

# **LA GUAIRA AND ITS ROYAL WAY TO CARACAS, AN IMPORTANT POINT WITHIN THE HISPANIC COLONIAL CARIBBEAN, RELEVANCE OF ITS CONTINENTAL CONNOTATION. CASE PRESENTATION THROUGH HISTOGRAPHIC APPROACH, SPACE - URBAN - CONSTRUCTIVE EVOLUTION. PRIMARY DESCRIPTION OF THE DEFENSIVE SYSTEM DESIGNED FOR THE SITE**

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## **Introduction**

With the presentation of the following work we want to begin to show the inhabitants of our country as well as the rest of the world, that the harbor city of La Guaira and the way drawn up between it and the metropolis of Caracas represent a destiny of ample interest within the itinerary that represents the intercontinental route in the days of the colony, for this reason an interesting accumulation of constructions or rest of them exists. We will show aspects such as the foundation of La Guaira, the space historical evolution, the development of its system of defense as much in the city as in the path and a summary of the characteristics of this important route for the development of Venezuela.

## **Genesis and evolution (San Pedro de La Guaira)**

**Foundation:** The exact date of La Guaira city's foundation is not precise since there are not conclusive evidences. Nevertheless, June 29<sup>th</sup> of 1589 it is assumed, like so (See in Beroes P, 2000)

In order to approach La Guaira's genesis the governmental management carried out by the governor Diego de Osorio must be taken in consideration, who tries to develop the just founded city, the province of Venezuela. In such sense, he founded a hospital, the school of first letters; he also made public works, the paving of the streets and its adjustments besides repairing the ways of entrance and exit of the city.

## **The harbor activity and the urban nucleus, movements, characteristics and development**

The communications of Caracas's city with other sites made him thinking about a defense plan of the city, thus he

proposed to have the place of La Guaira next to the capital like the suitable site to create a fort and established a port. Therefore, he constructed a pier and began works to create the first fort. Regarding his port, it is reported that it is stopped in 1558, that it was used as a pier, nevertheless in 1580, that Don Diego Ruiz Vallejo, indicated that in that place is where the merchandise destined to provide the just founded city of Santiago of Leon is received. In 1584, an agreement between the governor and commander in chief Luis Rojas and the accountant of Real Property is signed, in order to construct a creek and a customs, and thus having a better control of the entrances and exits of the merchandise; already for 1589, the governor Diego de Osorio dictates the first laws destined to regulate the operations in that port.

In such sense, it was during that period which it rose with the category of port of Caracas, in addition of being a bastion of defense of the Province of Venezuela. (Cf. Beroes P, 2000; González L, 1982, 85)

The greater activity of the port during the colonial period was during XVIII century, as a result of the rise of the agricultural production, the commercial product flow like: cacao, coffee, sugar, cotton, and indigo, to the markets of other Spanish dominions or to international markets. In this respect Manuel Lucena Samoral (1984; 3) indicates that the situation of commercial delay did not occur particularly by the Creole commercial impetus, but this was possible thanks to the commercial machineries of the North Americans and British who had a series of efficient and modern strategies. In addition he indicates that in the ports of La Guaira along with the one of Puerto Cabello, was where the greater commercial traffic of the Province of Venezuela and later Venezuelan General Captain's Harbor Office was developed. Thus, in 1779 La Guaira was enabled (New infrastructure) by Spain to commercialize with it, becoming effective this in 1789, as a result of the suppression of the Guipuzcoana Company. From this enabling the establishment of commercial businesses with other Spanish dominions,

neutral nations and friendly nations began. In spite of this, he emphasizes that the port never present optimal conditions for the anchorage of the ships, due to the shaken condition of the waters, that damaged the boats; in addition as a result of the scuffle with the English in the year 1740, many remains were left in the port that entangled the anchors of the boats, which carried certain upheavals, in fact in its majority they entangled anchor twenty-five to thirty miles of the beach (See in Lucena, 1984, 6).

