

**TEXTO PARA DISCUSSÃO V. 22**

SÉRIE 3 – IDENTIFICAÇÃO DO PATRIMÔNIO CULTURAL

**CHALLENGES AT THE INTERFACE OF INTERPRETATION ON THE  
CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE: THE CASE OF THE  
ISTHMUS OF OLINDA AND RECIFE - BRASIL**

**Virgínia Pontual**

**Anna Elizabeth de Azevedo**

**Flaviana Lira**

**Magna Milfont**

**Renata Cabral**



## Centro de Estudos Avançados da Conservação Integrada

### Missão

O CECI tem como missão promover a conscientização, o ensino e a pesquisa sobre a conservação integrada urbana e territorial dentro da perspectiva do desenvolvimento sustentável. Suas atividades são dirigidas para a comunidade técnica e acadêmica brasileira e internacional

### Diretoria

Jorge Eduardo Tinoco, Diretor Geral  
Mônica Harchambois, Diretor  
Juliana Barreto, Diretor  
Flaviana Lira, Diretor

### Conselho de administração

Silvio Mendes Zancheti, Presidente  
Tomás de Albuquerque Lapa  
Ana Rita Sá Carneiro  
Fernando Diniz Moreira  
Virginia Pitta Pontual

### Suplentes

Luis de La Mora  
Fernando Diniz  
Norma Lacerda

### Conselho fiscal

Vera Milet Pinheiro, Presidente  
Natália Vieira  
Norma Lacerda

### Suplentes

Fátima Alves Mafra  
Magna Milfont  
Rosane Piccolo

### Texto para Discussão

Publicação com o objetivo de divulgar os estudos desenvolvidos pelo CECI nas áreas da Gestão da Conservação Urbana e da Gestão do Restauro.

As opiniões emitidas nesta publicação são de responsabilidade exclusiva dos autores, não exprimindo, necessariamente, o ponto de vista do Centro de Estudos Avançados da Conservação Integrada.

É permitida a reprodução do conteúdo deste texto, desde que sejam devidamente citadas as fontes. Reproduções para fins comerciais são proibidas.

### Editores

#### Gestão da Conservação Urbana

Natália Vieira, Renata Cabral e Vera Milet Pinheiro

#### Gestão de Restauro

Jorge Eduardo L. Tinoco, Mônica Harchambois e Roberto Dantas de Araújo

#### Identificação do Patrimônio Cultural

Ana Rita Sá Carneiro, Magna Milfont e Virginia Pontual

### Centro de Estudos Avançados da Conservação Integrada

Rua Sete de Setembro, 80  
Olinda – PE  
53020-130 – Brasil  
Tel/Fax.: (55 81) 3429-1754  
[textos@ceci-br.org](mailto:textos@ceci-br.org)  
[www.ceci-br.org](http://www.ceci-br.org)

### FICHA BIBLIOGRÁFICA

**Autor:** Virginia Pontual, Anna Elizabeth de Azevedo, Flaviana Lira, Magna Milfont, Renata Cabral.

**Título:** CHALLENGES AT THE INTERFACE OF INTERPRETATION ON THE CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE: THE CASE OF THE ISTHMUS OF OLINDA AND RECIFE - BRASIL

**Editora:** Centro de Estudos Avançados da Conservação Integrada

**Tipo da publicação:** Textos para Discussão – Série 3 – Identificação do Patrimônio Cultural

**Local e ano de publicação:** Olinda, 2007

**ISSN:** 1980-8267

# CHALLENGES AT THE INTERFACE OF INTERPRETATION ON THE CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE: THE CASE OF THE ISTHMUS OF OLINDA AND RECIFE - BRASIL

Virgínia Pontual<sup>1</sup>,

Anna Elizabeth de Azevedo, Flaviana Lira, Magna Milfont, Renata Cabral<sup>2</sup>.

**Abstract:** Currently, it has become evident that there is a growing interest in knowledge about cultural heritage, but verifies that don't exist the methods relatives of historical identification. For it is history which can reveal the culture of a place, by establishing with it a relationship of identity and values which can show the meanings expressed across the centuries. This identity is intimately bound up with memory whose link to the present day comes about by means of constantly interpreting the past. These are the new understandings which represent the tools needed to relate a historical narrative which might manage to reach a target public, to reconstruct the forgotten identity of the place and of the collective memory. Within the existing methodologies which converge on the problematics cited, that of interpretative planning by Goodey (2002) and Murta (1995 and 2002) is the main starting point. It permits the identification of the cultural heritage, but not the association with how to give value based on criteria, according to Riegl (1999). The discussion of these conceptual and doctrinal challenges is undertaken by taking the Isthmus of Olinda and Recife as an empirical reference since it possesses a significant history, which has been the object of federal preservation orders and international recognition.

**Key words:** identification, cultural heritage, history, Isthmus, Olinda, Recife.

## INTRODUCTION

Currently, it has become evident that there is a growing interest in knowledge about cultural heritage as an act of recalling the experiences of other times. Yet governmental institutions have not gone beyond the action of merely classifying and safeguarding this heritage. What is problematic is the gap of historical identification, for it is history which can reveal the culture of a place, by establishing with it a relationship of identity and values

---

<sup>1</sup> She holds a doctorate in urban history. Professor and research fellow at the Centre for Advanced Studies in Integrated Conservation (CECI in Port.) and of the Program for Post-graduate studies in Urban Development (MDU) of UFPE, Brazil. This paper has been prepared by the members of the community for the Service of Identification and Authentication of Cultural Heritage (SIAC) of CECI, and consists of results from research financed by the Fund for Culture (FUNCULTURA) of the State Government of Pernambuco.

<sup>2</sup> Research fellows at the Centre for Advanced Studies in Integrated Conservation (CECI), holding the following academic degrees: Master's Renata Cabral (urban planning) and Anna Elizabeth de Azevedo (historian); is undertaking a doctorates Magna Milfont (historian) and Flaviana Lira (urban planning) .

which can show the meanings expressed across the centuries. This identity is intimately bound up with memory whose link to the present day comes about by means of constantly interpreting the past. Using these values, it is possible to get close to “the democratization of knowledge about the past and recognition of the different voices which translate it into the present”, as pointed up by Doia Freire and Lígia Leite Pereira (2002: p. 128). These are the new understandings which represent the tools needed to relate a historical narrative which might manage to reach a target public, to reconstruct the forgotten identity of the place and of the collective memory of the legends and folklore.

However, the conceptual framework for interpretative planning and integrated conservation have been set in order to respond to the demands relative to distinct disciplinary fields. Therefore they do not display the interfaces needed for dealing with the current complexity of safeguarding historical places.

Within the existing methodologies which converge on the problematics cited, that of interpretative planning by Goodey (2002) and Murta (1995 and 2002) is the main starting point. It permits the identification of the cultural heritage, but not the association with how to give value based on criteria, according to Riegl (1999). The discussion of these conceptual and doctrinal challenges is undertaken by taking the Isthmus of Olinda and Recife as an empirical reference since it possesses a significant history, which has been the object of federal preservation orders and international recognition.

The Isthmus which joins the towns was a small tongue of sand which went from the Fort of Brum, Recife, to the Beach of Milagres (Miracles), Olinda. When the tide was in, it separated the two towns, transforming Recife into an island. The sand of the isthmus, besides being a temporary quay for small canoes, was also an unmade road which, at low tide, travellers walked across to gain access to the two towns. In addition to being a causeway, the Isthmus was a place of defence for the two towns, on which a belt of fortifications and small batteries kept guard. From the Portuguese occupation in the early 16th century, the strategy for the defence of the Captaincy of Pernambuco was concentrated on this tongue of land, and gave rise to more effective occupation with the Dutch invasion of 1630.

