

Flags of the Touristic Cities in São Paulo (Brazil)

by Andréa Batista Nunes and Tiago José Berg

Abstract The aim of this paper is to show how the symbolism of flags of touristic cities of São Paulo State (Brazil) is strongly related to the different activities in such cities. The government of São Paulo State classifies its cities as “touristic” (or resorts) in four main categories, according to their infrastructure and services meant for tourism: seaside resorts, inner cities resorts, winter resorts and spas. We note that the municipal flags in each of these resorts have a greater or lesser degree of representativeness according to the tourism activity developed in each city and the characteristics of its natural and historical-cultural attributes (beaches, rivers, mountains, parks, pleasant climate, religious temples, monuments, among others) which become “iconic symbols” of those touristic activities. Therefore, in this paper, we demonstrate that vexillology is an important tool to evidence both the study of tourism practices and its presence in the civic culture of touristic cities.

Introduction

The state of São Paulo is located in Southeastern Brazil and has 645 municipalities. The state government of São Paulo assigns the status of “resort” to municipalities which have touristic features and certain requirements such as conditions of leisure, recreation, natural resources and cultural contexts. These municipalities should also provide infrastructure and services measured for tourism. There are currently 67 municipalities in the state of São Paulo classified as “resorts”, which are divided into four main categories: tourist (29), seashores resorts (15), hydromineral (11) and climate (12) – representing 10,4% of total the state’s municipalities.

The touristic resorts are cities with cultural traditions, historical heritage, crafts, beautiful landscapes, leisure centers and typical food. The climatic resorts are places with natural attractions such as a mild climate, mountains, waterfalls and multiple green areas or numerous adventure sports. The hydrominerals are the cities that have therapeutic waters, immersion baths, medicinal treatments, in addition to extreme sports and ecological parks. The seashores resorts are cities that have beautiful beaches and many preserved stretches of the Atlantic Forest, and are also attractive in the area of culture or adventure sports.

From national independence (1822) until the adoption of the Republic (1889), regional and local symbols in imperial Brazil had not been encouraged. In the historical period called the “Old Republic” (1889-1930), the states and municipalities could adopt symbols themselves. Between 1937 and 1946 the constitution created during the Getúlio Vargas government banned the use of coats-of-arms and flags by municipalities and states of Brazil; only the national flag and coat-of-arms were officially



used. This is the reason that most flags of municipalities in the state of São Paulo are relatively “new” and were adopted after 1950. The style of these flags has great variety, but most cities usually have the coat-of-arms of the municipality in its symbolism with a shield characteristic of Portuguese (or Iberian) heraldry.

The purpose of this paper is to show that the municipal flags have a greater or lesser degree of representativeness according to tourism developed in each city according to its natural and historical-cultural attributes (such as beaches, rivers, mountains, parks, climate, religious temples, monuments, etc.). In this manner, we analyzed 67 flags of cities classified by the state government of São Paulo as having a “tourist interest”. We will present 10 municipal flags (15% of the total) that had our attention for their representativeness as “icons” related to touristic activities practiced in every city in the four categories proposed by the state government of São Paulo.

Touristic resorts

Cities which have the touristic resort status offer a variety of cultural, historical and sporting attractions. We have selected touristic flags related to trade and cultivation of flowers (Holambra), religious tourism (Aparecida) and sport fishing (Piraju). The flag of **Holambra** (figure 1) is composed of a field divided into a diagonal tricolor in orange, white and green, which are the same colours as in the coat-of-arms of the municipality (figure 2). The orange colour represents the country of origin of the pioneers (Netherlands) and green is the new homeland (Brazil). Holambra was founded on 14 July 1948 by Dutch settlers and their name is formed by joining the first letters of “Netherlands/Holland” (HOL), “America” (AM) and “Brazil” (BRA). On the white stripe are the coat-of-arms, with a Portuguese (or Iberian) shield-style: on a green background appears the geographical map of the city of Holambra in orange, alluding to the House of Orange to remind the Dutch people. Within the map appears a shovel, reminding the agricultural work of the pioneers started with the “Agricultural Cooperative of Holambra”. Flanking the map appear two greenhouses in white (as well as the flowers of the genus *Gladiolus* that adorn the shield) to remember the main economic activity of the municipality: the cultivation and sale of flowers. The green background represents the youth and the new homeland of Brazil. In the upper position, appears on a blue background a peace dove, representing the Holy Spirit as a symbol of religiosity of the pioneers. The mural crown above the shield represents the municipality, which achieved its political autonomy after a plebiscite on October 27, 1991. The red band reads the motto “God bless our work” as a sign of hope for the people of Holambra.



