

Geographic Names as a Cultural Expression: an Analysis of the City of Petrópolis – RJ

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Abstract. Geographic names through the comprehension of their origins and motivations allow for multiple relations to the cultural, social, political, economical and natural aspects of a studied area. This type of analysis has a multidisciplinary aspect and shows relevance in Geography, History, Linguistics, Anthropology, Cartography and other fields of study. The toponyms personalize and separate a place from its surroundings. In this matter, this article intends to discuss the geographic names as cultural expression of the groups responsible for naming such places. Therefore, the city of Petrópolis was chosen as it is a special place to be analyzed. Petrópolis is an important cultural and historical legate to Brazil. The Imperial City, as it is known, served as a summer residence of the Imperial family in the second half of the nineteenth century. The city's urbanization project was led by the German Major Júlio Frederico Köeler who brought German immigrants to work in the plan. It all comes down to the objective of this article that is to search and analyze the cultural origins of the current geographic names in the city of Petrópolis with the aim of verifying if is possible to find records of an immigrant group from the past, in this case, the Germanic group. It is intended as well to identify relations between different social groups established by the toponymic motivations. It is relevant to say that this study integrates the project "Geonímia do Rio de Janeiro" sponsored by the Laboratory of Cartography (Geo Cart) from the Geography Department of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro.

Keywords: Geographic Names, Cultural Identity, Toponymic Motivation, City of Petrópolis – RJ.

1. Introduction

The geographic names through the comprehension of their origins and motivation facilitate the establishment of various relations with the cultural, social, political, economical and natural aspects of a studied area. This aspect of study is relevant to many fields such as Geography, History, Linguistics, Anthropology and Cartography.

The toponyms individualize the space and, therefore, creates a unique identity separating a specific area from its surroundings. The act of naming things is naturally human and because of that a series of characteristics related to who (person or a group) has named this or that place is under analysis. In this case, bringing up the motivations that led to different designations can make clear aspects as the way of occupation of a territory and the strategic questions related to the topic.

The study of the geographic names is equally important for Geography and Cartography considering that those names may reflect a “humanized landscape”, through its own personification, resulting in a separation and differentiation from any other land and /or place. Based on this, geographic names can display a fundamental geographic language that indicates numerous aspects about a place. (MENEZES e SANTOS, 2006).

The discussion about the origins of geographic names is an international debate, particularly in relation to their standardization. For this matter, it is noticeable the active performance of the Organization of the United Nations through the “*Comissão Permanente de Peritos em Nomes Geográficos do Conselho Econômico e Social*” (Permanent Committee of Experts in Geographic Names of Economical and Social Council). On the other hand, nationally speaking, the recent creation of Banco de Nomes Geográficos do Brasil (Geo-Database of Geographic Names of Brazil) by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics is also remarkable. However, the Brazilian academic production is still in need specifically in geographic science. There are lots of researching fields and gaps to be filled.

Accordingly to what has been presented this study intends to analyze the roots of the current geographic names of the city of Petrópolis with the aim of verifying if is possible to find records of an immigrant group from the past, in this case the Germanic group. It is also intended as to identify relations between different social groups established by the toponymic motivations.

2. The City of Petrópolis – RJ

This municipality of Petrópolis is located in the mountain region of the state of Rio de Janeiro (Figure 1). It has an important historical legate in the national perspective since in the second half of the nineteenth century it was used as summer residence for the Imperial Family.

