

Voyages of a 17th-Century Map of Buenos Aires: From Spies and Sailors to Printers and Scholars

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Résumé de l'article

The proposed paper will present the long and rich life span of a city map of Buenos Aires and its changing settings, by following the many editions of a map first drawn by a French military engineer, Barthelemy de Massiac, that stayed as a prisoner in the city between 1660 and 1662. This example helps to further questions referring to the problem of stability / instability of maps. How do copies and adaptation to different supports or media affect their alleged unicity? How do they travel and what are the effects of their journeys? The problem may be addressed on the basis of the works on sociology of culture and science by Pierre Bourdieu, and on the history of the book and print culture by Roger Chartier. Although they don't specifically study maps, their views add to the social and cultural approach to maps of the now classical critical studies in history of cartography by John B. Harley and David Woodward, among others. In this respect, Bourdieu stressed that ideas, books especially (as well as, it can be added, images and maps), travel without their context of production, through appropriations, translations and editions that sustain their circulation in space and, I also add, in time. The work of Roger Chartier also offers ground for this claim, as do his more recent work about images and their life in manuscripts, print and digital records and production. On a more epistemological perspective, attention to these changing supports, media and audiences contributes to rethink Bruno Latour's definition of maps as immutable mobiles that sustained the making of modern science. I intend to address these issues presenting an example of the many copies, versions, printing of a map and its consequent storing, selling, circulating, archiving and studying, that show both the persistence and mutability of maps in shifting scenarios and readership. Briefly, the map drawn in 1669 by de Massiac lived a broad and long life, travelling from drawing desk to shelves, from print to books, from geography to antiquarianism and tourism, from urbanism to history, along at least 15 different versions and supports made until 1981, always surrounded by doubts about its trustworthiness yet at the same time used as a virtual logotype for the earlier stages of the city of which no other plans survive. Much later, pursue in French archives helped restore its original status as part of a military plan. The significance of recovering its original condition is more fully grasped when we put it into the perspective of its changing appropriations and journeys in time, place and varying scholarship.

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*Voyages of a 17th-Century Map of Buenos Aires: From Spies and Sailors to Printers and Scholars**

In 1660, Barthélemy de Massiac,ⁱ a French *gentilhomme* and military engineer at the service of the Portuguese crown, took a journey from Angola on a ship that carried goods and enslaved Africans to trade in Buenos Aires and Brazil, with plans to later return to Portugal. The trip ended badly. Not only was foreign trade then forbidden in Buenos Aires, but on its arrival, Massiac's ship fell victim to an act of piracy by a Dutch ship and lost its merchandise. Being an unauthorized foreigner, he was imprisoned and subjected to trial. After two years of confinement, he managed to secure a trip to Spain where he was finally released. As a result of his stay, he envisaged a plan for the French to take over the Río de la Plata, an advantageous point of entry to the wealth of Potosí (presented in the coming pages), of which he later drew three maps: one of the fort of Buenos Aires (not found), one of the layout of the city, and another of its surroundings (both extant in manuscript). The city map was the only one to outlive its original purpose; in fact, it was copied and reissued several times in different places and contexts.

Alfredo Taullard published the first collection of historical maps of the city of Buenos Aires in 1940. On the book cover, Taullard (1940) presented a silhouette of the federal district of Buenos

Aires, comprising inside it the map of study, thus denoting the book's timespan (figure 1), which presented 54 maps from the Spanish foundation of the city in 1580 to its federalization as the capital city of Argentina in 1880. Taullard believed the map he reproduced was from the 1750s, as it had appeared in the *Histoire de Paraguay* by the Jesuit father Pedro de Charlevoix, which was published in Paris in 1756. In the decades prior to Taullard's book, students and antiquaries such as Della Paolera (1936) and Furlong (1936), had discussed whether this map portrayed the city at the time of Charlevoix's publication, or whether it reflected a prior situation, and had, thus, been accomplished before. A Dutch view of Buenos Aires from 1628, or the visit in the region of Jesuit priest Joseph Quiroga in 1745, were proposed as potential dates or circumstances behind the creation of the map. Taullard favoured the attribution to Charlevoix.

