

Fellipe Decrescenzo Andrade Amaral

The city before its patrimonialization: Urban configuration of Mucugê, Bahia, Brazil

La ciudad antes de su patrimonialización: La configuración urbana de Mucugê, Bahía, Brasil

A cidade antes da sua patrimonialização: Configuração urbana de Mucugê, Bahia, Brasil

Keywords | Palabras clave | Palavras chave

Urban pattern, Vernacular architecture, Brazilian architecture, Chapada Diamantina, Minas

Trama urbana, Arquitectura vernácula, Arquitectura brasileña, Chapada Diamantina, Minas

Tecido urbano, Arquitetura vernacular, Arquitetura Brasileira, Chapada Diamantina, Minas

Abstract | Resumen | Resumo

The discovery of diamonds in Mucugê so far exceeded any expectations that it overshadowed all other discoveries made in the region in previous years of the nineteenth century. They attracted thousands of people to this vernacular settlement that was set amid the rocky hills that characterize this region of Chapada Diamantina, in Brazil. Although it also received adventurers from other parts of Bahia, migrants from Minas were the ones who most influenced the new settlement – and, possibly, other urban sites that later appeared in Chapada. This work focuses on the study of Mucugê's natural site, the structure of its society, economy and culture, its urban form and the introduction of domestic and religious architecture into this ensemble; it analyzes Mucugê's urban configuration, revealing influences from Minas' earlier urban settlements that also arose out of mining activity. It also shows how Mucugê developed its own features, especially regarding the relationship between its architecture and the landscape.

Las expectativas despertadas por el hallazgo de diamantes en Mucugê ensombrecieron el resto de descubrimientos realizados en la zona en los años anteriores del siglo XIX. Los diamantes atrajeron a miles de personas a este asentamiento autóctono situado entre las colinas rocosas propias de la región de la Chapada Diamantina, en Brasil. Aunque hasta aquí llegaron aventureros de otras partes de Bahía, los emigrantes de Minas fueron los que más influyeron en el nuevo asentamiento y, probablemente, también en otras zonas urbanas que surgieron más tarde en Chapada. Así pues, centrándonos en el estudio de su emplazamiento natural, la conformación de su sociedad, su economía y su cultura, su forma urbana y la integración de la arquitectura doméstica y la religiosa en este conjunto, el trabajo analiza la configuración urbana de Mucugê y desentraña las influencias de asentamientos urbanos previos en Minas que

también surgieron por la actividad minera. Por otra parte, expone de qué forma Mucugê desarrolló sus rasgos propios, especialmente en cuanto a la relación de la arquitectura con el paisaje.

As expectativas pela descoberta de diamantes em Mucugê escureceu todas as outras descobertas feitas na região em anos anteriores do século XIX. Atraíu milhares de pessoas para esta povoação vernacular situada no meio das colinas rochosas que caracterizam esta região da Chapada Diamantina, no Brasil. Embora também tenha recebido aventureiros de outras partes da Bahia, foram os migrantes de Minas os que mais influenciaram a nova povoação – e, possivelmente, também outros núcleos urbanos que apareceram posteriormente na Chapada. Assim, centrando-se no estudo do seu sítio, na configuração da sua sociedade, economia e cultura, na sua forma urbana e na inserção da arquitetura doméstica e religiosa neste conjunto, este trabalho analisa a configuração urbana de Mucugê, desvendando influências anteriores dos núcleos urbanos de Minas que também se desenvolveram a partir da atividade mineradora. Expõe também como Mucugê desenvolveu as suas próprias características, especialmente no que diz respeito à relação da sua arquitetura com a paisagem.

Introduction

Arising from an intense population flow attracted by the discovery of diamonds in the middle of the nineteenth century, Mucugê developed quickly, built by the hands of the miners and adventurers who came from the most diverse places to the state of Bahia. Its period of economic prosperity, however, lasted just over a quarter of a century. With the decline of mining, the driving force behind that settlement, the city witnessed the exodus of a large part of its inhabitants during the twentieth century. Teodoro Sampaio (2002: 264), when passing by the village then called Santa Isabel do Paraguaçu, in 1880, observed the decline of mining activity and the increase in agriculture.

The emptying of the city during the twentieth century contributed to the preservation, with a certain degree of integrity, of the nineteenth century ensemble until the end of the 1970s, when a request was made for it to be listed. The end of this year will mark the fortieth anniversary of its listing, but the protection of ensembles such as Mucugê was only made possible by the *Venice Charter* of 1964 which disseminated an expanded concept of heritage and recognized urban and rural settings as historic monuments, as well as the modest works of the past. This gave rise to a greater scope of heritage preservation policies, but the topic of vernacular urban ensembles has remained practically absent from studies on the history of architecture and the city in Brazil. This work bears this in mind and, in addition to contributing to knowledge about this urban core, seeks to analyze its urban configuration, unraveling the possible influences of earlier mining urban centers.