Fishermen, boatmen and others with small craft were concentrated on the shores of Recife and found the Isthmus gave the support needed for their tasks of transporting people and merchandise along the Rivers Capibaribe and Beberibe. During the 18th and 19th centuries, the boatmen multiplied their journeys thus making an important link with the

Isthmus. Most of them were freed blacks and slaves who established at this location their fantasy world of legends, peopled by evil doers and stories of crimes.

The meanings given to the Isthmus of Olinda and Recife are found nowadays, but without connection to their origins in the past. The reform of the Port of Recife which broke off the Isthmus in the early 20th century, besides destroying the strip of land which joined the two towns, also wiped out the “sense of place” present in the history, memory and identity of Olinda and Recife. Therefore to reconstitute this “sense” or “senses” is another challenge for the interpretation and conservation of cultural heritage.

### **REVEALING PLACE BY MEANS OF HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION**

Throughout the 17th century, the Isthmus of Olinda and Recife kept its main features of being a strip of sandy land with a longitudinal and narrow shape, dotted with very few built elements – each well apart from the next-, which was pounded by the sea to the east and by the waters of the Beberibe to the west, the banks of which had vegetation. The Isthmus was connected to the south with the town of Recife and to the north with the town of Olinda. The structures skirting the Isthmus were also maintained unaltered throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> century: the reefs, the sandbars, the anchorages, the River Beberibe.

This revelation given by the iconography of the 17th century permits the observation of the essentially natural character of the strip of sandy land and of its importance from the point of view of defence, an indicator brought to bear by the design of the forts. It was, also, in the approaches to this strip that vessels from overseas weighed anchor at specific points of unworked rock as described by 16<sup>th</sup> century travellers. In the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, ships began to take their bearings from a cross erected on the Isthmus, probably built by some harbour-master of the Port of Recife<sup>3</sup>.

One can see on a 1626 map, drawn up by João Teixeira Albernaz I, entitled "Todas as fortificações que se mostraõ do lugar do Recife até a Villa de Olinda e ainda adiãte até o Rio tapado de trincheiras Redutos e Plataformas que se estendem pormaes de huã legoa de terra se fezeraõ por mandado e Ordem do Governador Geral Mathias de Albuquerque na oCasiaõ

---

<sup>3</sup> Pereira da Costa (1917: 141-142) states that “the monument designated by the name Cruz do Patrão-Mór, which seems to indicate the Cross was built by some patrão-Mór (harbour master) of the port of Recife, this post having existed at least since 1654”.

em que os olandezes tomaraõ a Bahia"<sup>4</sup> (fig.01), in the foreground, the reefs are represented, partially jutting out, (the dark band to the left of the Fort of Picão) and partially submerged (the light band to the right of the Fort of Picão). Between the reefs jutting out and the Fort of Picão is to be found the “Barra” (“Sandbar”), the main access entrance to the anchorage which in this stretch is denominated the “Poço” (“Well”). Now on the extreme left of the “reef which also juts out” there is another access – a narrower one – the “Barreta” (“Little Sandbar”). On the Isthmus, represented on this map as being short and wide, there appear only two built elements: the Fort of Terra (Earth) or São Jorge (St George), and a cross, which is already present in cartography of 1609 and is situated between this fort and the “Settlement of Recife” (the small town). The Isthmus of Olinda and Recife appears, on the side of the River Beberibe, with vegetation along its banks and on the sea side it is sub-titled “beach”. This strip of land which connects Recife and Olinda and is bounded by the sea and the river seems to display, in the drawing, a continuity with the sands in front of the hill. On this stretch of beach, there is a fence which has characteristics of a palisade, according to Reis Filho (2000)<sup>5</sup>. It is interesting to observe that Olinda is drawn in a triangular shape, which, still according to Reis Filho (2000), may signify the recognition of the geographical situation of the place. Smaller vessels are crossing the river between Recife and Olinda, an indication that this was an important means of communication between the two towns.

On a 1630 map<sup>6</sup>, entitled "Porto e Barra de Pernãbvco"<sup>7</sup> (fig. 02), also by João Teixeira Albernaz I, one sees, as on the previous map, in the foreground, the entrance of Barra, represented by the breach between the reefs and by the drawing of a ship. The reefs to the right of the Barra appear as the less defined lines of the drawing and with staining, indicating that they are submerged, unlike the stretch on the left of the Barra. Between the “Settlement of Recife” and the “Town of Olinda” there is the Isthmus, now with a new built element, the Fort of Brum, to the right of the Fort of Terra (Earth) or São Jorge (St. George). Differently from the cartography shown earlier, which is by the same author, on this map, the Isthmus is represented as elongated and narrow, but in proportion to the real dimension. The relation of the Isthmus with the town of Olinda is also different, since on the 1626 map the protective palisade of the town did not separate the sandy shoreline of the hill, as

---

<sup>4</sup> "All the fortifications which will be shown from the settlement of Recife to the town of Olinda and beyond to the River covered with trenches Redoubts and Platforms which extend for another league of land, were carried out at the behest and Order of Governor General Mathias de Albuquerque on the occasion that the Dutch took Bahia"

<sup>5</sup> Sub-title of Figure 60 of the CD which accompanies the book Images of towns and cities of Colonial Brazil.

<sup>6</sup> 1630 is the date the map was drawn up while 1631 is when it was published. This map is the work of the Portuguese cartographer João Teixeira Albernaz I.

<sup>7</sup> "Port and Sandbar of Pernambuco"

appears on this 1630 map. It bears, in this sense, signs that the causeway along the Isthmus was not always a privileged place of communication between Recife and Olinda, a clue that is added to that given by the drawing of small craft on the Beberibe, indicating the presence of river transport at this point in time.

The Cross between the Fort of Terra (Earth) and the town of Recife, which appears in previous maps, does not appear here, this perhaps being an indication that it no longer was in existence at that time.

Still in the 17th century, a 1641 (1648) map entitled "de haven van Pharnambucq (1), Maritius Stad (2), Recif in (3) de Stad Olinda" (fig. 03), authored by Cornelis Bastiaenz Golyath, shows a new built element, the Fort of Buraco<sup>8</sup>, to the right of the Fort of Brum. In this cartographic work, which includes the maps of Olinda and Recife and the plans for developing the latter, one sees, on the first plain, the whole line of reefs, the submerged stretch represented by dots. Between Recife and Olinda, both walled – there is the Isthmus, slim and elongated, with its shape delineated by the contrast with the colour given to the waters of the sea and river. The Isthmus, in this drawing, at one portion, stretches out into the Beberibe.

In the cartography of the 18th century, note is taken of more significant alterations on the Isthmus, with the town of Recife and chiefly its port expanding towards it. The Port which contributed to the growth of the two towns comes to define the sense of the place together with that of defence. The architect, José Luís Mota Menezes (2000: p. 138) in describing the formation of the towns of Recife and Olinda between 1537 and 1630, demonstrates the sense of natural port which included not only the peninsula of Recife, but also its Isthmus: "As Olinda was the capital of the Captaincy, Recife (a settlement) came into being as its port, to which there was access because of a fault in the reef, breached rock. The formation of Olinda and its growth keep a close dependence on the existence of this Port in Recife. The Northeast coast was already well known in 1535 (...)“ it was not possible to leave out of consideration such a well recorded line of reefs and that peninsula, which allowed for a sheltered port, its being imprisoned by its Isthmus to a hill which lay about a league to the North”.

---

<sup>8</sup> According to historical memoirs of Fernandes da Gama (1977: 101) written in the 18th century, "Buraco de S. Tiago (St James' Hole): thus was called, as we said in these Memoirs, in those times, the right bank of the River Beberibe, in the frontier settlement to that in which was located the Fortress of Buraco”.

