

The Lexical Contribution of Geographical Names

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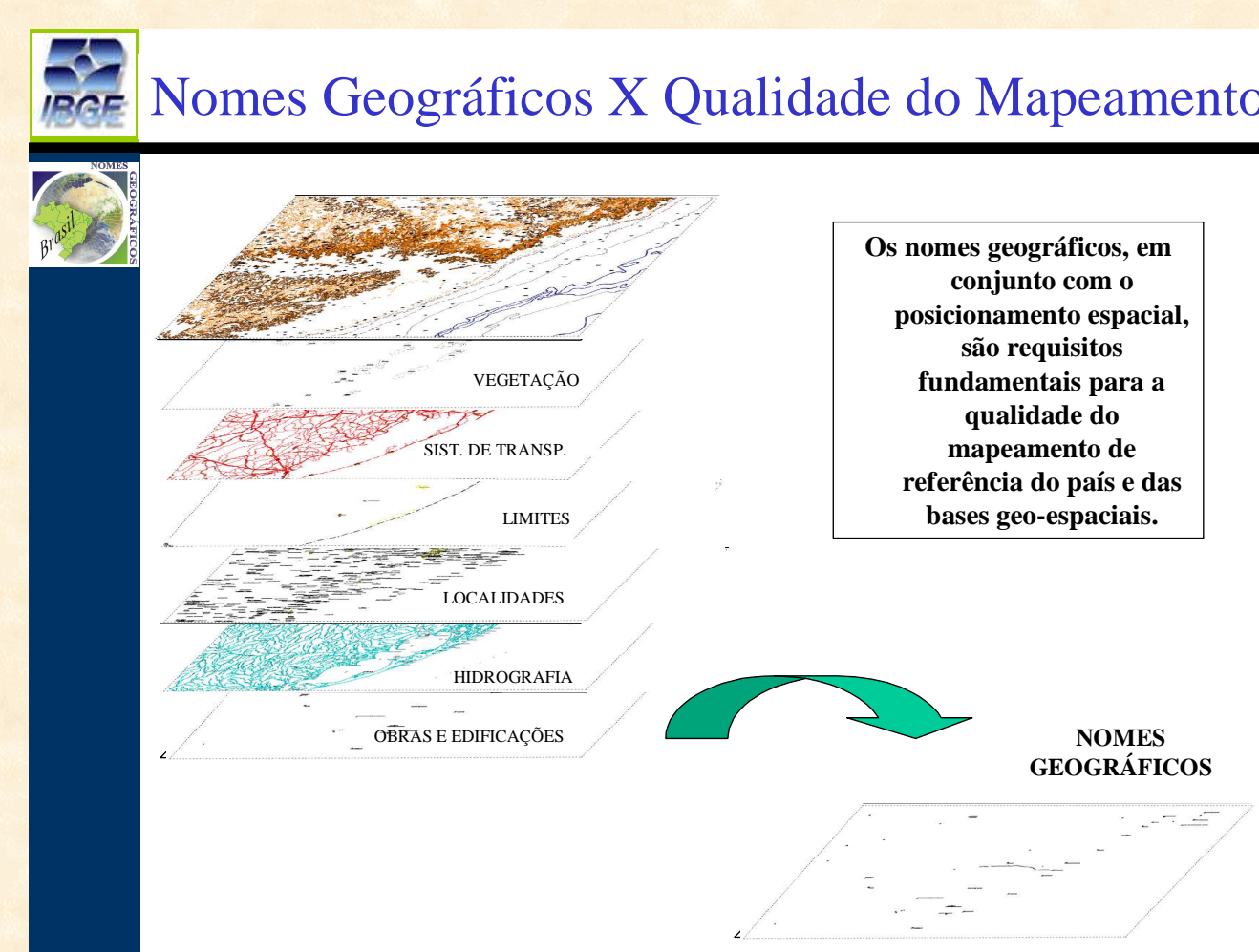
INTRODUCTION

There are words which only the topographic mapping will present to the society in general, by means of the geographical names which take part in it as one of the layers of the cartographic information. However, although most geographical names are assigned by the locals of a certain geographical area, many of these names are not found in dictionaries, encyclopedias or other types of references, but by no means are not recognized and respected.

A topographic mapping has official status, so the place names in it need to be standardized, undergo special treatment, a review so that it can be written according to the orthographic rules of the Portuguese language and the tradition of collective use, which are the basic principles for the standardization of geographical names according to the guidelines provided by the UN. In this sense, the Centro de Referência em Nomes Geográficos (CRNG) of the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE) has as its main function to review and to correct geographical names. A considerable number of such names often have an eccentric or peculiar feature in its spelling and do not have an accreditation in literature. These names are then standardized respecting the culture, history and traditions, according to anthropological criteria considered in the survey of names of cartographic features.

OBJECTIVE

The aim of this work is to build a toponymic dictionary drawing from information gathered in field surveys aiming at obtaining the meaning of geographical names which are present in the Brazilian official mapping but to which there are no other bibliographic references. The surveys also seek to establish the part of speech to which they are assigned.



APPROACH AND METHODS

Geographical names have several aspects, among which we highlight here the historical, cultural and linguistic. This paper focuses in the semantic aspects, on grasping the meaning of geographical names whose spelling is not in common use and do not have lexical bibliographic reference.

We have been working for a long time on the standardization of geographical names and often the lack of knowledge on the meaning and/or motivation of the "baptism" of a particular geographic feature brings great difficulty to standardization.

In Brazil, geographical names are collected mostly during the reambulação, which is a field survey for the collection of information of various natures about cartographic elements. This collection follows the anthropological method, that is to say, the names are acquired through interviews with the local inhabitants, according to the way these names are known and used by population. Therefore, surveyors (reambuladores) are being instructed to collect the meaning and toponymic motivation of names in the interviews carried out in the field. An example of toponymic motivation: Rio Lava-Pé (Rio = River, and Lava-Pé is a plant which motivated the naming of the river. Thus, Rio Lava-Pé is a phyto-toponym).



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REFERÊNCIA E IDENTIDADE

GEOGRAPHICAL NAME

It is understood as the georeferenced toponym, inserted in a temporal context, from which we can trace aspects of the cultural and / or historical backgrounds of the geographic feature and /or community that named it.

GEOGRAPHICAL NAME	CATEGORY
Brejo do Chiquitique	Vegetation
Curuanha	Locality
Lagoa do Buburum	Hydrography
Riacho da Varjada	Hydrography
Taicaica	Locality



RESULTS

A toponymic dictionary will not only contribute to complement the lexicon of our language as well as inform the process of standardization of geographical names and populate Geographic Names Database of Brazil (BNGB) in its linguistic and historical aspects.

Standardized geographical names are a key to the quality of statistical and cartographic information. The activity of treating the names which are acquired in the field survey (reambulação) contributes to the quality control of this information, which will be made available to the Brazilian society, in the form of products.

CONCLUSIONS

The toponymic universe goes far beyond bibliographic references, because geographical names fit in the area of knowledge of the humanities, and the capacity of the speaker-listener to create names is infinite, and significant. Since every act of nomination has a toponymic motivation which reflects historical, cultural and/or social aspects, the incorporation of these names to the lexicon of Portuguese and their consequent dictionary is of great importance.

WEB PAGES



Geographic Names of Brazil
<http://www.ngb.ibge.gov.br>



Division Portuguese-Speaking Countries
<http://www.dlpng.ibge.gov.br>