It is worth mentioning that the term “Minas region” refers to the urban agglomerations that originated from gold mining, within the limits of the current state of Minas Gerais, which reached its greatest splendor during the eighteenth century; and that this agglomeration was delimited by Vasconcellos (1968) in a study that we take as a basis for understanding the characteristic features of those societies. Brito (2013) already pointed out how the patrimonialization of Bahia’s urban mining sites was based on their similarity to the urban sites of Minas. However, we will seek here to delve into the influences of mining on Mucugê’s urban configuration, possibly brought into the imagination of miners and adventurers who came to Bahia in search of better luck. Consequently, it might also have had an impact on its domestic and religious architecture, and the resulting urban landscape. As Lamas (2004: 111) argues, we can only speak about urban form with reference to a specific moment. The analysis of the urban form of Mucugê was therefore built on the configuration of the 1970s, seen in the works of the Inventory of Protection of the Cultural Collection of Bahia, of the same decade. At that point, it seems there is little difference from the configuration outlined during the second half of the nineteenth century, due to the decline of the town in the following century.

The natural site and its confinement

The development of the old Santa Isabel do Paraguaçu village allowed it to be recognised as a city in 1917, when it received the name of Mucugê. It is surrounded by high

rocky hills that make up part of the Serra do Sincorá. The terrain is similar to that of other mining regions: rocky, with low vegetation and barely usable from an agricultural point of view. Miners, as Teodoro Sampaio explained (2002: 242), occupied the relatively flat part of the valley alongside the Mucugê river – where, in 1844, the first diamonds had been discovered in that region, giving rise to the beginning of the occupation (Fig. 1).

In addition to the considerable height of the hills, the fact that they are so close together increases their scale and magnitude in relation to the small spaces occupied by the village, framing the urban spaces and scenarios that develop there. Towards the northwest, the access is through a narrow passage between the hills, and, to the northeast, by an elevation that ends in a vast plateau.

When crossing Chapada Diamantina in the nineteenth century, Teodoro Sampaio (2002: 241) already called attention to the confinement of that area, noting that the village lays “tight between rocky hills, almost stripped of vegetation”¹. This, however, is a usual configuration of mining lands. In his characterization essay about the *mineiridade*², Sylvio de Vasconcellos, when dealing with the geography of the gold mining region, highlights the relationship between these highlands and their inhabitants (1968: 37):

The mountain does not favor the communion of men or extroversion, nor the lassitude produced by the humid heats

Figure 1. View from Morro do Cruzeiro, with the setting of the city in “L” shape, Mucugê, state of Bahia (IPHAN Digital Collection)



nor the breadth of view of the great ocean horizons. The mountain, the continuous mountain ranges, are fetters, tend to imprisonment, favor melancholy, determine introversion. Bare, dark, with sharp tops, they constitute the stone landscape of the region. (...) The mountain is the enemy to overcome, the unworkable stone, the indomitable iron.

Even before the beginning of the occupation, German naturalists Johann Baptist von Spix and Carl Friedrich Philipp von Martius³ had already noted the presence of diamonds in those lands, when observing their similarity to the lands of the old camp of Tijuco, today Diamantina, Minas Gerais, the main center of diamond extraction in the eighteenth century. Despite having informed Sergeant Major Francisco José da Rocha Medrado, owner of most of those lands, mining did not prosper until the discovery of 1844 (Sampaio 2002: 258-259).

Notes on the social, economical and cultural structure

According to the region’s literature, when news spread that diamonds had been discovered on the Mucugê riverbed and the mines subsequently multiplied, there was an intense and rapid flow of about 25,000 people into the region (Bahia 1980; Sampaio 2002), with most of them inhabiting that space compressed between the adjacent hills. Arising from spontaneous and gradual processes of growth and development, Santa Isabel soon became the main center of diamond mining in the region and in the state of Bahia. To the farmers and enslaved people who already occupied the land, a large number of miners and adventurers searching for easy wealth was added. Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, in his famous book *Raízes do Brasil*, highlights the adventurous spirit brought with the Portuguese who came to occupy the country and which gained its own contours in Brazilian lands, highlighting the decisive influence that the taste of adventure had in our national life (2014: 53):

And isn't this eagerness for prosperity without sacrifice, honorable titles, easy positions and wealth, so notoriously characteristic of the people of our land? Is it not one of the crudest manifestations of the spirit of adventure? (...) Among a set of factors as diverse as the races that clashed here - the imported customs and patterns of existence, the mesological and climatic conditions that required a long process of adaptation - it was the orchestrating element par excellence.

Holanda (2014: 85) states that “the whole structure of our colonial society had its base outside urban areas”, pointing out that essential changes in this scenario only occurred after the abolition of slavery in 1888; however, Minas, in the middle of the eighteenth century, represented an exception to this agrarian civilization. Vasconcellos (1968: 28) states that Minas Gerais developed an “eminently urban civilization”, responsible for densifying the region and the colony through considerable and dynamic urban

groupings. This urbanity is also very present in Mucugê, since there – as in Minas – agriculture practically did not exist in great proportions before mining, and that there were also dynamic commercial relations, both for precious stones and for enslaved people; but the social and economic development of Chapada society was much closer to that of the Brazilian coastal societies.