Nevertheless, even with this spreading out of the town and its port, the Isthmus of Olinda and Recife remains essentially as a sandy, natural element, with a continuous, narrow longitudinal shape, having built elements dotting its territory in a spaced-out way. Waters lap towards it in a longitudinal direction and its natural surroundings are preserved as is represented in the 1759 drawing in perspective "Planta e plano da villa de Santo Antonio do Recife Pernambuco"<sup>9</sup> by Father José Caetano (fig. 04).

In the 1776 "Plano da villa do Reciffe de Pernãbuco e parte da costa athe a ponta da cid. d'Olinda"<sup>10</sup> (fig. 05), by an unidentified author, one sees in the foreground the line of reefs, the submerged stretch being that which is not coloured. The drawing bears traces that the town of Recife was expanding towards the Isthmus. The Fort of Brum, which in cartography of the 17th century was represented as being far from the settlement, is already being reached by some constructions. To the left of this Fort there is the Church of Pilar, followed by Pilar Street, as shown in the key of the 1763 map (Planta genográfica da Villa de S. Antonio do Recife de Pernambuco [...])<sup>11</sup>. Constructions on the Isthmus which are still very isolated ones are the Cross of the Patrão (Harbour-Master)<sup>12</sup> and the Fort do Buraco, closer to Olinda.

The historian Robert Smith (1979) in talking about Recife of the 18th century describes the Isthmus as still being linked to the town. Smith, citing Vilhena, a traveller who was journeying through the Northeast and who described 17th century Recife, regards the Isthmus as a strip of land which can be located on maps of both Recife and Olinda, thus conferring on the Isthmus a twin belonging and a sense of place as a causeway.

The narratives of the late 18th century coincide with those of the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, although the sense of a causeway linking the towns of Olinda and Recife, only started to be attributed to the isthmus during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. One of the most expressive accounts is that of the Englishwoman, Mary Graham (1990: p. 139): "we rode on horseback to Olinda across the sandy Isthmus which links it to Recife. This is the Isthmus on which Sir John Lancaster built a strong point with a palisade during his stay in Recife, which he sacked. The beach is defended by two fortresses, very strong ones when the position is considered: on the one side a furious tidal current battering their foundations, on the other a deep estuary and a flat terrain such that they cannot be taken. The shoreline is partially covered with bushes; there is

---

<sup>9</sup> "Map and plan of the Town of Santo Antonio do Recife Pernambuco".

<sup>10</sup> "Plan of the settlement of Recife of Pernambuco and part of the coast to the point of the town of Olinda".

<sup>11</sup> (Geographical plan of the Settlement of S. Antonio do Recife of Pernambuco [...]).

<sup>12</sup> The Cross of the Harbour-Master had already appeared on earlier maps as the "project for fortification of the settlement of Recife" of 1739.

one which is beautiful, with thick leaves and red, bell-shaped flowers; many are likes those of the eastern world; many are completely new to me".

The Englishwoman's narrative recounts the undertaking of a leisurely journey which describes aspects of military constructions and the landscape. The open and free form of Graham's narrative reveals that the Isthmus is no longer a military area garrisoned by batteries and soldiers. The place is described as a causeway across which people ambled without there being problems from military or state intervention.

The Recife which Graham visited in the 1820s is represented by a map of 1820, by an unidentified author and one which has no title. If we compare it with the 1776 map, which was shown earlier, we see that the town has developed towards the mainland, with the suburb of Boa Vista showing great growth. Growth in the direction of Isthmus seems to have been stationary between these years.

The change in the location of the Cross of the Patrão (Harbour-Master) to the vicinity of the Fort of Buraco demonstrates a change in guiding ships to the entrance to the Port, probably provoked by the loss of the sense of defence of the Isthmus for the town of Recife since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, this being accentuated by the port reforms towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Recife district in the 19<sup>th</sup> century no longer needed their symbols of defence which had been built strategically to defender the nucleus of the port city. The removal of the Cross of the Patrão (Harbour-Master) to the central part of the Isthmus corroborates this hypothesis. The concern with regular navigation in the port and equipping it were central questions for Recife. Therefore the Isthmus which had been a symbol of the defence of the town began to lose esteem as did the town of Olinda. From the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the narratives of engineers will confer another sense to the Isthmus, that of a protection barrier to prevent the accumulation of sand in the port of Recife. Parallel to this, it will also be seen as an extension of the port, including in the projects for making the maritime terminal larger.

Until 1906, the date of the "Planta da Cidade do Recife"<sup>13</sup> (fig. 06), drawn up by the engineers Douglas Fox and H. Michell Whitley<sup>14</sup>, the Isthmus of Olinda and Recife, although it had suffered from dense occupation in the stretch to the left of the Fort of Brum, it having

---

<sup>13</sup> "Map of the Town of Recife".

<sup>14</sup> The engineers Douglas Fox and H. Michell Whitley were hired by the Recife Department of Public Works to draw up a 1906 city map, on a scale of 1:10000, including maps of the streets in order to assess traffic possibilities.

been widened and new streets having sprung up in comparison with the 1820 map, still presents its primeval traces, with dotted built elements, well spaced out from each other (Cross of the Patrão and Fort of Buraco) and with water to the east and west..

It is known that in 1915, nine years after the register drawn up by Douglas Fox, the Isthmus of Olinda and Recife was breached by the sea and this modified its natural structure. This change was due to the alterations in the maritime rollers brought about by the building of a mole, on a level with the Fortress of Buraco, to widen and improve the Port of Recife.

There was thereafter consensus in the technical reports on the importance of the Isthmus for the equilibrium of the currents, although a project by the engineer, Victor Fournié<sup>15</sup> had forecast the rupture of the Isthmus in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is very likely that this plan of the French engineer did not achieve prominence for there is no mention in the discussions of other engineers of the idea of a breach. This can be explained by the vision built up around the Isthmus throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a natural protection barrier for the port of Recife, interference in the place only being justified by means of successive shorings up. Lubambo (1991: 161) gives a history on the projects and reports which were presented to reform the port of Recife: “Between 1815 and 1887, 26 projects, technical assessments and reports were drawn up for re-equipping (*sic* the port)”.

Nevertheless, the most expressive intervention projects were approved at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century under the command of the engineer Alfredo Lisboa<sup>16</sup>. Lubambo (1991: p. 75) draws attention to them as follows: “In 1887 Alfredo Lisboa, the chief engineer of the Commission for the Conservation of the Ports and General Public Works of the Province of Pernambuco presents the Project entitled ‘Memórias do Plano Geral de Melhoramento do Porto do Recife’<sup>17</sup>, this project is approved but not carried out. In 1907, a Sub-Committee of the Fiscal and Administrative Commission of the Works of the Port of Rio de Janeiro is created, which only came to be instituted by the Legal Instrument of 17/12/1908, with the attribution of drawing up studies for the Port of Recife. For such purposes the following were nominated: Alfredo Lisboa, Lothario Hebl, José Pires dos Rios, José Cesário de Melo Filho and Sylvio Farias. In this same year the project was presented and the budget for it

---

<sup>15</sup>Victor Fournié was Director of the Department of Public Works at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, welcoming at that time his professional colleague, Émile Beringuer who drew up a report on “The port of Pernambuco and the town of Recife in the 17<sup>th</sup> century” (Lisboa, 1915).

<sup>16</sup>Alfredo Lisboa, an engineer from Rio, was hired to carry out the much hoped for reform of the Port of Recife and this began in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was responsible for the first reforms of the downtown area called the Suburb of Recife and drew up a report on the port of Recife published in 1915, and he was also responsible for the publication “Ports of Brazil”.

