits, in these cases, the use of a temporal marker that unites the new toponym to the former: “*Antiga Cidade Jardim*”.

The lack of a Standing Committee on Toponymy in São Paulo and Brazil<sup>20</sup> causes serious problems for the administration, not only related to the fact that unofficial parallel toponyms are currently used by the media, but also because a “deviation of functions” is produced, given that the city’s councilmen, who should legislate on urgent matters for the city, engage on creating bills that are often unnecessary, as São Paulo already has consolidated toponyms and only occasional problems should be corrected. This power given to the councilmen leads to toponymic changes, often severe from a cultural point of view, since traditional names are replaced by anthroponyms, either to pay homage, or for political favors. Often, these unofficial toponyms were formed in the early colonial days of the village in the sixteenth century with reference to people, monuments, rivers, and others are more recent but result from a similar naming system, marking new concrete references, such as bridges, squares, shops, and so on.

The competition between official and unofficial toponyms is strong and the latter always have an advantage, since the use of a large number of anthroponyms paying homage (not only to public figures, but also anonymous people) leads to what Carvalhinhos calls *anthropo-toponymic homogenization*<sup>21</sup>. However, a spontaneous objective, clear and concise

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<sup>20</sup> In fact, the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, IBGE, has recently participated in group meetings with experts of the United Nations, but only incidentally, and in our opinion, the academic-government integration is unsatisfactory in this respect, at this time. Of the Brazilian cities, Rio de Janeiro appears to be the first to maintain a specific agency to take care of the names of the city, the *Comissão Carioca de Nomeação de Logradouros e Equipamentos Públicos (CCNLEP)*, coordinated by the Municipal Department of Culture.

<sup>21</sup> The first time the author referred to the process without, however, coining the term *anthropo-toponymic homogenization*, it was in an article in 2009, referring to the question of changing the names of streets in Rio de Janeiro, a phenomenon already criticized by an author of the nineteenth century: “(...) Logo no início do texto uma ironia contra o governo acaba por ser, na realidade, uma manifestação atualíssima sobre as mudanças toponímicas nas cidades, mudanças que muitas vezes desrespeitam o cidadão por estarem alijadas da espontaneidade de sua formação e por servirem como moeda de troca em transações políticas. O nome perde, por assim dizer, sua função primordial de individualização e particularização ao naufragar em um mar de denominações massificadas, como

(unofficial) toponym is more attractive and popular than an anthroponym used to designate a street or overpass, as is the case with the famous parallel toponym *Minhocão* applied to a large city viaduct (officially, *Presidente Arthur da Costa e Silva*, as a “homage” to a president of the republic during the military dictatorship between 1967 and 1969), a metaphorical parallel toponym that is much more efficient in identifying the spatial area than the anthroponym quoted, which could be applied to any street, bridge or avenue. Interestingly, the same pattern is also repeated in the spontaneous designations for alleys and lanes of the “communities”, the term currently used to refer to slums.

Although disfigured, the mechanism of naming by paying homage can still be found in the city. Although several areas present name homogeneity in other semantic fields, they are not the result of spontaneity, but rather of government actions. Due to the profuse growth of the city during the twentieth century, in the 1970s São Paulo had approximately twenty thousand streets with irregular or repeated names. Thus, a commission was appointed to create what we know today as the *Banco de Nomes de São Paulo*, a computerized database created to outline potential toponymic names from A to Z, belonging to all the possible semantic fields. Therefore, whenever needed, a random name was picked from the databank, regardless of the historical or even onomastic context of the surroundings. The list was constantly expanded for a long time and remnants of it are still available.

That is how many neighborhoods ended up having a semantic unit in their public spaces, especially toponyms applied to their streets, simply because such names come from that database. This systematic mode is also found in neighborhoods whose streets were established by former landowners, who when they divided their land into plots to sell, chose their own names, which were later made official (as is the case of Vila Romana, Lapa, in the West part of São Paulo). Similarly, we find the present system mirrored by names in public spaces from areas created by companies, such as the Companhia City, in São Paulo, dating from the beginning of the twentieth century and responsible for the subdivision of land which today holds the neighborhoods City Butantã, City Lapa, Jardim Europa and Jardim Paulistano, or official institutions such as Instituto de Previdência do Estado de São Paulo (“São Paulo’s Social Security Institute”, IPESP), which, in its turn, is responsible for building popular housing and schools since the 1930s, thereby leading to the formation of numerous newer neighborhoods.