As Sylvio de Vasconcellos (1968: 20) points out, gold mining activities in Minas took place at such a juncture in which land ownership did not depend on Royal favor, since the Crown was restricted only to organising the rapid and spontaneous occupation of those lands as well as it could. Social unevenness was minimal, since wealth was less concentrated than widespread. However, diamond mining in Mucugê took place in lands donated as a *sesmaria*⁴ to the aforementioned Rocha Medrado family, and with a social configuration similar to the aristocratic and patriarchal coastal societies, with large landowners exercising control over the area and exploiting the manual labor of both free and enslaved workers – here concerning the mining of diamonds and not the mills as in the capital, Salvador.

Thus, while in Minas a population developed with an “aspiration for freedom and independence”, crystallized in regular revolts and provided, among other things, with the purchasing power immediately obtained through the possession of gold (Vasconcellos 1968: 24-25), in Mucugê conveniences and privileges were maintained and traditional families remained dominant. This was organized through a paternalistic system, with *coronelismo*⁵ establishing power relations and customs that extended not only throughout the city, but throughout the whole Chapada region as well. Freyre (2009: 92-93) highlights that the mid-nineteenth century constitutes “a period in which various types of Brazilian patriarchalism were manifested: the agrarian, the pastoral, the urban (...)”.

In the famous novel *Cascalho*, published by Herberto Sales in 1944, we note the relationship of subservience and dependence between miners and colonels in the region, describing how much of the product of the arduous routine of these workers remained in the hands of the holders of land and power (Sales 1986: 28). This contrast in the appropriation of profits from mining, responsible in Minas for facilitating the social ascension of the miners and for allowing their individual qualities to flourish, also caused differences of cultural order between both societies. Vasconcellos (1968: 27) states that Minas’ situation resulted in “an increased capacity for consumption which facilitated the spread of art among an expanding bourgeoisie, to the detriment of the elites who had previously monopolised it, and an artistic freedom which developed into something bold and natural”.

Constituted as a society fed by many roots, sheltering Portuguese immigrants, both from the city and from the countryside, people of good nature, but also fugitives and

convicts, from the most diverse origins – Jewish, Christian, Muslim –, besides the enslaved people, in Minas, however, there were no minor cultural transpositions without local fermentation. The Baroque, for example, reaches miners, according to Vasconcellos (1968: 192), through the immigrants’ cultural tradition (Vasconcellos 1968: 49):

In them all there is a fusion of influences; like pollen carried across the ocean by winds from the Metropolis, from Africa, from distant Asia, germinating into seeds and flowers conditioned by the hard soil, sprouting a new species, a new people, a new culture, whose ripe fruits perfumed the second half of the eighteenth century.

Despite a certain erudite strain, the most impressive architectural manifestations of Minas emerge at a time when signs of decline were already beginning to be noticed in the local economy, which was based, as pointed out by Vasconcellos (1968: 156), “on the sweat of the inhabitants themselves”. Minas’ architecture was based on the search to combine various influences received in essential schemes, with a view to stripping and eliminating the expendable, in an incessant search for clarity. With an enormous awareness of purification, as the author points out, miners were able to conceive some of the most relevant artistic manifestations of Brazilian art, with Antônio Francisco Lisboa, Aleijadinho, who was perhaps its main exponent.

It is important to understand Minas’ social, economic and cultural structure because in the nineteenth century, when mines were already in complete decay, miners had to choose between turning again to land cultivation and to an agrarian life, or looking for luck elsewhere. Many turned to the coffee plantations to the south, but a certain portion, especially the adventurous miners – or their descendants – from the north of Minas (Medrado 1998: 19), emigrated to Bahia, starting to create, along with other adventurers from different parts of the country and the world, the mining society of Chapada Diamantina.

Reflections on Mucugê’s urban form

With a peculiar geological formation, cities that originated from mining – where this is often the only reason they were settled in such locations, as agriculture was inefficient – are usually located in areas of very rugged topography. As Rodrigo Baeta (2017: 336) points out, the city of Ouro Preto, formerly Vila Rica, in the gutter of Ribeirão do Funil valley, has a topography that is not smooth at all. The author states that these geographical accidents impose a series of irregularities on the city’s road system, forming steep slopes and tortuous streets. Despite the shape of mountains and the very rugged topography of the region, the confined area in which Mucugê is erected has a relatively flat configuration. However, despite this topographical difference in the layouts of both cities, there are countless similarities in how they developed.

Like the mining cities of the eighteenth century, Mucugê appears irregular, created from the camps that are formed close to the extraction sites. As a result of the determination of the people who decided to explore that place, paths which until then had been rural, soon became urban roads. Philippe Panerai (2006) emphasizes this strong relationship between road and city, where the road, in addition to supporting urbanization, also determines its form and logic (Panerai 2006: 17-18):

Forged by the journeys of animals, men and their caravans, the path has organized the territory since time immemorial; since the times of shepherds and nomads, the first farmers and the first conquerors. The path leads from one point to another, from one city to another, from one region to another, as well as providing access, at either end, to land, fields, lots, inhabited places.