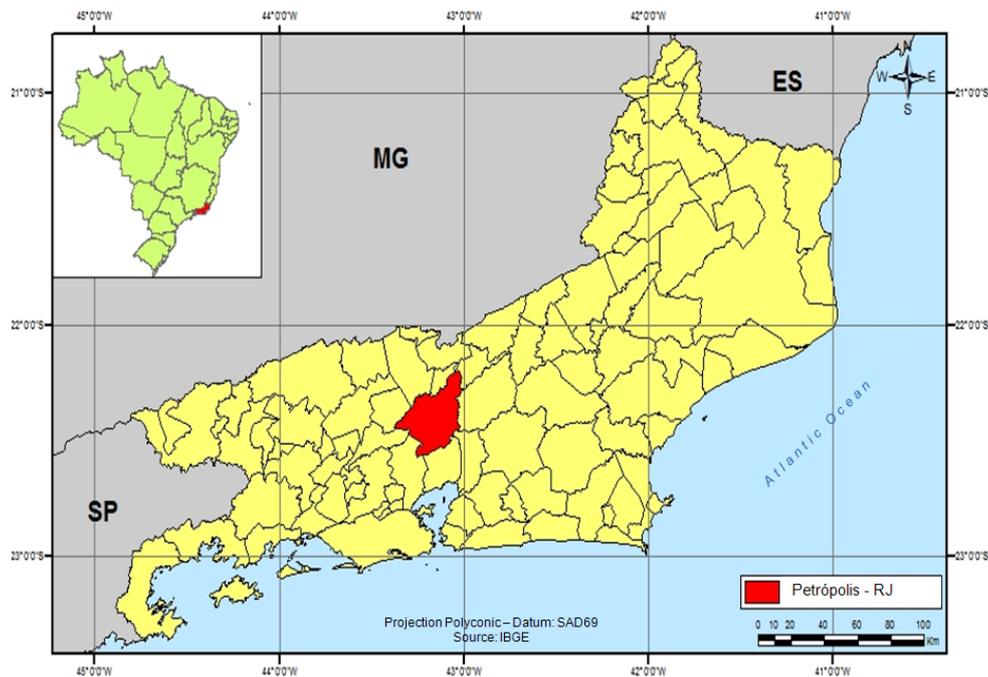


Figure 1. Localization of the studied area.

The population of Petrópolis lands began in the eighteenth century motivated by the construction of a new road that would connect Rio de Janeiro to Minas Gerais. However, the creation of the city and its population has an intrinsic relation with D. Pedro I's enchantment by that small place. His first visit occurred in 1822 when he was going to Minas Gerais and he had to stay overnight on Correa Farm, a very well known place for having special visitors. The same farm hosted the Imperial Family in 1830 when they were looking for a place to stay and rest in particular regard of Princess Paula Marian's health. After that, D. Pedro I found a way to own those lands. Initially he tried to purchase Correa's farm but he had no success in

that transaction since the owner declined the offer. So, he bought another piece of land called Corrego Secco Farm to be his Summer Palace.

According to Tinoco (1885) the new emperor's property could be described like this:

“there was only one ordinary home, two ranches for the troupes when they needed to stay overnight and two little blacksmith's garage, the main industry of the current owner, Major José Vieira de Afonso. This farm that from then on started to belong to D. Pedro I was left as a heritage to the D. Pedro II. During many years this land was rented by various people.”

D. Pedro I passed away in 1834 before the actual construction of his palace. In 1843 D. Pedro II restarted the “Settlement of the Summer Palace” and ordered the foundation of Petrópolis nominating the German Major Júlio Frederico Köeler. The Major brought German immigrants to work for him in the construction of the Estrada Normal da Estrela that would serve as the access to the new city. The Itamaraty Farm accommodated those 50 families of immigrants.

Köeler's desire to create a new Germanic colony was imprinted in his urbanization project. The names of German regions in some blocks of the city confirm this fact. Those blocks were subdivided into plots who belonged to the Germanic families that were in the place. This subdivision of big blocks into plots represents a new way of urban territorial organization.

Currently, Petrópolis, known as the Imperial City, turned into a tourist point in the mountain region of Rio de Janeiro. The beautiful landscape and the historical atmosphere in special the Imperial Museum are some of the city's attractions.

3. The acquisition of the geographic names and the systematization of the analysis

The geographic names, motive of this study, were extracted from the topographic letters in the scale of 1:50.000 elaborated by the IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) that put together the systematic mapping of the Brazilian territory. These letters are dated to the decade of 1970 and were considered registers of the current toponymics. All in all, five letters contained information about Petrópolis. After a closer look it was possible to define a group of names (125 in total) that were found inserted in the municipality of Petrópolis and then, keep researching.

The selected names provided relevant information such as geographic coordinates, toponymic motivation and orthography and these records after some research have the intention to feed the “Banco de Dados Espaço-Temporal da Geonímia” (Geo-Database) of Rio de Janeiro that is being constructed.

4. Toponym as a Cultural Expression

“Maps are a fundamental source of study for Geography”. According to Carl Sauer apud Jörn Seemann (2010), they can be considered a Geography’s language.

In this context, the geographic names are essential as SANTOS affirms that a map without names is a soulless map because a geographic coordinate has no history, no cultural, anthropological, linguistic, ethnolinguist, socio-economic aspects and games of power. Cosgrove (2005) says that a map is a powerful way to visualize and represent the spatial aspects related to how a culture is formed, how it interacts and changes.