From La Guaira port was commercialized with a total of forty and six ports, of which twelve were in the Venezuelan coast (Margarita, Maracaibo, Puerto Cabello, Cumaná, Píritu, Cabo Codera, Barcelona, Coro, Clarines and Guayana); ten in the Caribbean island (Trinidad, San Bartolomé, Curazao, San Thomas, San Martin, La Tortuga, Tórtola, Antigua, Jamaica and Martinica); five important ports of the Spanish dominions in America (Veracruz, Puerto Rico, La Habana, Cartagena and Río Acha); Eight ports of Europe, seven of Spain (Cádiz, Sevilla, Cataluña, Canarias, Tarragona, Málaga, Gijón and Guipúzcoa) and also with London; with Africa (Costa de Oro "Gold Coast") and with eleven North American ports (Baltimore, Nueva Cork, Beverly, Gloucester, Marblehead, Norfolk, Philadelphia, Salem, Boston, Portsmouth and Alexandria) (See in Lucena, 1984; 6). This author manages to settle down 5 areas isócronas (since 1781) by the Caribbean and transatlantic river basin. In order to explain the employed time, in the following way:

1) **Southern Caribbean Scope:** Passages smaller to twenty-four days of navigation. He emphasizes that the commercial traffic was greater in this scope. Within this area the Venezuelan ports included (Margarita, Maracaibo, Puerto Cabello, Cumaná, Píritu, Cabo Codera, Barcelona, Coro, Clarines and Guayana); the Spanish islands of the Caribbean (Puerto Rico and Santo Domingo) and the islands pertaining to the kingdoms of Holland and England (Trinidad, San Bartolomé, Curazao, San Thomas, San Martin, La Tortuga, Tórtola, Antigua, Jamaica and Martinica).

2) **Next Atlantic Scope:** Passages between twenty-five and forty and eight days, that included the ports located in North America (Baltimore, Philadelphia, Alexandria, Charlestown, Georgetown, Gloucester and Norfolk); those pertaining to the Neo-Grenadian Viceroyalty (Rio Acha, Santa Marta, Cartagena and Portobello) and those pertaining to Cuba (La Habana, Santiago and Baracoa).

3) **Average Atlantic Scope:** Passage between forty and nine and seventy and two days, that generally was used to go to the North American ports of New York, Nantucket, Salem, Marblehead, New Haven, Beverly, Portsmouth, Boston, the

Mexican port of Vera Cruz, and the Spanish port of "Las Palmas"(The Palms) in Canary.

4) **Distant Atlantic Scope:** Passages between seventy and three and one hundred four days, among which was arrived at the Spanish ports (Cadiz, Sevilla, Cataluña, Canarias, Tarragona, Malaga, Gijón and Guipúzcoa) and also with London.

5) **Austral and Inter-oceanic Atlantic Scope:** Passages that included more than one hundred five days. This type of route was little common, generally towards Buenos Aires.

### **Natural context that frames the city and its emblematic constructions**

The population of La Guaira is located in a land strip between the Caribbean Sea and foothills of the mountain El Ávila in its north face. The land that includes this strip has been not propitious for the crop; nevertheless, it had the main port of the country that has served as entrance and exit of diverse products inside and outside Venezuela, besides of constituting a main communication channel. (See in Beroes P, 2000).

### **Morphology of the population**

#### **Urban Context**

Its urban configuration has varied very little from its foundation; it conserves its old part, low constructions and narrow streets. Regarding the port, there are reports that already as for 1580, the harbor activities that were made in the town of Caraballeda before, were transferred to this new site.

With respect to the terrestrial road in 1586, under Don Luis Rojas command the construction of the Way to Caracas was began, which initiated in Punta de Mulatos, San José de Galipán, Galipán, Boca de Tigre and culminated in the Rio Arauca in Caracas. (Gonzalez L, 1982, 141)

For 1593, the paving of its streets and the construction of a new way, denominated the "Camino a la Montaña" (Way to the Mountain) were made, that began in Maiquetía (El Rincón "the Corner") in Puerta (Door) Caracas, the boom of this way was little since it was ordered to close in 1595, by the side of Guanare that arrived at which is today San José. (Id., 143)

In the year 1600, a corral for oxen is constructed, between the denominated sites "Caja de Aguas" (Water Boxes) and "Puente de Jesus" (Jesus' Bridges) (Id., 156)

In 1680 approximately the second public jail was constructed and a quarter of military services that was located between the corner Mamón and Cochera. (Id., 156)

The hospital San Juan de Dios, owner of the property "Todasana", arranges in its testament that it would be donated to the Franciscanos de Hospicio San Juan de Dios of Mexico, so that hospital was constructed destined to cure the most needed. (Id; 156).