Just as the urban settlements of Minas have a longitudinal configuration, although located mid-slope or on a ridge (which is preferable in Minas for the paths), the city of Mucugê is also not affected by the radio-centric schemes implemented by the Portuguese on the coast (Fig. 2), and also develops in a linear way, in the middle of a flat site in the valley, where two straight streets converge at an angle of almost 90 degrees, one coming from the entrance to the northeast and the other coming from the narrow passage to the northwest.

The streets, which are also the road itself, both the entrance and the exit to the newly formed village, do not run in the same direction as the so-called “trunk road” of old Vila Rica (Fig. 3). They meet perpendicularly just to accommodate themselves to the direction already predefined by the valley, as indicated by Vasconcellos over Vila Rica, “two points of the same road that is being occupied, each one moving towards the other, until they meet” (1968: 88).

Thus, as Lamas states, “the site already contains in many cases the genesis and the generating potential of the built

forms, by pointing out a path, by expressing a place” (2004: 63). The urban form of Mucugê is inseparable from its site, from its geographic support. Its irregular layout rejects the geometric trends that marked European colonial urbanism, establishing a clear relationship between the city and its territory, highlighting the importance of route, of displacement. On a much smaller scale than Minas’ towns, especially old Vila Rica, Mucugê’s urban fabric has expanded to just over a dozen secondary roads. This timid road formation can be inferred both from the reports of Teodoro Sampaio (2002), and from the map prepared in the Inventory, created during the 1970s and published in 1980, under the coordination of Paulo Ormino David de Azevedo (Fig. 4).

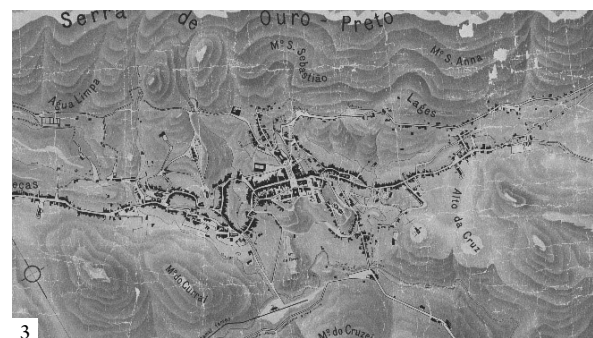
However, something both coastal and mining urbanizations have in common, and which was still in use in Mucugê in the middle of the nineteenth century, is the construction of buildings occupying the front and side limits of the lot. The lots have narrow front dimensions, since they only have ‘one’ street available, developing more towards the back where they reach lengths three or four times greater than their front dimensions. Thus, although attached together, there is a strong harmony between each new building that emerges and the pre-existing ones; a vernacular characteristic of building in harmony with the landscape. The streets gradually received a rudimentary stone pavement. Like in cities of the Brazilian colonial period, they consisted of continuous surfaces with very few interruptions, due to the frontal and lateral alignment of buildings, and marked by the proximity between the coloring of their façades.

Despite being enclosed between high and rocky hills, we disagree with Teodoro Sampaio (2002: 241) when he affirms that “there is nothing picturesque about the village, nor is it an adequate place for the seat of a city”. Although Vasconcellos (1968: 38) highlights the troubled relationship of miners with the mountains and Sampaio himself (2002: 241) highlights that the hills oppress the village by “damaging” its horizons, today the inhabitants



Figure 2. Bahia’s restitution plan, 1631. View of Salvador, first capital of Brazil, founded in 1549 by Tomé de Souza. (Drawing made by João Teixeira Albernaz, available at: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Planta_da_Restituição_da_BAHIA_por_João_Teixeira_Albernaz.jpg, consulted on 15/08/2020)

Figure 3. Ouro Preto city plan of 1888, and the so called “trunk road”, state of Minas Gerais (Monumenta, IPHAN 2008: 4)



