

# The Morro da Queimada Archaeological Park, Ouro Preto, MG - Brazil.

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**ABSTRACT** This paper deals with the creation of the Morro da Queimada Archaeological Park in Ouro Preto, MG – Brazil. The Morro da Queimada constitutes an invaluable archaeological site, being an excellent sample of the first architectural typologies in town, for it keeps registers of the gold exploitation period at the beginning of the 18th century and the vestiges of one of the most dramatic moments in the Brazilian colonial history. This project is coordinated by IPHAN and is supported by national and international institutions, at the municipal, state and federal levels, as well as religious bodies, NGOs and community associations. It was formally proposed by the *Museu de Arte Sacra do Carmo*, based at the *Paróquia de Nossa Senhora do Pilar* and was approved by the *Conselho Nacional de Incentivo à Cultura – CNIC* (National Committee for the Promotion of Culture), under the auspices of MinC – the Federal Ministry for Culture of Brazil.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

On April 18, 1881, during one of his many visits to Ouro Preto, Dom Pedro II found an important archaeological site on *Morro da Queimada* (Burnt Hill). The Emperor, erudite and widely-traveled, wrote in his journal that these ruins reminded him of Pompeii, the Roman city buried by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD, discovered in 1748 and today a famous archeological site, visited by specialists and tourists the world over.

The archaeological site of *Morro da Queimada* similarly has its origin in tragedy. Also known as “*Morro do Paschoal*” or the Village of *Ouro Podre*, it was one of the earliest settlements in Ouro Preto. It was destroyed in 1720, following the revolt led by Felipe dos Santos against the increased taxes imposed by the Portuguese Crown through the prohibition of the circulation of gold powder and the establishment of royal minting houses in what was then the Capitania of São Paulo and Minas Gerais. Ouro Preto, then known as Vila Rica, rebelled during the night of the 28<sup>th</sup> and the 29<sup>th</sup> of June, 1720. The situation deteriorated, and on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1720, more than two thousand rebels marched on the Vila do Carmo, today Mariana, with the intention of pressuring the Governor to repel the measures of the Portuguese Crown. At this point, the movement had already spread to other communities such as Sabará and Mato Dentro which went on to support the revolt.

The principal leaders of the revolt were Pascoal da Silva Guimarães, Sebastião da Veiga Cabral, Dr. Manuel Mosqueira da Rosa and his son, the Frei Vicente Botelho, and even the Frei Francisco do Monte Alverne. According to the historian Diogo de Vasconcelos, Felipe dos Santos, was “the only truly popular leader” (Vasconcelos, D., p. 182 ) (Fig. 1). The uprising lasted around eighteen days. On the 16th of July, the governor, the Count of Assumar, entered Vila Rica at approximately eleven o’clock in the morning at the head of fifteen hundred men.



Figure 1  
The Execution of Felipe dos Santos, July 1720  
Reconstruction by Antônio Parreiras  
(Museu Antônio Parreiras, Niterói, RJ, Brazil)

After its destruction by fire on the orders of the Count Assumar, the area was renamed *Morro da Queimada* and the population transferred to the nearby *Arraiais*.

According to Diogo de Vasconcelos, Felipe dos Santos was arrested on either the 19th or 20th of July, received a summary judgement and was executed. The other heads of the revolt were transferred to Rio de Janeiro and there condemned to exile in Lisbon, Portugal. At the time, the Governor, the Count of Assumar, stated that even the very stones of the *Arraial* of Ouro Podre plotted against the Portuguese Crown.

As a result of the *Sedição de Vila Rica* in 1720, the establishment of the proposed Royal minting houses was postponed for four years, and Minas Gerais became an administrative region independent of the *Capitania* of São Paulo.

*Morro da Queimada* today constitutes a priceless archaeological site, a concrete record of the first urban architectural typologies of Minas Gerais, evidence of the gold rush at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and a remnant of one of the most dramatic moments in the history of Colonial Brazil. Besides the ruins of old buildings, in the area may be found the remains of the many gold mines that dot the hillside: hollowed shelters carved out of rock, long galleries, ventilation shafts, and entrance tunnels. Still found on this archaeological site are *mundéus*, reservoirs constructed for the washing of ore, small dams, water diversion channels, and hydraulic systems used for transporting slurries of water and mud mixed with gold (Fig. 2).