<sup>17</sup> ‘Descriptive Memoir and Justification of the Project for Improvements in the Port of Recife’

which are included in the ‘Memoirs of the General Plan for Improvement of the Port of Recife’ approved by Decree nº 6738 of 14/11/1907”.

The works to reform the port started in the early years of the 20th century, as Lubambo states (1991: p.77): “The services began on 19/07/1909. In 1910, the works on the sea wall and the reinforcement of the Nogueira dyke were almost concluded; besides this, the building of the Olinda mole was also begun”.

In 1911, the effect of the wearing away of the Isthmus provoked by the mole works had already been detected by the technicians and publicised by the means of communication at the time of the inspection visit carried out by the engineers, Alfredo Lisboa, Cesário Mello, Moraes Rego and Samuel Pontual. The *Diário de Pernambuco* of 16 May 1911 relates the phenomenon of “rock dumping” to contain the breaching of the Isthmus: “At the site there are 30 men working, on services such as: 1. assembling hoists; 2. building wooden barriers to ‘avoid the impetuosity of the sea’ and 3. ‘rock dumping’”.

It is precisely with the definitive rupture of the Isthmus provoked by the building of the Olinda mole at the start of the 20th century by which the historical identity relative to the meanings of defence and causeway were deconstructed. The destruction of the Fort of Picão on the reefs represented the start of the loss of historical identity by virtue of de-characterizing the memory of the time-honoured defence logic, symbolized in the architecture of the forts of the Isthmus. Carlos Bezerra Cavalcanti (1995: p.19 e 20) quoting the report of Mário Sette narrates the historical event as follows: “The works began on 29 July 1909 (...). Dredgers, derricks and tugs are moving about. The port has taken on a hue different from its routine days of yesteryear (...). Along the reefs chugs the locomotive bringing ballast with blocks of rock coming from the quarries of Comporta. All along the old quay, other stretches are land-filled from out of which soon spring the metallic skeletons of the warehouses. What is beginning to disappear from the sight of the people of Recife: the Fort of Picão (the sea quay of yore), the beach of Brum with its rest-rooms built from palm and its bathers in their baize swim-suits, the mansion of the Companhia Pernambucana de Navegantes (Pernambuco Company of Navigators) which in that place had replaced the Fort of Matos, the stockade of Conceição with the neighbourhood of the cod-workers, the mansion on the Rua de São Jorge (St George Street) and, shortly after, the (*sic* Church of) Corpo Santo, the arches, Rua da Cadeia (Prison Street)”.

On one of the maps by the engineer, Alfredo Lisboa (fig. 07), at that time in charge of the works of the Port of Recife there appears the project for carrying out the “rock dumping

to protect the Olinda-side of the Isthmus of Olinda and Recife”, to cover the functions of the breached stretch, given that such breach has badly affected communication with the Olinda mole works, delaying it by 2 years. Lisboa noted in his “Portos do Brasil” (Ports of Brazil), according to the 1926 edition, what had happened:

“The building of the mole was at a standstill between 1915 and 1917, as a result of the serious circumstance of the sea having breached the Isthmus to the South of the old Fort of Buraco, which was almost completely destroyed at that time, so cutting off the railway track of the company; communication was only re-established towards the end of 1917, after the land-fill, on top of which the track was built, had been protected by much rock dumping, using material which had been destined for the mole of the Isthmus” (Lisboa, 1926: p.226).

In photographs taken by Bocage (fig. 08), in 1910, we see the Olinda mole being built near the Fort of Buraco<sup>18</sup> and the railroad trains.

On the map “Melhoramentos do Porto do Recife – modificação da planta do caes entre o armazém I e a extremidades do caes de 10,00”<sup>19</sup>, found in the Public Records Office of the City of Recife, there is an annotation which reads “existing rock dumping to be removed”, an indication that in fact the rock dumping was carried out.

Still according to Lisboa (1926: p. 252-53), the breaching of the Isthmus of Olinda and Recife “gave rise to the idea of converting the basin of the Beberibe [...] into a vast commercial dock, in direct communication with the ante-port.” In this case, there would be, according to Lisboa, the need “to remove, partially or wholly, the protecting rock dumping exterior to the Isthmus of Olinda.” Put in other words, the rock dumping area, after it had been extracted, would give way to a channel of communication of the ante-port (between the reefs and the Isthmus of Olinda and Recife) with the basin of the River Beberibe. This idea,

---

<sup>18</sup> Fort of Buraco, located on the sandy cordon or Isthmus of Olinda and Recife, to the North of the last sandbar of the port of Recife, near the present-day School for Naval Apprentices (Albuquerque, Lucena & Walmsley, 1999:77-83). Its construction dates from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. This fortification was built by the Dutch, in 1630, between Olinda and Recife, probably on the spot where once was the Old Fort of St. George. Its original name, which appears in Dutch cartography, Domina Brunonis, is attributed as having been in honour of the wife of Bruyne (President of the Dutch Council). In 1654 it was occupied by the Portuguese. In 1705 it was re-built and enlarged. In 1880 it was considered a second-class fortification. In 1883 it was repaired. Part of its stones were made use of in lengthening the port of Recife. Alternative names: Fortress of St Anthony of Buraco; according to Albuquerque, Lucena & Walmsley (1999:77-83), also: Fort Madame Bruyne, Domina Brunonis, Fortress of St Anthony of the Coconut Palms of Buraco, Fortress of St Anthony of the Coconut Palms.

<sup>19</sup> “Improvements of the Port of Recife – modification of the map of the quays between warehouse I and the ends of quays 10,00”

which is to be found in the projects described below, already appears in 19th century projects like the "Projeto de melhoramento do porto do Recife"<sup>20</sup>, by Victor Fournié, in 1874.

Lisboa (1926) cites a project of the engineer, Moraes Rego<sup>21</sup> of 1924 which forecast the definitive breaching of the Isthmus of Olinda and Recife on establishing "communication between the ante-port and the farther basins". While describing a little the uses foreseen in Moraes Rego's study, Lisboa (1926: p. 253) explains:

"Finally, the engineer M. A. Moraes Rego, head of the Inspection Unit of the port of Recife, in studying the spread of port berthing making use of the basins of the Beberibe and of Santo Amaro, organized a grandiose plan in 1924, which perhaps in a not remote future will come to be adopted, and made reality. It consists of lengthening by 360 metres the quay of 10 metres of water from the extreme point of the coal quay projected, building in those two basins 2,300 metres long, 60 wide and 10 deep to establish communication between the ante-port and the farther basins; proceeding along this canal, shipyards for naval repairs would be located, with a dry dock, for ships, up to 300 metres long. We would gain by this a vast area of lands, railway lines, which would be divided into lots of great saleable value".

In more recent times, a plan was drawn up which was approved by the Chief Engineer of the Port of Recife, Lorival de Almeida Castro, called a "Perspectiva do Porto do Recife com a ampliação prevista no projeto 'Moraes Rego' e ante-projeto da Base Naval do Recife"<sup>22</sup>, that is, a perspective which aggregates two distinct projects: Moraes Rego's one and that of the Naval Base (fig. 08). It is not known when the perspective of this engineer was drawn up. However, it is likely that it was immediately after the project for the Naval Base which dates from the 1950s.

Through this perspective we can have an idea of the enlargement proposed by the engineer Moraes Rego for the Port of Recife and we can also visualize some of the works which were underway at the time of Rego's project, such as the case of the break-water erected on the site of the submerged reefs, leading to the closing of the "Barra" and to the closing of the passage of waters over the old submerged reefs. The access to the ante-port became an entrance to the Olinda mole.

---

<sup>20</sup> "Project for improvement of the Port of Recife".