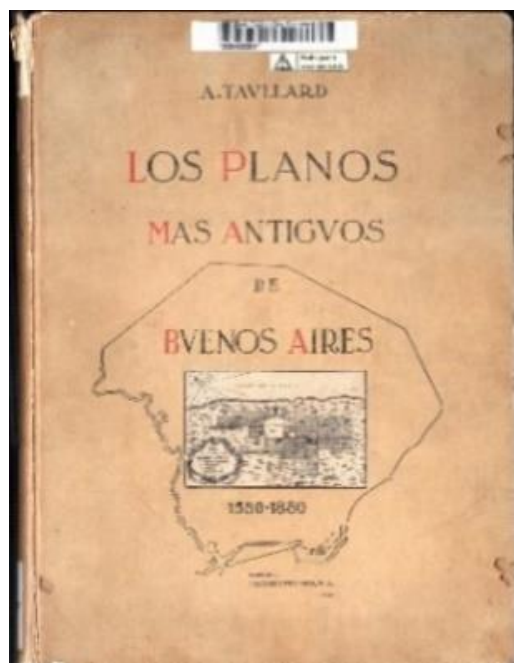


Figure 1
Front cover of Alfredo Taullard's *Los planos más antiguos de Buenos Aires*, Buenos Aires: Peuser, 1940.

Its origins were fully traced when Maud de Ridder de Zemborain (1999) published the results of her research in Argentinian, Portuguese, and French archives, making a fairly complete portrait of Massiac's life and plans available to the public. Only then it became certain that the author of the map had been the Seigneur de Sainte-Colombe on behalf of his brother, Barthélemy de Massiac. Based on the observations made by Barthélemy during his compulsory stay in the city between 1660 and 1662, the brothers wrote and submitted a memoir to minister Colbert's brother. At Colbert's request for further information, the said map was drawn in 1669.

This paper follows the wide, long, and rich life span of this city map of Buenos Aires and its changing settings by tracing the many copies, editions, formats, and

supports in which it circulated among diverse audiences over three centuries. While the scope is narrow, it can also be considered wide since we follow the lives of one map; or rather the lives of an urban layout as drawn first in the 17th century, and its reiterations along a broad time span and across changing places and interests, as it passed from being a secret manuscript to public display, as it became interwoven in warfare, map making, politics, and scholarship.

In this sense, this is not about maps in the making, but about maps on the move. For as interesting it may be, the saga of this map is also relevant when considered from the perspective of circulation or motion, a key notion in current theoretical and methodological trends in the humanities as well as in social theory (Rodgers, Raman, and Reimitz 2014). Following Lauren Beck in the call for this issue, the study of maps as they move, or as things-in-motion in the methodological terms suggested by Appadurai (1986), can improve our understanding of their social lives, or, as Kopytoff (1986) presented in the same book, their cultural biographies, their histories of exchange and value, their appearances, and disappearances. This stress in motion has been reformulated under the methodological lens on itineraries, that perhaps is better suited for the things-objects that move and perform and offer an alternative to the notion of object biographies (Joyce and Gillespie 2015, 3–20). Here I use more loosely the term journeys, in an attempt to retain and stress the often-contingent character of the circulation or flow of maps and their historical consideration.

A related perspective focuses on flows of ideas, or, in a more materialistic optic, books, written works, and images as part

of the social formation of intellectual and academic fields (Bourdieu 1989; Topalov 2001; Chartier 2016, 2021). Maps, as texts and artifacts, also move in space and time, are exchanged, copied, stored, displayed, studied, looked upon, talked, and written about. In these journeys, they assemble with other things and people; they transform and perform (Brückner 2011, 147). Tracking their paths and stops makes it possible to identify or at least conjecture their agency, and their effects in the course of deeds and actions. In this sense, maps are not inert and at hand. They are perhaps, as Hodder has stated, points of intersection, entanglements among things, social practices and changing epistemologies or ways of knowing that engage with maps (Hodder 2012, 12–13). Among the effects of the map and of mapping practices, as we will see, an arena of debates takes place that plays an important role in the legitimization of professions and academic fields. This study seeks to reposition and reassess their agency in modern history, as well as to a reflexive historicism of some of the many professions of the map.