Figure 2

Aerial view of Morro da Queimada in the mid-decades of the 20th century  
(IPHAN archives, Ouro Preto, MG, Brazil)

## 2. THE DETERIORATION OF MORRO QUEIMADA

In recent decades, *Morro da Queimada* as an archaeological site has become corrupted due to the chaotic growth of the City of Ouro Preto. In the absence of urban planning, the site was occupied, the ruins being used by the population for building material, and the surviving structures employed as foundations for new constructions (Fig. 3). The lack of protection for the archaeological remains on *Morro da Queimada* in Ouro Preto constitutes one of the more serious cases of neglect of cultural heritage by the various levels of government.



Figure 3

Irregular occupation of *Morro da Queimada*  
(IPHAN archives, Ouro Preto, MG, Brazil)

In April, 2003 a technical mission from UNESCO on a visit to the city identified the preservation of the archaeological site at *Morro da Queimada* as one of the measures necessary to halt the alarming deterioration of the cultural and environmental heritage of Ouro Preto.

## 3. THE RECOVERY PROJECT

Following this warning, the *Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico Artístico Nacional-IPHAN* (National Institute for Historical and Artistic Heritage) established work groups (historical research, property issues, Housing, physical planning, and community relations), necessary for the preparation of a pilot project for an archeological park in the area.

This project sought to create a substantial and positive impact on the City of Ouro Preto by means of the following:

- expansion of historical research and the creation of programs for archaeological excavations, facilitating a wider knowledge of mining history and the material culture of the period;

- protection and classification of the ruins dating

from the earliest settlements in Ouro Preto (Fig. 4);

- preservation of the memory of Felipe dos Santos and of the *Sedição de Vila Rica* in 1720;
- creation of a Ecomuseum (Community Museum) and archeological museum for the towns which emerged during the “Gold Cycle”;
- creation of a unusual option distinct from the traditional tourist circuit, to encourage visitors to extend their stay in the area;
- protection of a meaningful part of the landscape, including the urban and architectural complex of Ouro Preto;
- improvement in the quality of life and social inclusion of the nearby communities, creating new employment and business opportunities, as well as ensuring the economic sustainability of the project.



Figure 4

View of part of the ruins at *Morro da Queimada* (IPHAN archives, Ouro Preto, MG, Brazil).

During 2006 and 2007, various plans for public works were developed, including the following:

- delineation of the area of the park and creation of the park program (Fig.5);
- demolition of the recent constructions inside the park; the families concerned were relocated to new homes designed for improved quality of life;



Figure 5

Aerial view of the park: area of 124.88 hectares (IPHAN archives, Ouro Preto, MG, Brazil)

requirements of the local population in the nearby areas, so as to encourage social and cultural relationships that would facilitate social development based on the elements of living space, society and heritage (Fig. 6).



Figure 6

Creation of the Ecomuseum (IPHAN archives, Ouro Preto, MG, Brazil)

At present, the Historical Research Group is working on the bibliographic classification of manuscript, published and iconographic sources and on the preparation of interview itineraries for the preliminary stages in collecting the oral history of the area. After a critical reading and analysis of the sources and bibliography, a work methodology will be established for drawing up a basic text on how to make a qualitative approach to the space. Research in archives, libraries and technical reports on the history, historiography and information management of the *Morro do Queimada* will assist in making diagnoses that will orient the process of setting up archaeological park, as well as in the elaboration of the central theme to be incorporated in the urban planning directives for the City of Ouro Preto (Fig.7).



Figure 7

View of the ruins on Morro do Queimada, in the, in the mid 20th century (Photo from Luiz Fontana IFAC archives, Ouro Preto, MG, Brazil)

-creation of an Ecomuseum, in line with the

The Property Issues and Housing groups have already carried out the survey, transfer and new ar-



chitectural projects created for those families that lived in the area designated for the creation of the park. The families were compensated and can opt to buy dwellings or lots for the construction of new houses. The projects were developed with the participation of the Programa de Arquitetura Pública (Public Architecture Programme) of the School of Architecture of UFMG (Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais), which seeks to align the education of its students with the Brazilian reality, using both theory and practice (Fig.8).



Figure 8  
Demolition of irregular constructions  
(IPHAN archives, Ouro Preto, MG, Brazil)

The Physical Planning Group has the responsibility of making interventions in a site of exceptional natural beauty and significant archeological, historical and natural value. The first stage, already in progress, consists of drawing up proposals and studies for the creation of the park, taking into consideration its archaeological, historical, constructive, social, visual, environmental and functional aspects, so as to obtain information and subsidies for carrying out the projects that involve physical intervention. The interventions involve the identification, protection and consolidation of the archaeological structures and remains, as well as proposing solutions for environmental recovery, and guaranteeing the protection, surveillance and security of the archaeological site.