### **The Way to Caracas known like “de los Españoles” (of the Spaniards) “De Recuas o Picas a Caminos” (Of Recuas or Picas to Passages): Passage to the Sea**

#### **Indigenous Recuas or Picas.**

The indigenous Recuas or picas were of vital importance to undertake the conquest of the Venezuelan territory, this type of Recuas or picas after conquest served as a base for the Spaniards to establish very rudimentarily although, a road network to connect towns with another ones. Also they constituted a headache because many served to maintain businesses with enemy countries of the Spanish crown and fomenting the contraband, as well as meaning easy flanks for any enemy of Spain.

Regarding the characteristics of this type of Recuas or picas, Gonzalez L, (1982, 97) describes them "These routes, in which a person fitted barely, were not straight routes but with many sinuosities and shortened the way with much or little distance, depending on the route that the daring traveler took...They were dangerous routes, surrounded by abysses and filled by a rich fauna that made their transit dangerous, specially in nocturnal hours"

Concerning these characteristics Amodio, Navarrete and Rodriguez (1997,44) establish a categorization between the indigenous Recuas or picas, the temporary ones, "determined by momentary interests" and the long duration ones, these routes "served as connections between the distant towns".

In addition, these authors emphasize that in the case of Mountain Ávila due to great amount of routes, is possible to affirm that particularity presents these two categories of routes, because from one side it has to be consider that by the particular ecosystem and climate in this mountainous area many of the routes were of short duration, also indicate that "such precarious routes were also determined for the war reasons between several groups, in the sense that the route easy to destroy was guarantee of a greater defense"(Id). In the case of long duration routes, they were those that

served as base to the Spaniards to construct their communication networks.

In the mountainous area existed innumerable indigenous Recuas or picas and they were interconnected one with another. Gonzales (1982, 162) indicates that thanks to these, one had access to the valley of Caracas climbing by Carayaca, by Maiquetía (El Rincón "the Corner"), Macuto, Quebrada de Mapurite or Quebrada Germán.

The advantage on the part of the Spaniards of these Recuas or picas that crossed the mountainous area of El Ávila, occurs with the use of the one that climbed by the site denominated Catia, whereas from the North side it was used the denominated La Culebrilla (because of its sinuosity), that is where ends up drawing up the Royal Passage (Cf. Amodio, Navarrete and Rodriguez, 1997, 45).

### **From the Recuas to the Ways. The Passage down to the Sea**

Being already settled Caracas City it is expressed the necessity to count on routes that maintained it interconnected with other populations, these connections were vital mainly referring the economic scope. In such sense, by virtue of there were no infrastructure sufficiently capable to count on to elaborate ways, it was decided to take advantage of the already existing ones. The City had only two natural exits, towards the east by Valencia, and by the north by the mountainous area and that lead to the sea. (Cf. Amodio, Navarrete, Rodriguez, 1997, 47)

The exit to the sea, represented for the colonial authorities a key point, because it was a way to maintain an interchange with other populations, the almost nonexistence of ways adapted for the transport, necessarily forced to use marine ways to be able to supply the capital.

Therefore in 1573, in meeting of the town hall it was ordered that one looked for settlers in Caraballeda who went to the Mamo River so that they cleaned up the area and see in what way they could build a way. For 1590 General Attorney Tomás Aguirre ordered Andrés Machado the opening of a way to the sea, among the multiple recuas that existed, one was chose and was restored. (See in Armas Chiti, 1992, 21 and Valeri 1979, 16)

This multiplicity of recuas was remarkably harmful, because in 1595 the Caracas city was attacked by the English pirate Preston, who arrived towards it from Macuto passed through Galipán, and ending by San José, the paradoxical thing of this subject was that the authorities were waiting for him by the royal way. This situation caused

that the following year the authorities of the Town hall demanded the closing of all the picas.