<sup>21</sup> José Mamede Alves Ferreira, an engineer from Pernambuco, educated at the School of Engineering of Paris, projected important buildings in the city of Recife such as the Ginásio Pernambucano (a school) and the Hospital Pedro II. The engineer Moraes Rego was also one of the government inspectors in the works of the Port of Recife from at least this year - 1911. According to Alfredo Lisboa, in 1924 this engineer, still an inspector, drew up a study for the enlargement of the port berths taking advantage of the basins of the Beberibe and of Santo Amaro.

<sup>22</sup> "Perspective of the Port of Recife with the enlargement set out in the 'Moraes Rego' project and ante-project of the Naval Base of Recife".

Rego's project forecasts a huge land-fill of the Isthmus of Olinda and Recife, which can be well visualized when this project is compared with the 1906 Douglas Fox map. The widening by land-fill would take place in the stretch today known as the Suburb of Recife, reaching the Fort of Brum and the Cross of the Patrão (Harbour-Master) and going as far as the vicinity of the Fort of Buraco, which would be anticipated by a canal linking up to the Basin of Santo Amaro.

Another very similar project to that of Moraes Rego and dated 1931 was found in the Public Records Office of the City of Recife (fig. 10). The dating of this "Planta Geral do Porto do Recife com o anti-projeto [sic] de ampliação para aproveitamento da bacia de Santo Amaro e aero-porto [sic]"<sup>23</sup> is an indication that until this date (1932) the works had still not been carried out and that in this year the fill-in with rocks, which appears in the drawing, had not yet been removed.

Returning to the Perspective of the Port of Recife, we see that it foresees buildings near the Fort of Buraco and a huge land-fill of the Rio Beberibe on the bank of Santo Amaro, leaving the Beberibe with a small channel.

In the 1950s the works for the Naval Base of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Naval District began, consisting of the building of new quays and dykes. In 1953, the Fort of Buraco, still a listed site, was dynamited at the command of Admiral Harold Cox (or Cooks), infringing the Decree-law nº 25 of 1937, for the construction of the "great dry dyke" of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Naval District. This fort had been listed at the federal level, by the then Serviço do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional<sup>24</sup> (Service for National Historical and Artistic Heritage) and was de-listed and the registration cancelled on 19 January 1955, in fulfilment of the Presidential dispatch of 11 January 1955, based on Decree-law 3866, of 29 November 1941. The request for cancellation was made by the Ministry of the Navy. There was strong opposition from SPHAN, especially from Rodrigo Melo Franco de Andrade and from Ayrton de Almeida Carvalho, the latter being the representative of SPHAN in Pernambuco, which was set aside. Apart from the demolition of the Fort of Buraco, little was done with respect to the decision of the Navy to transfer the construction of the Naval Base of the Naval Base of the 3<sup>rd</sup> District to the State of Rio Grande do Norte. From the initial project only the dykes and the anchorages of the canal

---

<sup>23</sup> "General Map of the Port of Recife with the ante-project [sic] for widening to take advantage of the Basin of Santo Amaro and airport [sic]".

<sup>24</sup> SPHAN, Process 101-T-38; inscribed on 24 May 1938, under nº 44, f. 9, in the book for Historical listings and nº 85, f. 16, in the book of Fine-Art.

of Santo Amaro were built and probably some of the Fort's stones were used in lengthening the Port of Recife. There remain ruins which were later the object of being listed by IPHAN<sup>25</sup>.

These transformations appeared as registered still in the 1950s, in magazine articles and books as “losses” – whether from the point of view of the historical heritage or from the point of view of the natural landscape. In the section “Streets and Quays”, in an editorial of the *Boletim da Cidade e do Pôrto do Recife* (1952-1956: s/p), author undeclared, is found the following note:

“It is a pity that the works of the Base have required the sacrifice of historical relics such as the Fortress of Buraco and the Cross of the Patrão (Harbour-Master) and the de-characterization of this area which is so charged with tradition and has been incorporated into our literature in a page of Franklin Távora, which is the valley of the Beberibe”.

Starting in the mid-20th century, the Isthmus became a place unknown to the population at large, travellers and tourists. Almost an isolated place which belonged to the city of Olinda and no longer to that of Recife, although historical tradition reveals the Isthmus as belonging to the two cities. The very definition - “Isthmus of Olinda” – already expresses in itself only the forgetting of the values and beliefs which were historically constructed by the identity and memory of the two cities. The writer Hermilo Borba Filho (1945: s/p) described towards the end of the 1940s the discovery made by the caricaturist Augusto Rodrigues of one of the most beautiful beaches of Recife: “If you, my dear tourist, come to Recife during the summer, go and get to know the Isthmus of Olinda discovered by the caricaturist Augusto Rodrigues, on such and such of January of the year nineteen hundred and forty-eight. You can rent a private’s car, for fifteen *cruzeiros* and go on a fifteen minute trip to see close up one of the most beautiful beaches in Recife (...)”. The fragment of the narrative of Borba Filho reveals for the isthmus the sense of beach, that is, it being recognized as having landscape value.

Raquel Caldas Lins, in the 1970s, registers how the Isthmus of Olinda and Recife, could be seen from the heights of the See in Olinda, and regrets its “being masked”, this having occurred due to the construction of the Naval Base:

---

<sup>25</sup> See Process nº 1351 – T –35 of IPHAN/DID, Archive Ruins Fort of Buraco, in IPHAN 5RS, in Recife, folder Processo of Listing Olinda/PE – Ruins Fort of Buraco. Other legal protections in vogue: listed ex-officio in May 1982 by the municipality of Olinda. By Municipal Law 4849/92 (Urbanistic Legislation of the Historical Sites of Olinda), is inserted in the Special Protection Zone – ZEPC 3, in the Sector of Rigorous Preservation. Also the responsibility of IPHAN, for the site is in the zone surrounding IPHAN’s polygonal listings site, of the architectonic and landscape grouping of Olinda, in Sector F of the Polygon of Preservation of the Municipality of Olinda.

“This 'Isthmus of Olinda and Recife', over which Mrs. Graham rode on horseback in order to visit Olinda, is almost completely masked by the works for the construction of the Naval Base, which will fill in the broad mangrove swamps and leave the Beberibe only with a narrow channel" (Lins, 1978: p. 105).

Gilberto Freyre in his “Olinda, 2º Guia prático, histórico e sentimental de cidade brasileira”<sup>26</sup> includes a lament for the Fort of Buraco:

“Unhappily the ruins of the Fortress of Buraco have already undergone their well executed death sentence. Of these only one remains as a headstone, saying ‘The Fortress of Buraco used to be here’. These ruins were sacrificed to the works for the expansion of the Naval Base of Recife. The sacrifice seems unnecessary. Useless. Deplorable” (Freyre, 1968, p. 128)

The sense of loss and forgetfulness lingers on, accompanied by the landscape attribute felt by the few people familiar with the history of the place. This attribute was reinforced by IPHAN, towards the end of the 1960s, by means of legislation for the natural heritage over areas of rigorous preservation.

## **THE PRACTICE OF CONSERVATION APPLIED ON THE ISTHMUS**

At the end of the 1960s, IPHAN, configures a polygon of listed sites of an architectonic and landscape character<sup>27</sup>. This polygon corresponded to the high city, to the flat area of the shoreline and to the Church of the Miracles, according to the Federal Notification nº 1004/68. Thus the Isthmus is not included in this polygon. Nevertheless, it appears as a *non aedificandi* area in Municipal Law nº 3826 de 1973.

The World Heritage Convention drawn up by UNESCO in 1972 established norms of a “scientific character” to define a “defensive system for collective protection” with regard to a universal value for cultural and natural heritage, as is referred to in the digital document archive of IPHAN ([www.iphan.gov.br](http://www.iphan.gov.br), Jan/2005) and of UNESCO ([www.unesco.org.br](http://www.unesco.org.br), Jan/2005).