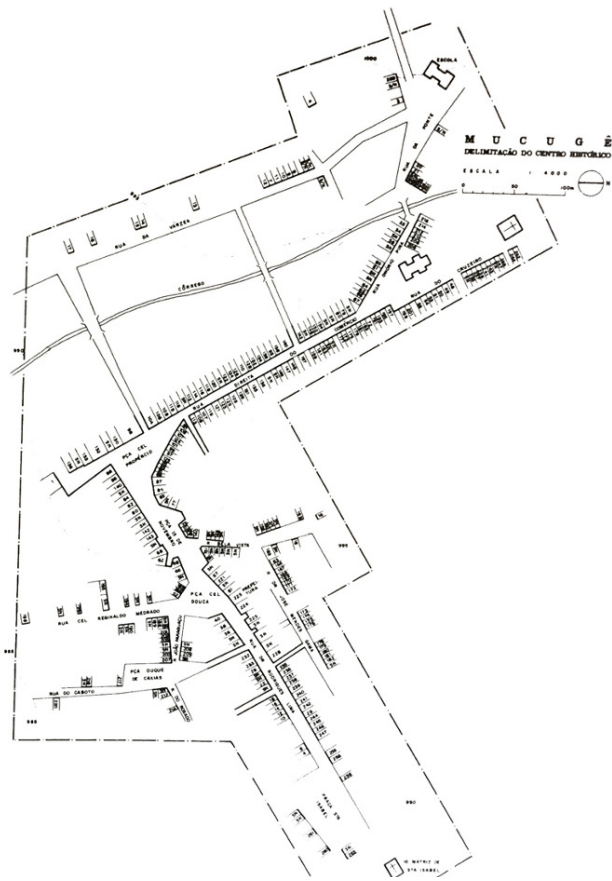


Figure 4. Map elaborated during the work of the Inventory of Protection of the Cultural Collection of Bahia (Bahia 1980: 260)

of these regions have a very different relationship to the land. Men no longer depend on the luck of mining for their livelihood, and are much less inclined to place exorbitant hopes on the land, so their relationship with the landscape and the land itself has become much more one of affection than aversion.

Figure 5. Miners' house Built under the stone vault with dry stone technique, Mucugê, state of Bahia, no date (IPHAN Digital Collection)



In fact, as the soil is infertile, they may never have built a city there were it not for mining. However, the simplicity of its domestic and religious architecture and its interaction with the natural environment has a clear artistic dimension, there is an almost poetic compositional relationship with the valley in which it is inserted. This relationship is so intense that it allowed this architectural and landscape ensemble to be recognized as national heritage, subtly and elegantly described by Paulo Ormino Azevedo, in the correspondence attached to its listing process⁶, when he affirmed that “naturally the great baroque churches of Minas Gerais are not found there, but a very harmonious ensemble of spontaneous architecture in which man only completes the work of nature”.

Domestic architecture and its expressions

Due to the rapid multiplication of mines, the first temporary shelters were simple constructions in stone masonry, which were roofed with straw or took advantage of natural caves instead, sometimes even combining both solutions (Fig. 5). This more primitive type of dwelling, known as *loca* or *toca*, was possibly used by the miners who first arrived there and needed quick shelter: Nevertheless, it was gradually replaced by stone and/or adobe houses.

Long before being considered a collective asset, the heritage of a certain society, many buildings and cities were already inspiring contributions to the literature on cities. It was not the case of Mucugê. Mucugê's built literature was written by the hands of miners and travelers who first arrived there – also understanding the unquestionable importance of slave labour in the construction of Brazilian cities. The local population, imbued by the knowledge transmitted by their ancestors – most of them from other mining lands – used the materials that this land best provided them with: stone and clay.

For Paulo Ormino, domestic architecture was the most important artistic expression of Chapada's societies (Bahia 1980: 21). Although in the second half of the nineteenth century the architecture that was made in larger cities no longer followed colonial standards, Mucugê's vernacular architecture emerged still imbued with these ancient patterns. They continued to be echoed throughout that century and the beginning of the twentieth century, in various corners of Brazil, as a reflection of traditional knowledge, which, in the case of Mucugê, was brought by miners, especially those from Minas Gerais. It is similar to mining architecture not just in its irregular plot, but also in the predominance of voids, the relations between the building and the lot, the existence of lookouts as a kind of a third floor and the use of elements such as guillotine windows, roofs with only two slopes – facing the street and the bottom of the lot – as well as in their construction typologies, such as the use of wooden structures with walls made in *pau-a-pique* or adobe, the most used construction

system in all of Minas region, as attested by Sylvio de Vasconcellos (1968: 47) (Fig. 6).

Mucugê's listed ensemble, in addition to the famous Brazilian door and window houses described by Louis Vauthier on his trip around the country, has other significant typologies, such as larger residential buildings, commercial buildings⁷, two churches and some *sobrados*⁸ – which reflect the economic power of some families who controlled the place, both economically and politically. When looking at the photos in the Inventory and the photos available in IPHAN's Digital Collection, dated mostly from the end of the 1970s – a few years before the listing – there is a clear dissonance between the modest residential buildings and the three most prominent *sobrados*, all belonging to deceased colonels of the aforementioned most powerful family. Paulo Ormino states that *sobrados* are not common amid the single-storey houses in the Chapada Diamantina region, with the exception of the city of Lençóis, due to its topographical particularities (In Bahia 1980: 21). It is worth mentioning, although we shall not go into more detail here, that we also understand that power and trade relations – those based mainly on the diamond trade – had a major impact on the typologies and spatial configurations of the houses⁹(Fig. 7).