Fig.1
Flag of Holambra



Fig. 2
Coat-of-arms of
Holambra



Fig.3
Flag of Aparecida



Fig. 4
Coat-of-arms of
Aparecida

The flag of **Aparecida** (figure 3) is blue with a white cross between four fleurs-de-lis, where, over a white diamond, is the coat-of-arms of the municipality, which depicts the image of Our Lady of Aparecida (figure 4). The blue colour and the fleur-de-lis on the flag are both traditional symbols of the Virgin Mary. Aparecida is the principal Maria shrine of Brazil, whose religious devotion by the people began with a miracle in the year 1717, when three fishermen found her statue on the river Paraíba; the miraculous statue was regarded as a sign of blessing for a Marian spot. Besides the statue, the shield has a coconut tree on a green hill, representing the Morro do Coqueiro (Coconut Hill), where the first chapel was built for this and the first Mass was celebrated on July 26, 1745. The wavy band represents the Paraíba River, where the statue was found by fishermen. The mural crown alludes to the creation of the city of



Fig.5
Flag of Piraju

Aparecida on December 17, 1928, when it separated from Guaratinguetá. The shield is surrounded by two rice plants, indicating the main crop of the region. The red ribbon has the following date entries: 1717 (when the image of Our Lady Aparecida was found) and 1928 (the political emancipation of the municipality) with the name "Aparecida" with the caption "Capital Mariana do Brazil" (Marian Capital of the Brazil), revealing the importance of religious tourism for the region.

The flag of **Piraju** is an extension of the coat-of-arms of the municipality (figure 5). It consists of a red field with a blue triangle with the image of a fish in yellow – known as Piraju or golden dorado (*Salminus brasiliensis*) – for "yellow fish", the name that the Tupi-Guarani Indians gave it. The red colour refers to the richness of the soil, because the city was a great producer of coffee in ancient times, while the blue triangle refers to Jurumirim Reservoir, where there is a dam in the Paranapanema River, that start within that municipality. The fish Piraju, besides referring to the origin of the name of the municipality, is currently associated with sport fishing and water sports.

Climate resorts



Fig.6
Flag of Campos do Jordão



Fig. 7
Coat-of-arms of
Campos do Jordão

The climatic resorts in the state of São Paulo are sorted by taking into account their altitude and average temperature during the year, as in the cases of Campos do Jordão and Analândia. The flag of **Campos do Jordão** is formed by eight triangular quarters divided by a cross and saltire of red stripes fimbriated by white. At the center there is a white rectangle representing the city and the coat-of-arms represents the city government that radiates throughout the municipality (flag field). The green symbolizes the fields and forests, the red audacity and boldness and the white stands for peace, work, friendship and prosperity (figure 6).

The coat-of-arms (figure 7) consists of a shield in Portuguese style on which appears a background in a silvery colour that is representative of the purity of climate and the air quality of Campos do Jordão that made this city famous, known by the nickname "Brazilian Switzerland". The red triangle represents the high altitude of the city, located in the Serra da Mantiqueira, with the county seat at 1.628 meters of altitude. The red colour represents the richness of the soil and the city's progress. The three green pine trees represent the typical flora of the city, formed by pines known as araucaria (*Araucaria angustifolia*) – declared symbol of Campos do Jordão by municipal law number 1264 of 15 July 1981 and an important touristic attraction. The golden mural crown represents municipal power. A white band bears the name Campos do Jordão with the dates 1874 and 1934 that refer, respectively, to the year of founding of the settlement and its elevation to a municipality.



Fig.8
Flag of Analândia



Fig. 9
Coat-of-arms of
Analândia

In **Analândia's** flag, the colour blue represents the pure and clean sky in the region, while the white diamond evokes the purity of its waters (figure 8). At the center is the coat-of-arms of the municipality in Portuguese style (figure 9), with a blue background, against which three small shields appear in the top. The first left shows a black tower on a silver background, representing the family of Manoel Lisboa, which offered the first piece of land where Analândia is sited. On the small shield in the center is a melting silver on a red background in the top half and a gilded chapel in the lower position, remembering the chapel of the patron saint of the city: Santana (Saint Anne). The shield on the right contains three black keys on a silver background, representing the three founders of the city on 20 October 1887: Diogo Eugênio de



Salles, Luiz Corazza and João Pinto Pereira.