For 1604 the governor Don Francisco García de Godoy decided to disassemble and restore one of the old recuas that started in what was called Puerta (Door) Caracas, passing through Sanchorquiz, being it the definitive route. In 1657 Governor Don Andrés de Vera y Moscoso, ordered the opening of a strategic way that facilitated the mobilization and maneuvers of the troops when needed. This mission was assigned to the Captain Juan Arraez who projected it from Puerta (Door) Caracas passing by a site denominated La Venta down to La Guaira.

### **La Guaira seen as a strategic destiny**

By its strategic position, during the colonial time an important number of defensive forts were constructed. Especially during first half of XVIII century, when the head office of the Guipuzcoana Company settles down in its territory (with its warehouses and offices) that would be in charge of controlling all the commerce between Venezuela and Spain, besides watching the contraband. (See in Beroes P, 2000)

### **Military Context**

**Military constructions from La Guaira to the Passage of the Spaniards as much in the North slope as in the summit and the South slope of the mountain El Ávila.**

By their strategic role that performed during the colonial period, the military constructions built in their territory were diverse, of which we will make mention in the following lines.

**Fort or the Powder House:** Construction carried out during the Diego de Osorio's Government, in the year 1590. It is described as follows: "... it belongs to the known type of military construction like warehouse".

"Its ceilings of two waters very pronounced, without roofing tiles and made of concrete; peripherally it has high walls; the lodges (2) are located externally or outside the walls. It has eaves that served to protect the implements for the drying of the powder" (Gonzalez L, 1982, 141). **We believe that it is the powder that still exists on the mount foot.**

Since 1664 in ahead a series of defensive constructions were constructed as they were:

**El Gavilán Fort:** This construction was located between the hill "El Gavilán" and the gap of "Guillermo or Germana". **It was built in 1682 in the government of Don Diego Merlo Maldonado and it was destroyed by the effects of the earthquake of 1812** (Gasparini G, 1982); such fort served as lodging for the battalion of "Whites". By the description contributed by Pedro Jose de Alagarriaga, its form had belonged to the type of regular fortress since it had all its bastions and curtains of a same dimension. "Its construction is of Lime and Edge... it has a high tower of 16 rods in redoubt form in front of which a square platform has been made of 8 rods of height. This tower has 20 rods of diameter and is of 2 rods of height ". (Gonzalez L, 1982, 141)

**Walls and Piers of La Guaira:** In 1680 under the supervision of Claudio Rujano the referring works for the construction began. **Demolished, there are still left hidden surpluses of some bastions in the port.** (Gasparini G, 1982)

**La Caleta Battery:** It is a rubblework battery with capacity for twelve barrels, constructed on the sea and of claw stone. (Id, 164) **There are no remaining rests from it.**

**La Caleta Bastion:** It was constructed on the sea; it was small whose capacity was for seven barrels. Under its embankment they were the guardrooms, guardhouses for the officials and the troops. (Id, 164) **Demolished.** (Gasparini G, 1982)

**Puerta de la Caleta:** It was located between the two previous structures. **Demolished.** (Gasparini G, 1982)

**Puerta Caracas:** It is located where the post office works. It was characterized for having a platform in the superior part, besides it had a pit, a drawbridge and its facade was doric. **With the port works this structure disappeared.** (Gasparini G, 1982)

**Puerta La Trinchera:** It had a doric facade, a guardhouse, which served to lodge the troops personnel, another room where the official and the customs civil employee lodged. **It does not exist anything of it now, only reference are left by drawings made during the Fifties of the XIX century.** (Gasparini G, 1982)

**San Fernando Battery:** (Without precise data of its characteristics). **This construction disappeared with port's works of extension during the mandate of Guzmán Blanco.**

**Battery of the Force: Demolished.** (Gasparini G, 1982)

**El Zamuro Fort:** It served as lodging for the company of “mulatos” (black people). **Today is known as El Vigía (Still Standing)** (Gasparini G, 1982)