---

<sup>26</sup> “Olinda, 2nd practical, historical and sentimental Guide to a Brazilian city”.

<sup>27</sup> Part of the historic hill of the city of Olinda was listed by SPHAN on 9/04/1968 as "Architectonic and Landscape Grouping", in the Book of Archaeological, Ethnographic and Landscape Listings, folio 19, under the number 75.

The debate opened by UNESCO spurred on the widening of new interests, mainly those related to tourism and cultural heritage. The digital document Archive of IPHAN ([www.iphan.gov.br](http://www.iphan.gov.br)) translates this tendency established in the “Charter for Tourism” of 1976. The definition of tourism starts to be linked to the understanding of protecting the natural heritage and the architectonic, landscape and cultural setting.

Starting out from the establishment of a system for the collective protection of the cultural and historical heritage of “universal value” in the Convention of World Heritage drawn up by UNESCO (1972) and the “Charter for Tourism” (1976), the value given to the preservation of natural areas began to gain force in some interventions undertaken in the city of Olinda.

In the early 1970s, Counsellor Luiz Delgado and the State Council for Culture presented a proposition for drawing up a preservation plan for an area between Recife and Olinda, in which no constructions should be approved so as to permit an unobscured view of the landscape and of the old buildings in Olinda. The proposal was also made to IPHAN that the perimeter of protection of the listed area of Olinda be extended. Luiz Delgado and the Council for drawing up these proposals were given by a boost by a technical report by a UNESCO delegate who stressed the importance of including the whole hill and lands near the polygon of listed sites. This report was mainly prompted by the construction of the Complex of Salgadinho and the possible visual impacts which the unrestrained expansion of this area might bring about for the visibility of the initial polygon of listed sites.

The result of the technical reports and studies went for approval by the Consultative Council of IPHAN of the Federal Notification n° 1.155 of 04/06/1979 registering the "Urbanistic, Landscape and Architectonic Archive of the City of Olinda" as an extension of the "Architectonic and Landscape Setting" given listing in 1968. The Isthmus then becomes part of IPHAN's polygon of listed sites, not because of their historical and cultural features, but by virtue of their natural landscape and the guarantee of visibility of the historic hill which had already been listed.

Since then norms have been institutionalized for the “protection of visibility and preservation of the natural areas”, restricting the occupation of surrounding areas which have mangrove and wetland vegetation. Despite the Isthmus being a forgotten area in the memory of the urban residents of the cities of Olinda and Recife, and mutilated by the port projects, it was included in this new normative concept. At any rate, IPHAN's attitude

protected the Isthmus area from property speculation and the accelerated occupation seen on the sea-front in Recife and Olinda in the 1970s and 1980s.

Reinforcing and widening the preservation norms of the architectonic and natural heritage took off in the years that followed, including with the creation of the Municipal System for Preservation described in the Basic Urbanistic Legislation of the Historical Sites of Olinda: “In September of the same year, by means of Municipal Law n. 4119/79, the Municipal System for Preservation is created, comprising the Council for Preservation, a deliberative body, the Foundation Centre for Preservation, a technical and executive body for the actions of preservation, the Preservation Fund, and the idea of the Municipal Listing is instituted” (Olinda, 1973: s/p).

Other initiatives of the 1980s, instituting listed site polygons, and the Gondim Law<sup>28</sup>, controlling uses in areas of rigorous preservation, were important to restrain the thirst for property and the occupation of areas of architectonic and landscape settings of Olinda: “From 1980 on, the Foundation Centre for Preservation, together with the Council for Preservation, begin studies to make the norms contained in the federal notification 1155 adequate for the reality of the city. These studies lasted until 1982, when the proposal was sent to the Consultative Council of SPHAN, and obtained approval, being deemed 're-ratification of notification 1155. This latter instituted the listed site polygon, made up of the nucleus of the old site and its surrounding area, formed to the south by the Salgadinho Complex, the triangle of Peixinhos, part of Sítio Novo to the North by the settlements of recent occupation of Bultrins and Bairro Novo (...) After that, Law n. 4821 (the Gondim Law) sanctioned in 1985, determines the prohibition of bars and restaurants, night clubs and the like, only in the Area of Rigorous Preservation of the Historic Site, and functioned as an emergency measure to contain the indiscriminate proliferation of incompatible uses in the area.” (Olinda, 1973, s/p).

With the consolidation of the laws cited above, the concern arises to establish criteria to define values of cultural and landscape interest for the historic sites. The initiative was taken by the Municipal Council for Preservation which drew up the Urbanistic Legislation for the historic site of Olinda. This legislation includes the Isthmus in two values – the cultural one, on account of the importance of the Fort of Buraco and the landscape one, due to the place presenting natural areas of preservation (mangroves and wet-lands): “Drawing up the new

---

<sup>28</sup> Law n.4821 or Gondim’s Law, sanctioned in 1985, functioned as an emergency measure to combat the indiscriminate proliferation of incompatible uses in the areas of “rigorous preservation of the historic site”, having reinforced the protection of the Isthmus and other natural areas.

Urbanistic Legislation for the Historic Site is inserted into a greater action, the Law on the Use of the Land of the Municipality, in this draft Law, the Historic Site is identified as the Special Zone of Cultural and Landscape Interest (ZEPC). Also included in this classification are the other sites and isolated buildings of historic and architectonic and urbanistic interest of the municipality: the ancient group of the Convent of Santa Tereza, the slaughterhouse of Peixinhos and the Factory of Tacaruna, situated in the area of the Site, the chapel of Santana of Rio Doce; the ruins of Santo Amaro, the Casa da Pólvora (Gunpowder House), the Fortress of Buraco and the chapel of the Fragoso sugar plantation” (Olinda, 1973: s/p).

The urbanistic legislation definitively instituted the landscape and cultural values which were present in diverse narratives. The criterion for nomination of the special zones for cultural and landscape protection express the renovation of awareness about the Isthmus.

## **THE CURRENT LANDSCAPES OF THE ISTHMUS OF OLINDA AND RECIFE**

The adventure of getting acquainted with the Isthmus of Olinda and Recife, leads to the conclusion that one cannot reach Olinda on foot from Recife and starting out from Olinda one does not arrive in Recife. Another possibility is arriving on the Isthmus via the sea. From Olinda one can better understand what that place was in prior centuries – an essentially natural place, with no buildings: a strip of sand pounded by the waters of the ocean and the river. Notwithstanding this, the changes also do not pass unnoticed. If you look to the side opposite the sea, you will see a stone wall, related to the Canal of Malaria, which prevents one from seeing the River Beberibe, which today is very polluted. This wall makes the Isthmus seem like a beach, because it takes away the notion that it is a strip of sand with waters to the east and west, the geographical situation which has always defined the place. If one accesses the Isthmus by crossing the Canal of Malaria via the community of Maruim, one can proceed to walk in the direction of Recife, up to the point where there is the interruption of the strip of sand, which gives way to the canal which links up with the River Beberibe, or, even, head towards Olinda. On the level with the Church of the Milagres (Miracles) it stops being an Isthmus and is transformed into city. This is Olinda with paved streets or houses at the sea-side, many of them without any sand in front, given the advance of the sea. If you look out from the Sé (See) of Olinda, the Isthmus is seen in its entirety, comprising a delightful, beautiful landscape: the strip of flat sand, the reefs, the aquatic masses of the sea and the river and the masses of vegetation of the beach, the river, the mangroves and the gardens of the residences.