The landscape of the coat-of-arms represents the Cuscuzeiro peak, a high sandstone rock a few kilometres from the city, which was also the first name of the town. The green field at the base of the shield recalls the pastures and the silver river represents Analândia waterfall, with a height of 20 metres. The arms also features a golden mural crown representing the status of municipality, two branches of coffee as the main agricultural wealth and a red band with the Latin motto *Ad Analândiae Sublimitatem* (By the greatness of Analândia). Currently, the Cuscuzeiro peak is used for climbing and extreme sports and its waterfall is a most attractive area because of its scenic beauty.

Hydromineral resorts

The spas are known for the qualities of their waters with therapeutical purposes. The flag of the municipality of **Lindóia** is formed by an all blue field, representing the quality and abundance of its waters (figure 10). This city produces 40% of bottled water from Brazil and is known by the nickname "National Capital of mineral water". At the center of the flag, a white rectangle showing the coat-of-arms of the municipality (figure 11), that consists of a shield in Portuguese style on which appears the typical landscape of the region as a touristic attraction: the green hills that form the Serra da Mantiqueira, forming the background of the territory of the municipality, in blue the Grande Lago (Great Lake) and the Peixe river, aquatic attractions, a eucalyptus, representing the lush greenery and a fountain spurting water as the most important natural resource. The crossed coffee branches show the main agricultural activity, as well as being a symbol of the land in São Paulo. The mural crown represents the status of a city and its three towers recall the following periods: 1728-1938, when the city belonged to the city of Serra Negra (dexter tower), from 1938 to 1964, when it was part of the territory of Águas de Lindóia (sinister tower) and from 1964, when it got its autonomy (central tower). The blue band bears the name of the municipality in its ancient writing "Lindoya" and the mottos in Latin: *aqua pura* (pure water) and *vita longa* (long life).

In the municipality of **Monte Alegre do Sul**, the flag consists of a blue field on which is placed a white triangle starting from the hoist which features the coat-of-arms of the municipality (figure 12). In the fly of this flag appear two white sources gushing water, as the icon that characterizes the city as Hydromineral since 1964. The blue and the white represent the purity of the waters. The coat-of-arms of Monte Alegre do Sul (figure 13) shows on its shield three fountains spouting water on a blue background above a silver mountain that stands for the name of the city (literally "Happy Mountain" of the South). The mural crown symbolizes the municipality status and a branch of peach and other of strawberry alludes to the main crops. The city is known for its annual strawberry festival, held in July.

Situated in the southwestern region of the state of São Paulo is the town of **Águas de Santa Bárbara**, whose flag consists of a green field (representing the vegetation and agricultural fields) in which is inserted a white triangle (symbolizing the purity of the waters) with the coat-of-arms of the municipality (figure 14). The arms (figure 15) in Portuguese style is a shield with a green field with a silvery fountain spouting water that recalls the status of Hydromineral city. The wavy band represents the Pardo River



Fig.10
Flag of Lindóia



Fig. 11
Coat-of-arms of
Lindóia



Fig.12
Flag of Monte Alegre do Sul



Fig. 13
Coat-of-arms of
Monte Alegre do Sul



Fig.14
Flag of Águas de Santa Bárbara



Fig. 15
Coat-of-arms of
Águas de Santa Bárbara

(until 1978 the town was called Santa Bárbara do Rio Pardo), the two crosses recall the Christian faith and the sword crossed with the lightning bolt refers to the symbols of Saint Barbara, the patron saint that gave her name to the city. The silver mural crown represents the status of the municipality and the branches of maize and rice are the main crops. The silver band shows the motto *Pretiosum Dei Donum* (Precious gift of God) to highlight its natural beauty.