**El Peñón Fort:** Where the company of “pardos” (brown people) lodged. (Id., 165) **Disappeared.** (Gasparini G, 1982)

**El Colorado Fort:** Where the company of “blancos” (white people) lodged, under the supervision of Claudio Rujano in 1680, it is reported that had several uses, it was a cemetery and later a circus of bulls. **There are only left very few rests of the walls that constituted their bases** (Gasparini G, 1982);

**San Gerónimo Castle:** The works began in 1680, under the supervision of Claudio Rujano. (Id., 165)

**Catía La Mar Fort:** Its function was to protect the properties of Catía La Mar, besides to protect the way that lead that zone towards Caracas, it lodged a battalion of “pardos” (brown people). (Id., 165) **Demolished** (Gasparini G, 1982)

**El Mapurite Fort:** It is located in Tejar near the gap El Mapurite. The Fort was constructed by Don Fermín de Rueda between the years 1788 and 1790. It is a structure in form of half moon with two bastions where the arc closes. It has a service area that has two rooms that served as warehouse. It was built to protect one of the most vulnerable accesses to the way to Caracas. (Id., 167) **Still standing**(Gasparini G, 1982)

**San Carlos Fort:** It is located in the hill Las Tunas, where it passed the old passage of the Spaniards. It constituted one of the most strategic fortifications constructed in La Guaira to be constructed in a high site. **Its construction dates since 1769, it is known that for its construction they took advantage of the rests of an old fortification that existed in the Place.** (Gasparini G, 1982)

#### **“La Cumbre” (The Summit) and the South slope**

**Black Castle:** It is located in the Summit. It is a quadrangular fortification, from it is possible to have a panoramic view of La Guaira Port. (See Amodio, Navarrete and Rodriguez, 1997, 107) **Ruins**

**La Cumbre Fort: (Redoubt of San Joaquin and Fortín de la Cuchilla):** A greater structure than the previous one, strategically it had the mission of defending Caracas of a possible attack, besides of serving as a control post to passports. **Ruins**

**El Portachuelo or Atalaya Battery:** It is a defensive

structure located closely together of the Black Castle, approximately one kilometer. Its strategic target consisted of watching the way and to maintain visual contact between the Black Castle and La Cumbre Fort. (Id) **Ruins**

#### **Conclusion**

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After having presented this summary, we only have left to conclude that La Guaira along with their port like the way between Caracas and the sea represent a fundamental axis for the development of the Venezuelan territory with ample connotations in the commercial and cultural axis of the Caribbean. Although their beginnings denote precariousness we see a strengthening during the centuries XVII and XVIII that shows us the great strategic commercial and therefore cultural value that took the Province of Venezuela to be known in many latitudes of the well-known world at that time. The best example we can see it materialized in the constructions that throughout almost 400 years rose between La Guaira and Caracas, perhaps being the best representatives the constructions of defensive military character. This work represents the beginning of an investigative axis that will be continued developing for the documentation and fortification of a destiny and important point within the colonial itinerary in the Caribbean context.

### **Abstract**

La Guaira and its surroundings considered like natural landscape (El Ávila National Park) and cultural landscape, frame the perspective of the sociocultural and space development, within the American colonial commerce with the great large cities of Caribe, and inland with the city of Caracas, from century XVII, reaching greater height in century XVIII. It constitutes a point of great strategic value within Camino Real intercontinental with the greatest traffic in the colony. The investigation will results in the definition of the layout and the insertion of this sector within the same one. Important to stand out that the work se will carry out with participation a interdisciplinary team from which it is managed to obtain a vision of the port jointly with the defense of the capital of Province (Caracas).We will include different stages from urban growth and of the constructed defensive system in its surroundings (extra e intrawalls), with the inventory of the military constructions that still remain like registry instrument the card designed by the committee from cultural itineraries. Thus we will be presenting the logical illation of construction of batteries, hornabeques, alcabalas and others, that were conforming the defensive system of the Camino Real to Caracas.

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