I intend to address these issues by tracing the many copies and printings of this Buenos Aires map and its consequent storing, circulating, archiving, printing, and studying that help to acknowledge the persistence, as well as the mutability of maps in shifting scenarios and readership. It is worth going over them once more as the permanency of the 1669 image sheds light on the lives of maps through the most varied circumstances. How do maps travel? What are the effects of their journeys? More specifically, how can we trace the 1669 map's persistence? What paths did it travel since its first manuscript? What alterations did it go through? What questions did it provoke,

and what actions did it trigger? As we shall see, the long life of this map had a peculiar geography as it was reproduced in different versions in Europe and only became public, and therefore noticeable to Spain and Buenos Aires, after it was published in print in 1756. Astonishingly, this map persisted for another two centuries as a puzzling, misdated and confusing testimony of a city that had been, in fact, much larger at the time when it was published and entered the savant circles (Favelukes 2021, 182-99).

As this article will show, the manuscript drawing and the secret plan that resulted from Massiac's stay were taken into consideration by French authorities. As it passed to printed books, the map became a display of an imprecise, almost anachronistic geographical present, and afterwards it transformed into a testimony of an uncertain past open to critical consideration and became the object of systematic historical and urban inquiry. Along these journeys, the Massiac brothers' map shaped the non-Spanish imagination of a city that soon outgrew the 1669 layout. In this sense, its journeys, rather than pointing at a state of knowledge about a certain city at a certain time, point out its circulation and its fortune among political, military, scholarly, and publishing circles, regardless of its degree of resemblance to the actual state of the city it purported to show.

A secret plan, the archives, the copies: 1660-1669-1693-1734.

As mentioned before, Barthélemy de Massiac, after serving in Angola for eight years, set off on his journey back to Lisbon in 1660 on a Dutch trading ship carrying goods to Buenos Airesⁱⁱ (this synthesis is based on Ridder de Zemborain

1999.) After being imprisoned, he remained confined in the city for two years and was then sent to Spain for trial. Once in Madrid, and still as a prisoner, Massiac met with his brother, Pierre de Sainte-Colombe. Based on the observations made by Barthélemy, they secretly wrote a memoir which Sainte-Colombe sent to the rising Intendent of Finances, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, in 1664, presenting a plan to seize the city and the Río de la Plata region. In the accompanying letter to Colbert, Pierre assured that he and his brother could give further information and provide the “measures of the plan of Buenos Aires, with the indication of the place where landing should take place in order to ensure its success” (Massiac 1664 in de Ridder 1999, 150). It was believed that a navigable river connection existed between Buenos Aires and the wealthy mines of Potosí – the ultimate goal of trade. According to the plan, either a military conquest or the establishment of a French settlement across the coast of Buenos Aires would secure the desired connection and exalt France and its king.ⁱⁱⁱ

The manuscript reached Colbert, who had recently established the *Compagnie française des Indes occidentales*. Showing interest in the idea, he sent Sainte-Colombe a list with thirty-six questions about the region and city.^{iv} As the paleographer who transcribed the document in 1933 stated, Barthélemy wrote his answers in a disarrayed manner, using the margins of the paper, and added a long commentary in the final pages to support his plan and to justify the entitlement of France to take these lands (Roussier 1933, 220).^v In 1669, after being appointed Head of the Marine Department of France, Colbert requested further information and commanded Sainte-Colombe to draw a map

of the city and of the Río de la Plata. Pierre drew three maps – of the fort, of the city, and of its surroundings – based on his brother’s account and sketches. The latter two are currently kept in the *Salle des Cartes* of the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF) as part of a folder pertaining to the Hydrographic Service of the Marine. The collection contains 69 maps related to the city of Buenos Aires and its surroundings before 1801.^{vi} Colbert archived the memoir and the answers to the questionnaire in a folder containing several documents related to the Río de la Plata, currently in the archives of the Minister of the Colonies. The maps then, at least the two surviving ones, became estranged from the written documents (it is unknown as to how and when) and the map of the city took a path of its own,^{vii} and, as previously mentioned, was only recently put in relation again to the memoir.