Regarding the vernacular residential typologies in general, they show notable similarities with the patterns of domestic architecture produced during the colonial period. Living rooms usually occupy the front of the buildings and kitchens occupy the back, with bedrooms in between. In this way, corridors that connect the entrance/living room with the kitchen span the entire length of the house. In smaller houses the corridors are attached to one of the side walls, with bedrooms on the other side. In larger houses, they are located in the center, with rooms on both sides. Thus, houses' rooms develop perpendicularly to the street. Few homes have a different spatial arrangement¹⁰. Nery

and Amaral (2020) (Fig. 8) had already explained the motivation behind the scarce homes with rooms placed parallel to the street, as mentioned above.

With a setting similar to that seen in towns and cities of the colonial period, streets were defined by buildings, and buildings defined according to the streets. Attached construction, in addition to providing greater structural stability, also provided greater protection to the side-gables. Nevertheless, the horizontal configuration of the ensemble, combined with the limits conferred by the physical environment, and in addition to providing the feeling of confinement as observed by Sampaio (2002: 241), also produces exceptional scenarios and visuals, unique structures in each corner of the city.

Mucugê was an important centre of Bahia's diamond business of the nineteenth century, and acquired enormous value mainly due to the association of its built ensemble with the natural environment in which it is inserted. This adaptation to the environment occurs not only due to its setting, accommodating itself gently to the rugged topography of the surroundings, but also through the use of techniques and materials available in the region. The drystone technique, embedded without mortar, was used for building the *locas* – no longer seen near the city centre – of some houses, and today it is still used for the construction of walls outside the houses. Earth was the most commonly used material for houses, using both *pau-a-pique* and the adobe technique. The roofs, originally made of straw, were later replaced by roofs with ceramic tiles. The good quality of local materials, as attested by Lins and Santana (2017), was central to the symbiosis between the ensemble and the rocky environment.

The architecture of Minas is derived from a melting pot of influences, yet it has its own individuality that is neither scholarly nor totally popular; different, as highlighted by

Figure 6. Residential ensemble of Direita do Comércio street, Mucugê, state of Bahia, 1978 (IPHAN Digital Collection)



Figure 7. *Sobrado* between the ground floor houses in Coronel Douca Medrado square, Mucugê, state of Bahia, 1978 (IPHAN Digital Collection)



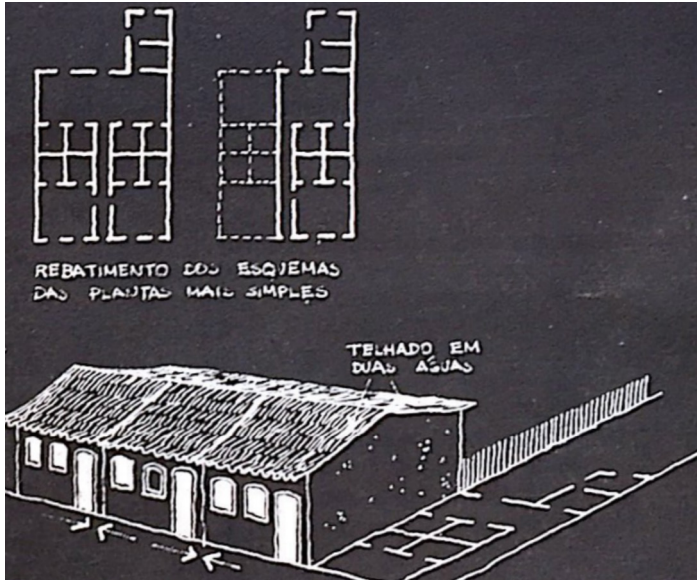


Figure 8. Simplest and most typical plan scheme from the colonial period (Reis Filho 1987: 31)

Vasconcellos (1968: 102), to that of any other Brazilian architecture of the period. Its grace lies neither in São Paulo's robustness, nor in Bahia's refinement. Minas therefore has a clear and prevalent influence on the architecture of Mucugê, which reaches Chapada through its people, and their tradition and memory. Once in Mucugê, a diverse social, economic and cultural context led to an unpretentious and plain development; it never reached a significant level of erudition, nor even the bold and magnificent solutions found by the people of Minas, but connected itself with the natural environment in a unique way.

Figure 9. São Francisco de Assis Church, Ouro Preto, state of Minas Gerais (Photograph by Rodrigo Argenton. Available at: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Igreja_de_São_Francisco_de_Assis_\(Ouro_Preto,_MG\)_por_Rodrigo_Tetsuo_Argenton.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Igreja_de_São_Francisco_de_Assis_(Ouro_Preto,_MG)_por_Rodrigo_Tetsuo_Argenton.jpg), consulted on 13/08/2020)

Figure 10. Partial view of Ouro Preto and Nossa Senhora do Carmo Church, implanted on a prominent place of the topography, state of Minas Gerais (Photograph by Adriano Oliveira, available at: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vista_de_Ouro_Preto.jpg, consulted on 13/08/2020)



9



10

Religious architecture and the structure of town squares

As in Minas (Figs. 9 and 10), the church appears here as an affirmation of popular faith, distant from other buildings, and although it plays a major role in the urban setting, it is architecturally conceived in a simplistic, humble, modest and graceful way, without pretensions of architectural grandeur. Nevertheless, even the first chapels in Minas Gerais, although simple externally, had a certain refinement in their internal spaces (Vasconcellos 1968: 192-193). This is not the case in Mucugê. Mucugê's churches were also not built in prominent points of the city's topography, but on the same level as the whole ensemble.