The new structures will shelter programme activities and will be grouped in conformity with their separate functions and by functional and environmental affinities: entrance and access, administrative block, parking and cafeteria.

To articulate and connect these spaces, roads and interpretative trails will be created that will impart the values existing in the park and its creation. Rest and family areas, signage, and various types of commu-

nication, visual, mobile and lit, will be installed. The architectural design proposes buildings that will be sparse, transparent and inserted into the natural

surroundings, taking on expressive and technological aspects appropriate for contemporary architectural languages, but that also make reference to the typological and traditional construction characteristics.

The proposal must create a fruitful dialogue between the natural elements and the constructions in such a way so as to produce a renovated and restated landscape on the Morro da Queimada (Fig.9).



Figure 9  
View of a mine entrance, 1990s.  
(Photo from Germano Neto, Ouro Preto, MG, Brazil)

The Community Relations Group is working with various initiatives to involve the neighbouring communities in the project of creating the archaeological park. For this the principles, concepts, methodologies and actions of the Ecomuseum will be used, so as to meet the needs and desires of the neighborhoods that surround the archaeological site. The principle function of this group is to establish a participative inventory of activities for the purpose of diagnosing local potentialities and educational activities in the art education field; creative arts, theatrical arts, music, dance; handicrafts; sports and leisure. The expected result is a community project aimed at a receptive tourism, sustainable culture, by means of the experiences of an ecomuseum integrated with the archaeological park.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The challenge – to implant in the community a modern approach to sustainable development that takes into consideration the preservation of the natural and cultural heritage of the city – requires concerted action from all parties concerned.

This project is supported by several public and religious institutions, including the following: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization - UNESCO, *Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico Artístico Nacional - IPHAN*, The Federal University of Minas Gerais – UFMG, The Federal University of Ouro Preto – UFOP, State Institute for

Historical and Artistic Heritage – IEPHA, the State

Forestry Foundation – IEF, the State Public Funding Agency, Municipality of Ouro Preto – PMOP, Municipal Chamber of Ouro Preto – CMOP, the Gorceix Foundation, parish of *Nossa Senhora do Pilar*, parish of Santa Efigênia and the Sociedade Soto Zen do Brasil. In addition, there is support from various NGO's, such as the *Associação de Proteção Ambiental Ouro Preto – APAOP* (Ouro Preto Environmental Protection Association), the *Amigos do Patrimônio Cultural e Natural de Ouro Preto - AMO Ouro Preto* (Friends of the Cultural and Natural Heritage of Ouro Preto) and the *Federação das Associações de Moradores de Ouro Preto- FAMOP* (Federation of Residents Associations of Ouro Preto).

This project is coordinated by IPHAN, developed in partnership with The Federal University of Ouro Preto – UFOP, Municipality of Ouro Preto – PMOP, Municipal Chamber of Ouro Preto – CMOP, managed by the *Museu de Arte Sacra do Carmo*, based at the *Paróquia de Nossa Senhora do Pilar*, and sponsored by the *Programa Petrobras Cultural*, the *Caixa Econômica Federal* (Federal Development Bank) and Novelis Brasil Ltda.

*Morro da Queimada* is a site endowed with rare natural beauty, from where it is possible to obtain a unique view overlooking the historical centre of Ouro Preto (Fig. 10), and the Peak of Itacolomi, which guided the first European settlers, the bandeirantes, to the area, , and, still to this day, a symbol of the city (Fig.11).



Figure 10

View overlooking Ouro Preto from Morro da Queimada (IPHAN archives, Ouro Preto, MG, Brazil)

The creation of the archaeological park of Morro da Queimada is one of the most important recent undertakings in Ouro Preto, and the realization of this project will be as important to the city as the Acropolis is for Athens or the Palatine Hill and the Ancient Forum are for Rome.

The creation of the archaeological park of Morro da Queimada will establish a setting favorable to the recovery of the cultural and environmental heritage of the city, a new start in the place where the city began: the Arraial of Ouro Podre where once Paschoal was master (Meirelles, C, p.55).



Figure 11

View of the Peak of Itacolomi from Morro da Queimada (IPHAN archives, Ouro Preto, MG, Brazil)

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