The city layout is drawn in black ink and grey colouring on a thick 38 x 53 cm sheet of paper (figure 2). The title, scale, author, date of the map, as well as the list of numerical references of noteworthy buildings and locations are presented in two cartouches skillfully adorned with festoons and drapery, and frilled lettering.^{viii} The ornaments encircle the topographic drawing, that is indeed the first known scaled map of Buenos Aires after its foundation in 1580.^{ix} The depiction by Massiac is fairly consistent with the foundational disposition of the residential lots and religious buildings, which, as explained earlier, were to occupy 42 of the 141 blocks of the *traza*, but ignores the periphery of orchards that he had mentioned in his answers to Colbert’s questions. According to the topographic drawing, his map shows several square and fully occupied blocks, as well as some

rectangular, smaller ones that may be interpreted as partially built blocks, a feature that was later seen as confusing by historians since the square block finally became identified as an essential characteristic of the urban fabric of Buenos Aires. The most detailed figure is, according to military interest, the fort, described in the answers as weak and easy to take, with its walls, corps de guard rooms, and chapel.

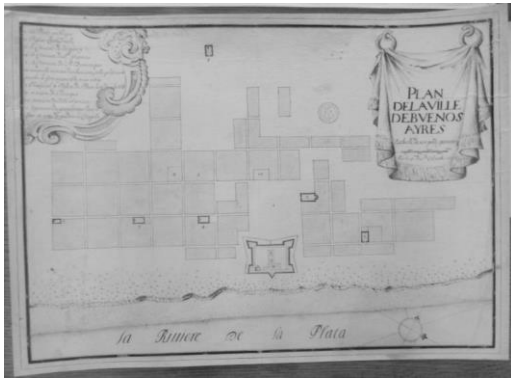


Figure 2
Plan de la ville de Buenos Ayres / par le Sr. de Ste. Colombe. 1669. Manuscript, ink and watercolor on paper, 38 x 53 cm. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Maps and Plans Department, GE SH 18 PF 167 DIV 6 P 2 D [Division 6 of Portfolio 167 of the Naval Hydrographic Service dedicated to the city and surroundings of Buenos Aires and Martin Garcia Island]; 2 D. <http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb44251067x>.

Afterwards, the map seems to have been lost or misplaced and interest in the region diminished. But worries about European wars and crop shortages revived French interest. The Minister of the Navy, Pontchartrain, wrote to Massiac in 1693 requesting copies of both the report and the maps. Massiac replied he had not

kept any, and that a copy should be requested from Mariscal d'Estreé. In his requirement letter to the Chancellor, the Minister stated that "I would be satisfied enough to learn the prowess and weakness of the enemy colony" (Pontchartrain 1693 in de Ridder 1999, 184). That is, thirty years after Massiac's stay in Buenos Aires, the French government still had barely any knowledge of the Plata region, and France was once again interested in it. This was not unusual; on the contrary, the circulation of images and maps of Spanish American towns was rare, and limited to few outstanding cases, such as Mexico City, Lima, Cuzco and Potosí, and a few city ports presented in atlases and books with long outdated images that frequently froze urban reality, as Kagan (2001, 72–73) has shown. The urban situation of the vast majority of towns and settlements remained almost completely unknown to the European public.

The original drawing must have been found later on, because another manuscript copy, coloured in this case, is kept in the same binder of the marine service (figure 3). At the bottom right corner, along the margin, it says "Lemoine fecit," a signature used by the cartographer acting as Jacques-Nicolas Bellin's right hand at the *Depot de Cartes*.^x There appears no indication of the time of production on the sheet, but a note in old inventories date it to 1734.^{xi} It is a drawing on thick paper, cardboard-like, and is the same size as Massiac's map (36 x 51 cm, on a 49.5 x 66.5 cm sheet).

Even though the drawing is undoubtedly a copy of the previous one, some minor differences point to a substantially different production context, that of the emergent state administration. The most noticeable variation is the map's bearing,

which has been turned 180°. As a result, the shores of the Río de la Plata appear at the top of the sheet. Besides that, Lemoine's drawing, despite being watercoloured, is displayed within a very austere frame, and decorations are completely absent. The graphic scale is located at the top border. The list of references disappears, and the names of buildings and notorious places appear in the form of written legends inside the drawing itself, in an understated small font, plain, lowercase hand lettering. The title is the same as in the first map, that is, "*Plan de la ville de Buenos Aires*," written in uppercase in the emptiest area of the sheet, with no frame or adornment of any kind.