The historic city centre has two churches: Santo Antônio Church and Santa Isabel Mother Church, which was built between 1852 and 1855, and recently restored by IPHAN in 2014. The stylistic and compositional transformations that Minas' churches underwent, from the economic and cultural development of their society and builders, had no place in this simple urban settlement in Chapada. Both churches, despite their modest conception, suggest simple interpretations of scholarly models and ideas. The Mother Church, for example, structured in three internal aisles with a rectangular plan, has its composition topped off with a triangular pediment and bells which try to imitate two towers, naively appropriating elements in an attempt to produce a neoclassical facade (Fig. 11).

Mucugê's urban form expresses its own specific aesthetic intentions, and the insertion of this religious architecture at either end of the two main roads, marking the limits of the city, is perhaps the only example here of the sort of baroque urban culture that inspired certain mining towns in Minas and in Salvador's historic center; or at least its approach to framing and perspective. In fact, the long straight streets that make up the route already favored the arrangement of important buildings highlighted with the perspective, and promoting the creation of distinctive events in the urban landscape. The two churches were then placed, with almost

millimetric accuracy, into the perspective escape points of the Direita do Comércio and Rodrigues Lima streets, framed by the continuous surfaces formed by the street and by the facades of houses on both sides. In doing so, they present themselves to the pedestrian right from the beginning of the street, even if one does not aim to reach them (Fig. 12).

Perhaps this explains the absence of religious buildings in the city's main square. Squares, usually showing some intentionality and arranged as a purposeful place for meeting, for the occurrences of life in the city, have always hosted many of the principal activities of urban centers. While religious architecture was inserted into more persuasive places, with greater visual interest, only private buildings, mostly residential, are to be found in the two main squares of Mucugê – Coronel Propércio and Coronel Douca Medrado squares. They both have an irregular layout and their boundaries are defined by the existing façades. It is noteworthy that, although some houses of these two squares started to perform public functions over time, they originally emerged as residences for wealthy colonels.

In addition to both churches, Santa Isabel Cemetery, built in the last decades of the nineteenth century, deserves special mention due to its unique condition. Its setting, framed alongside the churches, represents two monumental experiences provided by the configuration of Mucugê's city environment. When emphasizing the banality of death for the inhabitant of Minas, Vasconcellos (1968: 32-33) affirms that "the cemetery leaves the countryside to be urbanized, architecturally, in the graves of the Churches or in the drawers of the city necropolises". However, in Mucugê the cemetery displays features that are difficult to find elsewhere (Figs. 13 and 14).

Set in the foothill of one of the surrounding hills, popularly known as Morro do Cruzeiro, the whitewashed mausoleums, built on the rocks, also display naive stylistic interpretations – this time neo-Gothic, although it is curiously known as the "Byzantine Cemetery". However, its appearance is so unique that it was listed together with the ensemble, and is now one of the most important legacies of that mining society.

Figure 11. Santa Isabel Mother Church, Mucugê, state of Bahia, 1978 (IPHAN Digital Collection)



Final considerations

Although emerged from an intense population flow attracted by mining, Mucugê's urban core has never reached the level of development of Minas' towns; this is true socially and culturally speaking, but also economically. Reflecting the traditional knowledge brought by adventurers who came to live here, we understand its built ensemble as the materialization of an essentially vernacular architecture, influenced much more by Minas' architecture than by the architecture found in Bahia during that period. However, it did not reach the same levels of development and even architectural erudition, especially regarding religious architecture, as can be found in Minas.

Nevertheless, the influences from Minas in its urban configuration are countless, such as its longitudinal arrangement, its irregular form, the way buildings were positioned in the lots, the vernacular residential typologies and the elements, techniques and materials used in Mucugê in a manner much more simple than bold, with sometimes naive interpretations of scholarly models. However, as in Minas, the cultural transpositions in Mucugê are not simple. Even with the strong influence of Minas Gerais, Mucugê architecture has its own features, adopting the particular architectural typologies of the region, as shown by Nery and Amaral (2020); this is apparent above all in the way in which houses interact with the surrounding physical environment, in the urban form and the effects of its configuration on a relatively flat terrain, and in the structure of its religious architecture, including the churches which complete its urban form, and the cemetery with its peculiar setting, embedded in the hill.

¹ All the texts quoted here from their Portuguese version were translated by the author.

² Brazilian word to say something about the condition of being from Minas Gerais, a *mineiro*. The word is composed by adding a suffix similar to -ness in English, transforming the adjective *mineiro* into a noun.