In Recife, it is apparent that little has remained of the Isthmus of the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries or even of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Today, the Isthmus in the stretch to the south of the breach does not even have a minimum strip of sand in contact with the sea. Besides this, it was widened by land-fills and is thick with buildings, mainly by those linked to the life of the Port of Recife, with typologies of sheds and warehouses. Its outstanding edifications, such as the Fort of Brum and the Cross of the Patrão (Harbour-Master) are mixed in with these buildings (fig. 11 and 12), differently from what is seen in the 1912 photograph, taken by Bocage, in which the Cross of the Patrão (Harbour-Master) is seen between the sea and the river, with few constructions surrounding it (fig. 13).

The area considered as the Isthmus of Olinda and Recife<sup>29</sup> and its immediate surroundings is limited to the east by the Atlantic Ocean, to the west by the River Beberibe and by the ZEIS of the Island of Maruim, to the south by the Fort of Brum and to the north by the Church of the Milagres (Miracles), which take in four important built landmarks: the Fort of Brum, the Cross of the Patrão (Harbour-Master), the ruins of the Fort of Buraco and the Church of the Milagres (Miracles).

The main access roads to arrive in the area, leaving from Recife, are Avenue Pan Americana, Avenue Olinda and Avenue Agamenon Magalhães and, setting out from Olinda, only Avenue Olinda. Access to the strip of sand is very precarious and scarcely safe, the possibilities are: from Olinda, via street Santa Tereza, by entering the Island of Maruim and via Avenue Santos Dumont, next to the Church of the Milagres (Miracles); by boat, via the River Beberibe and by sea.

The landscapes present in this polygon are grouped into eight units, two natural and six built ones, and are described below:

The first landscape is that of the Sandbank and Ruins of the Fort of Buraco, and comprises the narrow strip of sand, the Beach of del Chifre, the ruins of the Fort of Buraco, the vegetation of mangrove and the beach – coconut palms -, having on one side the sea, the reefs and the port mole, and on the other the mouth of the River Beberibe. The concavity of the shape of the beach contrasting with the colour of the sea and the green of the vegetation

---

<sup>29</sup> The setting of the boundaries of the Isthmus established by the survey resulted in a confrontation between Unibase and the current aerial image and historical cartography, besides the information obtained from other sources and documents. The few alterations suffered in the longitudinal and narrow shape of the strip of sand, in addition to the localization of unvarying elements, maintained throughout the centuries until nowadays, such as the Fort of Brum, the Fort of Buraco and the Church of the Miracles, allowed the limits of the Isthmus to be defined.

confers a singularity and beauty on this landscape. These are the attributes which associated with the force of the history of the place in all senses of defence, protection, causeway, and port extension rightly see that it is deemed as cultural heritage.

The second landscape is that of the Mangrove of Santa Tereza, and displays a certain continuity with the previous one. It is a fragile natural environment, but of importance to the environmental equilibrium of the place. The fragility arises from the existence of small dwellings or rudimentary homes on its banks and from the pollution carried by the waters of the Canal of Malaria and the River Beberibe.

These two landscapes were considered in the 2005 Director Plan of Olinda, as areas of environmental conservation, destined to protect the quality of the existing fragile natural systems.

The third landscape corresponding to the Church of the Milagres (Miracles) is small in area, but of great historical and artistic significance. Today's church building was built in the 1860s, beside a large cross from the previous decade, to replace a small chapel also of the 1850s. It is a simple construction with an unadorned frontispiece, a bell tower and a central doorway. The Church is a focal point which by its scale and proportions is associated with the landscape of the sandbank. The advance of the sea in this spot has required containment works to be carried out, using the placing of rocks which, unless under urbanistic management, spoil the beauty of the landscape and the cleanliness of the area. One of the access points to the Isthmus is given by this unit. However it is partially blocked by the placing of the rocks and by the shanty town which constitutes the landscape described below.

The fourth landscape is the Shanty Town of Milagres, which occupies an area between the beach and the arm of the mangrove. It is an area that has recently been taken up with very simple dwellings, the shape of which is formed by blocks without geometric form, of small dimensions (from 1729 to 2228 m<sup>2</sup>) and without defined lots. Via this area one can gain entrance to and appreciate the Isthmus. However, this occupation allied to the works for containing the advance of the sea, form barriers to the view and of access to the Isthmus, which makes it difficult both to get there and to enjoy the associations of the landscape, found in the previous ones.

The fifth landscape is the Island of Maruim, which in the past was a portion of land surrounded by the waters of the River Beberibe and the Canal of Malaria. The land-fills

arising from the occupation by simple dwellings and lots have caused this natural feature to disappear. The occupation of the blocks is preponderantly of a non-geometrical shape, of average to large size (from 2163 to 13319 m<sup>2</sup>) and small rectangular lots and narrow and unpaved streets. The landscape is characteristic of a poor area, granted little by way of infrastructure, and has a precarious sewage system and unpaved streets. On account of such features it is defined in the Director Plan for Olinda of 2005<sup>30</sup> as a special zone of social interest. This landscape is also regarded as having barriers to the view and to access. Although the impact arising from the differences of scale and proportion as well as from the ratio of high to low tides is reduced, the greatest difficulty lies in the social dimension.

The sixth landscape is that of the Port of Recife, which is typical of a port area, without blocks, defined lots and occupied by warehouses, container yards and those for fuel tanks. This area is circumscribed by the sea and by the Rivers Capibaribe and Beberibe. The perception and contemplation of the beauty of the landscape which surrounds it is made impossible by such objects and by access being prevented. Therefore, there is neither ease of access nor landscape continuity. On the north side, for the length of the anchorage, a comprehension of the existence of the Isthmus is lost. There is discontinuity of the natural and historical landscape. It is as if Recife has turned its back on both Olinda and the causeway which for centuries connected these two cities.

The seventh landscape is that of the Cross of the Patrão (Harbour-Master), located between the port area and the blocks with industrial constructions. Despite being an important cultural asset, cloaked in legends and mysteries, and always represented in historical cartography, it has become forgotten and covered in buildings, reflecting the loss of the natural and historical landscape as a result of the successive land-fills and expansions of the Port of Recife. Therefore it is a shriveled landscape, which has neither a sense of association nor access.

The eighth landscape is that of the Fort of Brum, besides the silos and warehouses for stocking fuel. The Fort of Brum is an important landmark built in the Suburb of Recife, and together with the Cross of the Patrão (Harbour-Master) and the ruins of the Fort of Buraco, are the only built elements remaining from the occupation of the Isthmus begun in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Despite its surrounding area having been rather de-characterized, mainly due to the land-fills and the later industrial and port constructions, the Fort of Brum, on account of its

---

<sup>30</sup> The Final Report consulted was concluded in 2004, although the Law of the Director Plan was only approved and sanctioned in 2005, it should be noted that in the content dealt with here there is no difference between the Report and the Law.

typology, still stands as an element of great visibility. Nevertheless, what has been completely lost is that it was originally erected on the beach, between the sea and the River Beberibe.

### **Conceptual and interpretative challenges: procedures with no end-date**

The conceptual and interpretative challenges remain open. Adopted procedures are indicated and a narrative is constructed, the research for which adopted the preliminary division of the contents of the sources into thematic areas, as a strategy for understanding the history of the Isthmus of Olinda and Recife. These themes are: representation of the isthmus in iconography; breaching of the isthmus; toponymy; forts and the harbour-master's cross; processions, celebrations and African rituals; church of the Miracles. Interpretation as a construction of a sense of events of the past, stresses the senses which can be found in the different narratives of the historical sources. It is not a way forward only to describe senses which have been constructed in time, but to understand them by contextualizing the sources researched. It is possible to highlight in space and time meanings about the place related to defence, causeway, port, beach and fundamental themed issues which are related to each other. .