Corrêa (2007) affirms that toponym is a significant cultural record and expresses an effective appropriation of space by some cultural group and so becoming an important identity element.

As it was emphasized by Furtado (1957) the act of naming a place is essentially human, establishing, initially a cultural relation directly connected to its population and the way to get to know the place or the area. Therefore, it is not correct to say that geographic names infer one simple objective, because they carry a vast historical and cultural legatee. For this particular matter Fernandez (1987) supports this affirmation:

“The geographic name or the toponym is not only a fusion of words to indentify a piece of landscape. It goes beyond. In reality, it involves enormous transcendence because in this denomination it is implicit, in its roots, various factors and meanings granted by men.” (FERNANDEZ, 1987 apud SANTOS, 2008)

Toponymy is the study of place names. This study is a branch of Onomatology, the study of the origins of proper names. Toponymic researches intend to analyze not only the origin of place names and their transformations but also their intrinsic relations with the place identity since a name can be evaluated as a reflection of a social group in the area.

Toponyms can be defined as the names of the geographic features. However, when they can be found in a place by its geographic coordinate it is advisable to call them Geonyms. Menezes e Santos (2006) affirm that this denomination is given by the geographic reference of the names allowing

for a unique analysis and territorial identification. It is to be found in the geospatial database.

It is adequate to enlighten a work by Tuan (1974): “an area can have its own personality and it is constructed by men’s existence and therefore incorporates a human dimension related to the idea of life itself.” Santos (2008) complements saying that a place expresses the idea of belonging to the social group that resides in a determined area. This affirmation shows that the idea of belonging contributes in the construction and consolidation of place’s identity.

Lastly, for a better comprehension about the systematization of naming places Dick (1990) presents a toponymic motivation idea. It consists of an investigation of the motives that led to a denomination, a name, a toponym. In general those motivations are related to the social and cultural circumstances. The author also classifies the different motivations known as toponymic taxonomy separating them in anthropological/ cultural and physical nature. Those classifications help the geographic names study allowing for a clear perception of the motivation.

After all these considerations it is accurate to affirm that the geographic name’s analysis is a contribution to the world intending to identify the intelligibility of human action in the terrestrial surface (territory).

5. The geographic names of Petrópolis: Cultural origin and Motivations

The 125 toponyms selected were classified by their cultural sources as an attempt to draw parallels between the cultural origins of the geographic names, the social groups of the area and consequently the place’s occupation .

The Imperial City, Petrópolis, had the influence of Germanic culture in the time of the city’s urbanization, particularly by the figure of Major Koeler. In this perspective it was advisable to verify if this influence is still present in the current geographic names found in the topographic records/letters.

Figure 2 shows the results obtained by classifying the names. It is clear that 70% of the toponyms came from the Portuguese language, 19% from the native people (the first social group) and only 4% from European nature and non- Portuguese, from this 4% only 1 (one) has a Germanic origin.

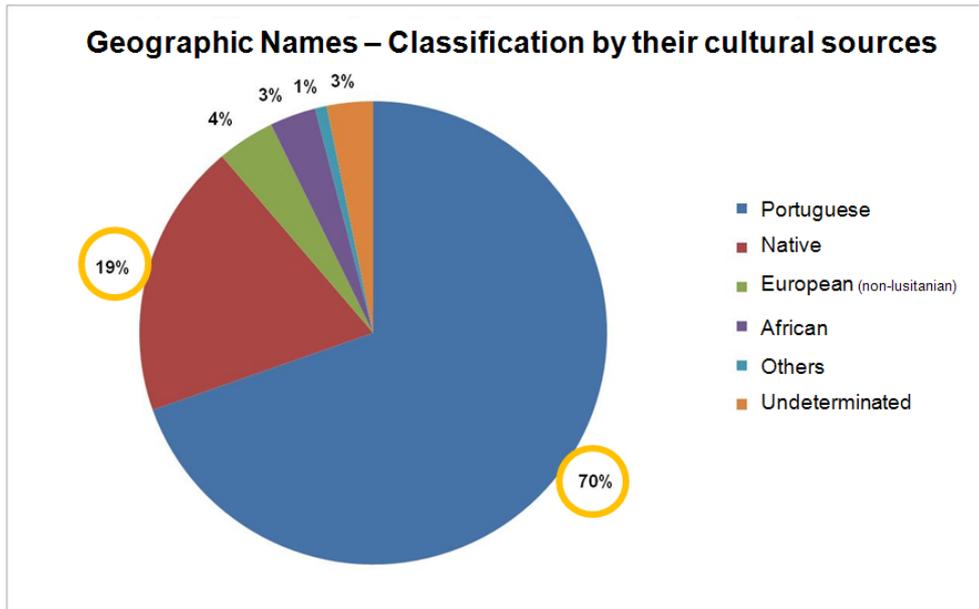


Figure 2. Origin of the Geographic Names.