³ Spix and Martius were two of the most important foreign travelers of the nineteenth century who landed in Brazil, where they traveled between 1817 and 1820, and whose exploration of Brazilian fauna and flora yielded several publications and scientific productions.

Figure 12. Santa Isabel Mother Church marking the focal point of the perspective through the axis of Dr. Rodrigues Lima street, Mucugê, state of Bahia (Bahia 1980: 259)





13

Figure 13. Santa Isabel Cemetery, Mucugê, state of Bahia, 1974 (IPHAN Digital Collection)



14

Figure 14. Santa Isabel Cemetery, Mucugê, state of Bahia, 2019

⁴ Instrument used by the Portuguese Crown to distribute lands for agricultural production, assigning to individuals the function of organizing food production.

⁵ Social and political organization commonly found in rural and small towns, mainly during the Old Republic (1889-1930), where an elite, embodied by the figure of the landowner, controls the means of production, holding local economic, social and political power, in the figure of the colonel.

⁶ In 1980, the “Architectural and Landscape Ensemble, especially the Cemetery, of the City of Mucugê” was listed by the National Historical and Artistic Heritage Institute (IPHAN), under the code 974-T/78 and inscribed in the Archaeological, Ethnographic and Landscape Listing Book.

⁷ It’s important to note that even commercial buildings, whose façades only have doors into the business inside, are a kind of dwelling with a residence located on the ground floor behind the shops.

⁸ Word to define a building with one or more floors and occupying a large area, in contrast to the other popular residential buildings of the colonial period which are usually single-story, and which reflect a turn towards urbanization in Brazil.

⁹ In this regard, see Nery and Amaral (2020).

¹⁰ It is important to understand that the most common residential typologies do not correspond to rigid and fixed models, but rather to the predominant arrangements that spread out through the territory and made up most of the built environment. They are residential types that characterize the very physiognomy of our culture, as defined by Gilberto Freyre (1971: 53). Evidently, predecessor types such as the *Casa Grande*, came from another organizational structure. Even in more urbanized areas, other different typologies coexisted with these *sobrados* and urban single-story houses, such as buildings with four roof slopes, buildings that allowed and witnessed the appearance of porches, or even the *mucambos*, whose roofs were usually made of straw and had two pitches, with a ridge perpendicular to the front façade.

Bibliography | Bibliografía | Bibliografia

Baeta, Rodrigo. 2017. *A cidade barroca na Europa e na América Ibérica*. Salvador: Edufba.

Bahia, Secretaria da Indústria e Comércio (ed.). 1980. *Inventário de proteção do acervo cultural: monumentos e sítios da Serra Geral e Chapada Diamantina*. Salvador: SPHAN/Estado da Bahia.

Brito, Carolino. 2013. Cidades históricas da Chapada Diamantina: patrimônio baiano ou mineiro?. *Revista Espacialidades*, vol. 6, S: 102-129.

Freyre, Gilberto. 1971. *A casa brasileira*. Rio de Janeiro: Grifo.

Freyre, Gilberto. 2009. *Vida social no Brasil nos meados do século XIX*. São Paulo: Global.

Holanda, Sérgio Buarque de. 2014. *Raízes do Brasil*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.

Lamas, José. 2004. *Morfologia urbana e desenho da cidade*. Porto: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia.

Lins, Eugênio; and Santana, Mariely (coord.). 2017. *Mestres artificiais: Bahia, Cadernos de memória 4*. Salvador: Halley.

Medrado, Helena. 1998. *Mucugê e sua história*. Salvador: Littera.

Monumenta, IPHAN. 2008. *Ouro Preto. Minas Gerais*. Brasília: IPHAN.

Nery, Juliana; and Amaral, Fellipe. 2020. As expressões da arquitetura popular de Mucugê e sua importância na configuração da cidade. In *2º Seminário Arquitetura Vernácula, Anais eletrônicos*. Belo Horizonte: Escola de Arquitetura da UFMG.

Panerai, Philippe. 2006. *Análise urbana*. Brasília: Editora Universidade de Brasília.

Reis Filho, Nestor Goulart. 1987. *Quadro da arquitetura no Brasil*. São Paulo: Perspectiva.

Sales, Herberto. 1968. *Cascalho*. São Paulo: Círculo do livro.

Sampaio, Teodoro. 2002. *O rio São Francisco e a Chapada Diamantina*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.

Vasconcellos, Sylvio de. 1968. *Mineiridade: ensaio de caracterização*. Belo horizonte: Imprensa Oficial.

Biography | Biografía | Biografia

Fellipe Decrescenzo Andrade Amaral

He is a Master’s student at the Postgraduate Program in Architecture and Urbanism at the Universidade Federal da Bahia (PPG-AU/UFBA), with a focus on Conservation and Restoration, and a member of the “Arquitetura popular: espaços e saberes” and “Barroco Ibero-Americano: Arquitetura e Cidade” research groups. He was a visiting student (2014-2015) at the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) in Chicago, with a scholarship granted by the CAPES Foundation through the Science Without Borders program.