It still remains for the authors to underline that, increasingly, historiography is seeking to break away from the paradigm of objectivity and draw closer to an understanding of the “horizons of sense” (Pelizzoli, 2002) inherent to human experience in time and space. The interpretation of the historical documentation, nowadays, necessarily takes in “understanding” which differs from explanation or analysis of the very fact in itself. In this sense, the experience of historians which is inherent to their office, seeks through the estrangement of the source, as Ginzburg (2001) would say, the construction of a more finely honed historical perspective.

## FIGURES



Fig. 01: Map entitled "Todas as fortificações que se mostram do lugar do Recife até a Villa de Olinda (...), 1626. Source: Reis Filho (2000).



Fig. 02: Map entitled "Porto e Barra de Pernambuco", 1630 (31). Source: Reis Filho (2000)



Fig. 03: Map entitled "de haven van Pharnambucq (1), Maritius Stad (2), Recif in (3) de Stad Olinda", de autoria de Cornelis Bastiaensz Golyath, 1641. Fonte: Source: Filho (2000).



Fig. 04: Map entitled "Plano da villa do Recife de Pernambuco e parte da costa athe a ponta da cid. d'Olinda", 1776. Source: Reis Filho (2000)

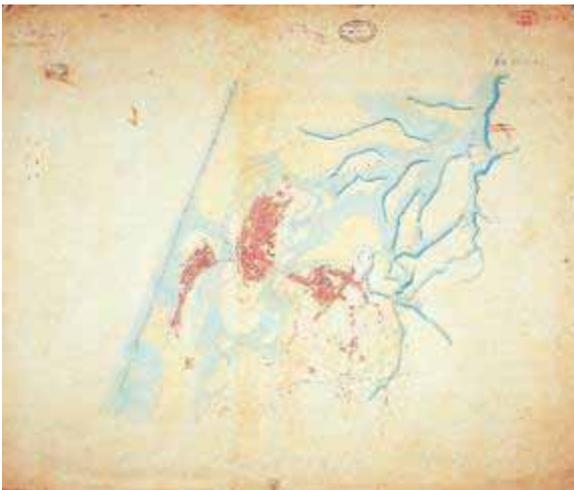


Fig. 05: Map without title, 1820. Source: Reis Filho (2000)



Fig. 06: Map entitled "Planta da Cidade do Recife", 1906. Source: Individual collection of Virginia Pontual.



BORBA FILHO, Hermilo. O Istmo de Olinda. In, *Boletim da Cidade e do Porto do Recife*. Recife: Diretoria de Documentação e Cultura da Prefeitura Municipal do Recife, n.15-18, jan-dez 1945.

CAVALCANTI, Carlos Bezerra. Recife um "Presente" do "Passado". Recife: VBF Gráfica e Editora, 1995.

COSTA, F. A. Pereira da. Fortaleza do Brum. In *Almanach Pernambucano*, 9º ano, p.141-142. Recife: Imprensa Industrial, 1917.

BORBA FILHO, Hermilo. 1945: s/p

FREIRE, Doia; PEREIRA, Lígia Leite. In MURTA, Stela Maris & ALBANO, Celina (org.). *Interpretar o Patrimônio. Um exercício do olhar*. Belo Horizonte, Editora UFMG/Território Brasilis, 2002.

FREYRE, Gilberto. Olinda, 2º guia prático, histórico e sentimental de cidade brasileira. Rio de Janeiro, José Olympio, 4ª ed., 1968.

GAMA, Jozé Bernardo Fernandes. Memórias Históricas da Província de Pernambuco. Recife: Secretaria da Justiça, Arquivo Público Estadual, vol. 2, tomo 3 e 4, pp. 371, 1977.

GRAHAM, Maria. Diário de uma viagem ao Brasil. Belo Horizonte: Itatiaia; São Paulo: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 1990.

GINZBURG, Carlo. Olhos de madeira: nove reflexões sobre a distância. São Paulo: companhia As Letras, 2001.

GOODEY, Brian. Interpretação e comunidade local. In: MURTA, Stela Maris & ALBANO, Celina (org.). *Interpretar o Patrimônio. Um Exercício do Olhar*. Belo Horizonte, Editora UFMG/Território Brasilis, 2002.

------. Olhar Múltiplo na Interpretação de Lugares. In: MURTA, Stela Maris & ALBANO, Celina (org.). *Interpretar o Patrimônio. Um Exercício do Olhar*. Belo Horizonte, Editora UFMG/Território Brasilis, 2002.

-----; MURTA, Stela Maris. Interpretação do patrimônio para visitantes: um quadro conceitual. In: MURTA, Stela Maris & ALBANO, Celina (org.). *Interpretar o Patrimônio. Um Exercício do Olhar*. Belo Horizonte, Editora UFMG/Território Brasilis, 2002.

Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional. Acervo da 5ª RS. Pasta do Processo Forte do Buraco.

<http://www.iphan.gov.br> at January 2005.

LINS, Raquel Caldas. Alguns aspectos originais do sítio urbano do Recife. In Arquivo Público Estadual de Pernambuco. *Um tempo do Recife*. Recife: Ed. Universitária, 1978.

LISBOA, Alfredo. Portos do Brasil. Inspectoria Federal de Portos, rios e canaes. Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Nacional, 1926.

------. Estudo Hydrografico e Meteorológico do Porto do Recife. Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Nacional, 1915.

LUBAMBO, Cátia W. Bairro do Recife: entre o Corpo Santo e o Marco Zero. Recife: CEPE/Fundação de Cultura Cidade do Recife, 1991.

MENEZES, José Luís Mota. Olinda e o Recife: 1537-1630. In Revista Oceanos, A Construção do Brasil Urbano. Lisboa: Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimientos Portugueses, nº 41, jan-mar, 2000.

MURTA, Stela Maris & ALBANO, Celina (org.). Interpretar o Patrimônio. Um Exercício do Olhar. Belo Horizonte, Editora UFMG/Território Brasília, 2002.

MURTA, Stela Maris. Interpretação e valorização do patrimônio no planejamento urbano. In MONTEIRO, Circe (org.). *Anais Seminário Interdisciplinar Cidade e produção do cotidiano*. Recife: UFPE/Mestrado em Desenvolvimento Urbano, 1995.

Olinda, Prefeitura do Município de. Lei nº 48-49/1992 - Legislação urbanística básica dos sítios históricos de Olinda. Olinda: Prefeitura Municipal / Fundação Centro de Preservação dos Sítios Históricos de Olinda, (APMAG 03 - E2 / A. Capítulo IV, sem paginação).

----- Relatário Final do Plano Diretor de Olinda, 2004. Olinda, Prefeitura do Município/Secretaria de Planejamento, Transporte e Meio Ambiente/Fundação de Apoio ao Desenvolvimento da UFPE/Centro de Estudos Avançados da Conservação Integrada (CECI), 2004.

PELLIZZOLI, Marcelo L. O eu e a diferença. Husserl e Heidegger. Porto Alegre: EDIPUCRS, 2002.

REIS, Nestor Goulart. Imagens de Vilas e Cidades do Brasil Colonial. São Paulo : Editora da Universidade de São Paulo / Imprensa Oficial do Estado / FAPESP, 2000.

RIEGL, Alois. El culto moderno a los monumentos. Madrid: Visor, 1999.

SMITH, Robert C. Igrejas, Casas e Móveis aspectos de Arte Colonial Brasileira. Recife: Ministério da Educação e Cultura, Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional, 1979.

UNESCO - [http:// www.unesco.org.br](http://www.unesco.org.br), at January 2005.

VEVERKA, John A. Why heritage sites need interpretation for their long term survival. In <http://www.heritageinterp.com>, at September 2004.

----- Planning interpretative walking tours for communities and related historic districts. In <http://www.heritageinterp.com>, at September 2004.