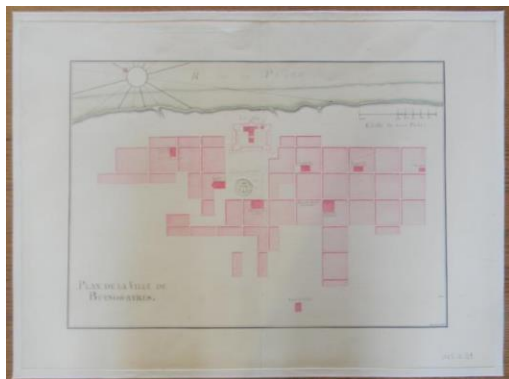


Figure 3
Plan de la ville de Buenos-Ayres / Lemoine fecit, 1734. Manuscript, watercolor on paper, 36 x 51 cm, on a sheet 49.5 x 66.5 cm. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Maps and Plans Department, GE SH 18 PF 167 DIV 6 P 2/1 D [Division 6 of Portfolio 167 of the Naval Hydrographic Service dedicated to the city and surroundings of Buenos Aires and Martin Garcia Island]; 2/1 D. <http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb44251067x>.

Although there are no indications of the purposes that the copy would serve, the image and its traits hint at the procedures

of modernizing administrative work: the drawing provides information solely on the topic of the title and casts a veil around – and rationalizes – its context of production. Behind this austerity and understatement lay the ideals of the emerging bureaucracy that was forming at the time: the administrators, the navy, the army, the king's corps of engineers and geographers, and most importantly, their archives, such as the *Dépôt de la Guerre*, created in 1688.

By 1734, two manuscript exemplars existed: the first drawing issued by the Massiac brothers in the context of their proposal to seize the Río de la Plata, which was carefully considered by the highest levels of the French government, and the copy made by the military engineer and cartographer Lemoine as part of his duties in the cartographic archive. Both carried secret knowledge that was key to the ultimately unfulfilled plans of expanding the French domain to South America.

Of books and prints, of geographers and militaries: 1754-1756-1758-1764

When Lemoine was copying Massiac's map, Jacques Nicolas Bellin (1703-1772) was already working as a cartographer.^{xiii} In 1744, Bellin authored the maps for the *Histoire et description générale de la Nouvelle France*, published by the Jesuit priest Pierre-Francois-Xavier de Charlevoix (1682-1761) after his journey between the years of 1720 and 1722 through the domains of France in North America (Charlevoix, 1744). The 32 books appeared in 2 volumes with abundant illustrations, particularly of the plant species he identified. The book also included *Carte de l'Amerique Septentrionale*, *Carte de La Louisiane, cours de Mississippí et país voisins*, as well as 18 maps of sectors, bays,

ports, and settlements^{xiii}, all signed by Bellin.

Ensuing his ambitious project of a History of the New World, which he did not get to complete, Charlevoix published his *Histoire du Paraguay* in 1757, where he also included maps authored by Bellin.^{xiv} In this book, however, images were scarce: only seven maps were included, two of them in the first volume. First, a folded map of South America appeared facing the title page; second, the map of Buenos Aires (copied from Massiac's) was bound opposite to page 267, where the text presented a transcription of a letter to the king of Spain dated 1730 by the bishop of Buenos Aires. What little information about the city the book contained was related to the description of the area by another Jesuit father, Cayetano Cattaneo, who travelled in the region in those years (Cattaneo 1729).

Although scarce, the maps in the book by Charlevoix are given a special section at the beginning of the first volume, authored by Bellin himself.^{xv} There, the cartographer presents a “warning” of nearly three pages where he explains how the included maps were prepared, especially those of Paraguay, Río de La Plata, Puerto Deseado, and Puerto San Julian, as well as the document sources he resorted to. He emphasizes the difficulties of obtaining comprehensive and updated information on a region which, he claims, remains little known to Europeans. In the face of such reality, he warns the reader that the maps are only included for illustrative purposes and to accompany the text, and that more appropriate maps should be developed over time. Having made these cautionary remarks on the other six maps, Bellin chose not to explain the origin of the map of Buenos

Aires he reproduced and gave no information about its date or authorship.