Seaside Resorts

As all municipalities located on the coast of São Paulo state are considered sea resorts, many of them evoke on their flags the symbolism of the figure of the Portuguese cross or “cross of the Order of Christ”, as historical heritage of their founding. However, there are municipalities where these flags show the touristic attractions of their coastline, such as Peruíbe and Ilha Comprida. The flag of **Peruíbe** (figure 16) consists of a field divided per cross and saltire in blue and white colours on which the coat-of-arms of the municipality is inserted into the central white circle. The coat-of-arms (figure 17) consists of a shield in Portuguese style, on which the white background signifies the clarity of the sky and the five stars represent the constellation of the Southern Cross, symbolizing the geographical position of Peruíbe within the state of São Paulo, on the south coast.

The mountain is a reproduction of the Morro de Peruíbe, a prolongation of the Serra Itatins range, evoking the city with its green, symbolizing the forests. The silver band with a black shark symbolizes the county name in the indigenous language (Ipe-ruiybe) which means “river of the shark”. The blue field represents the sea (Atlantic Ocean) and the white fringe, between the silver stripe and the blue stripe symbolizes the beaches, which stretch to the boundaries with the cities of Itanhaém and Iguape. Above the shield appear the Abarebebê church ruins, a most historical relic of the municipality, which evokes the region’s indigenous and missionary priests. The Church of Abarebebê is identified as the first built in Brazil, due to the type of material used in its construction, clay and stone. It was built around the sixteenth century, in order to catechize the Tupi-Guarani Indians who lived in the region, called the Village of St. John the Baptist. It is the landmark of Peruíbe’s foundation. The blue band contains the inscriptions: Peruíbe – Land of Eternal Youth – MCMLIX. The date in Roman numerals (1959) recalls the political emancipation of the municipality.

The flag of **Ilha Comprida** (figure 18) shows the natural attractions of this city, located south of the state of São Paulo. Its name literally means “Long Island”. It consists of a blue top stripe representing the Mar Pequeno (Inner Sea), which is the arm of the sea which enters at the two ends of the island and separates it from the continent. The green stripe represents the city of Ilha Comprida in all its extension, symbolizing nature, fauna and flora. The white stripe stands for the white beaches and their clear fields, purity and peacefulness of the city. The lower wavy blue stripe represents the sea (Atlantic Ocean) that bathes the entire length of the city of Ilha Comprida. The yellow circle represents the sun and on the inside of which appears a green stylized palm tree and four blue stars, symbols derived from the coat-of-arms of the municipality. The palm tree represents the vast littoral vegetation that covers the municipality and the four stars allude to the constellation of the Southern Cross – icons typical for a seaside resort.



Fig.16
Flag of Peruíbe



Fig. 17
Coat-of-arms of
Peruíbe



Fig.18
Flag of Ilha Comprida

Conclusion

The flags and coats of most cities in the state of São Paulo (as in Brazil) are recent and many of these symbols have no more than fifty years of existence. Of the ten city flags analyzed in this article, only two have icons that show a clear influence of touristic activities (Piraju and Ilha Comprida) and two feature icons related to the touristic function in the flag and coat-of-arms (Aparecida and Monte Alegre do Sul). In presenting the coat-of-arms on flags, the elements related to tourism are also present, with historical ruins and the outline of the coast (Peruibe), mountainous landscapes (Analândia and Lindóia), religious tourism (Aparecida) and hydro-mineral sources (Águas Santa Barbara, Monte Alegre do Sul and Lindóia). The typical vegetation (Campos do Jordão) and the cultivation and sale of flowers (Holambra) show the diversity of tourist activities in the state of São Paulo.

Analyses of touristic activities are traditionally made by economic indices, statistical data, field surveys and studies by the government. However, we note that the importance of tourism is also manifested by a series of "icons" on flags present in these municipalities, and further studies can be made taking into account the importance that these flags have in the collective memory of citizens. Thus, we note that vexillology is an important tool to highlight both the study of touristic practices, as well as its presence in the civic culture of the tourist cities.



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Biography of the authors



Andréa Batista Nunes was formed in tourism at the São Paulo State University (UNESP), campus of Rosana, and masters student at the University of São Paulo (USP).

Tiago José Berg is a geographer and doctoral student from the São Paulo State University (UNESP) in Brazil. He is author of the book *Hinos de todos os países do mundo* (National anthems from all over the World) published by Panda Books (2008) and member of the North American Vexillological Association (NAVA). tiago_berg@yahoo.com.br