Also, the naming systems of these institutions often tend to employ anthroponyms that pay homage, such as the *Jardim Adhemar de Barros*, which was studied in the research coordinated by Carvalhinhos and called Toponymic Memory of São Paulo, analyzed neighborhood by neighborhood. The district is commonly known by an unofficial toponym,

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é o caso dos antropotopônimos (nomes de pessoas aplicados a topônimos), sobretudo em cidades grandes como Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Salvador, Belo Horizonte etc. (...)” (Carvalhinhos 2009: 86). [(...) Early in the text an irony against the government turns out to be in reality a very current manifestation on the toponymic changes in the cities, changes that often disrespect the citizen by being removed from the spontaneity of their formation and for being used as a bargaining chip in political transactions. The name loses, so to speak, its primary function of individualization and particularization when sinking in a sea of mass names, as is the case of anthroponymic toponyms (names of people used as toponyms), especially in big cities such as Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Salvador, Belo Horizonte etc. (...).]

*Providência*, a rejection of the political figure that was honored through the official name (Adhemar de Barros). It comprises the areas of the Caxingui neighborhood, the oldest one (whose Indian toponym comes from a stream and whose etymology is unknown), in 1953 and subsequent years. Its first nine streets were transiently named by the letters from A to I, but shortly after the institution decided on toponyms to pay tribute to Civil Guards killed in action, since the neighborhood was precisely destined to public servants. It can be said that the residents, many of them living in the neighborhood since its foundation, have not established relationships between the honoree and the public space, oftentimes unofficial toponyms appearing for some places in the neighborhood, as verified in interviews with the informants.

In short, the names of addresses and public spaces in São Paulo can be analyzed as to their semantic content, the modifications that mark changes in the urban profile and also their naming mechanisms:

a) With regard to the semantic content, the city of São Paulo has an apparent anthro-toponymic homogeneity, although each of its nearly thousand neighborhoods is a small onomastic body;

b) Regarding the changes in the urban profile, it is not only these that govern the toponymic modifications. Even without this kind of changes, it is common for a street to undergo transformations merely as a result of an inappropriate and strange bill, as is the case of the current change proposed for the Viaduto do Chá;

c) As for the naming mechanisms, the city has toponyms that emerged spontaneously throughout its history and were later made official by the City Council, and also by incorporating another systematic mechanism from neighborhoods created by private land allotments or roads opened in new stretches subdivided by the municipality, containing semantics units (toponymic areas) that do not translate, in fact, the popular will or the conscious work of a Toponymic Commission.

An important fact cannot be left out: this apparent anthro-toponymic homogeneity in the toponymy of São Paulo does not result only from pure homage, but is also associated with the use of the toponym such as a bargaining chip. The *anthro-toponymic homogenization* generates, with the vast number of public spaces<sup>22</sup>, the emergence of small onomastic islands in which the unofficial referential parallel toponyms are responsible for establishing spatial communication and location (the functions fulfilled by a toponym as a discursive element).

From this toponymic overview of São Paulo, it can be concluded that its vast onomastic richness is in the old center (and in the names of older regions and neighborhoods), with the streets that were opened in the early years of the city, referring to its colonial history and portraying the small incipient village. It can also be highlighted that the living phenomena in the current unofficial designation processes remain the same since centuries ago, considering the toponym as a linguistic tool to spatially anchor discourse. Finally, one can also notice the urgent need to create more stringent policies regarding the preservation of the toponymic memory not only of the city of São Paulo, but also of Brazilian cities as a whole.

<sup>22</sup> According to the Arquivo Histórico, São Paulo has more than 65,000 public spaces: streets, bridges, squares, and so on. [http://www.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/cidade/secretarias/cultura/arquivo\\_historico/acervos/index.php?p=6974](http://www.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/cidade/secretarias/cultura/arquivo_historico/acervos/index.php?p=6974) (accessed April 8, 2013).

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