Origin	Quantity
Portuguese	87
Native	24
European (Non-Lusitanian)	5
African	4
Others	1
Undetermined	4
Total	125

Table 1. Analyzed Toponyms.

In the following, the toponyms of Portuguese and a native origin, the predominant sections were categorized by the toponymic motivation (Figure 3). This research showed that 87.5% of the names with a native origin had physical motivations and only 42.5% of the names with Portuguese nature had the same motivation. In the anthropological and cultural aspect 12.5% native and 57.5% Portuguese.

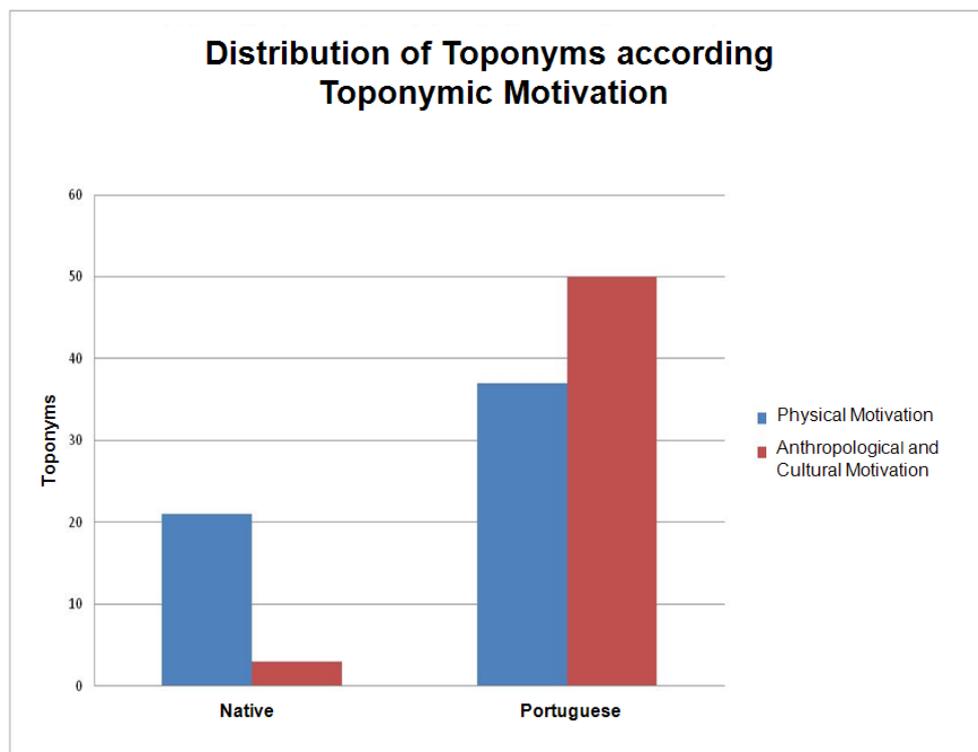


Figure 3. Toponymic Motivations.

6. Final Considerations and Future Stages

Based on the evaluation and analysis made, it was possible to identify that the current studied maps do not show a considerable quantity of geographic names with a Germanic origin. Nonetheless, this fact doesn't avoid the possible influence of the Germanic migratory flux in the spatial organization of Petrópolis since the cartographic documents utilized were extracted from a small scale (1:50.000). For this reason, it is intended to analyze bigger maps and documents from the central areas, first territory where the Ger-

manic groups resided. As for the toponymic motivations, the geographic names presented a strong Portuguese influence since the majority of the toponyms are from this language. The anthropological and cultural aspect of motivation reflected an abstraction idea of a place not so much for the area itself. On the other hand the toponyms of native origin showed a physical motivation meaning a better relation with the place and a fine understanding of the region.

This project/study is still in progress. Therefore, future analysis is expected for further stages in order for us to have a more precise evaluation of the historical and geographical structures of the toponyms. Also, it is intended to identify the name of the features which, for the scale's limitations, are not to be found in the maps. If the studies continue it will be possible to investigate contradictions between the local reports and the bibliographic information and comprehend the meaning of the geographic names for its current population.

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