Following Bellin's warning pages there is a “Note to the binder” indicating where each map should be located inside the volumes. This note gives a key that helps to understand the incorporation of maps into codex books, a process analyzed by Verdier (2015). The task was no small feat, since adapting maps to the size and ways of manipulation and use of books, especially in the case of maps way larger than the books that contained them, required the invention of different systems for binding, sewing, and folding.

Using the same orientation as in Lemoine's copy, the urban layout is laid horizontally on the sheet, with the top to the East, and bound to the book by its shortest side, facing page 267. Despite the fact that it is downsized from the original, the drawing itself does not present noticeable changes, and this can be attributed to its abstract features and to the scarce amount of information it presents. Only the names of the constructions within the fort have moved out from the drawing and appear inside the ornamented frame at the bottom left corner, a decision consistent with the reduction in size, and the consequent lack of space for those names in the drawing. The printed sheet with the city map (275 x 180 mm) is somewhat larger than the book pages, so it appears folded^{xvi} (figure 4).



Figure 4
Plan de la ville de Buenos-Ayres (for P. F. X. de Charlevoix, 1756), Jacques-Nicolas Bellin, 1754. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Maps and Plans Department, GE FF- 8487 (2) <http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb40755066v/PUBLIC>.

At the request of the Ministre et Secrétaire d'Etat de la Guerre et de la Marine, Bellin published *Le petit atlas maritime, recueil de cartes et plans des quatre parties du monde* in 1764, a grand work in five volumes. It contained the bulk of the maps and plans held at the *Depot des Cartes et Plans de la Marine*, necessary as a complement to the maritime charts issued by the Depot. This printed collection was intended to aid seafarers, showing shores, bays, islands, and port cities not included in the charts.^{xvii} In the second volume, sheet 59, right after a map of the Río de La Plata (that had not been available to Bellin 10 years earlier), appears the map of Buenos Aires first drawn by Massiac and later copied by Lemoine. In this engraved version, the city layout was turned ninety degrees to the right, with the top side northbound. The drawing is the same and is accompanied by a decorated cartouche containing the title at the left top corner and a list of references, similar to that of 1754, at the bottom left corner.

The image has been downsized again to 24 x 20 cm, the same dimension as the book, and bound by the long side of the page (figure 5).



Figure 5
Ville de Buenos-Ayres, Jacques-Nicolas Bellin, 1764. Engraved, 24 x 20 cm. In: *Le Petit atlas maritime par J.N. Bellin*, Paris, Tome II, No. 59, 1764. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Maps and Plans Department, IFN-5906091 <http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb40619209j/PUBLIC>.

A few decades later, the map again leaves the books and goes back to stand alone sheets. It appears as an insert within a map of the Río de La Plata, of which two versions are known. One of them contains an ornamented cartouche, indicating Thomas Kitchin (1718-1784) as the author, who was then general hydrographer to the King of England (figure 6). There is no indication of its date, but Taullard (1940, 43), following historian Juan María Gutiérrez, suggested the year

1783. This is mainly a nautical chart focusing on navigation indications, such as depth, bottom features, dominating winds and currents, alongside shore information. There exists another, more sober version, with a title on the top, but without a date or author: *A Chart of Río de la Plata compiled from the Spanish, French, and Dutch Draughts* containing profuse explanations scattered on the surface of the map (32 x 50 cm, figure 7).^{xviii}



Figure 6
Chart of Río de la Plata in South America by Th.s Kitchin Sen.r Hydrographer to His Majesty, Thomas Kitchin, ca. 1783.



Figure 7
A Chart of Río de la Plata compiled from the Spanish, French, and Dutch Draughts, Anonymous, without date. 32 x 49.5 cm. At the left bottom in an insert: “Plan of the city of Buenos-Ayres.” Notes on the reverse: “Rivière de la Plata et plan de Buenos-Ayres.

M. Le Ch[evali]er de Fleurieu.” Bibliothèque nationale de France, GE SH 18 PF 167 DIV 2 P 29 D. <http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb442488292/PUBLIC>.

In both versions, at the bottom left corner, Massiac’s map appears south of Buenos Aires, superimposed over an area mostly unpopulated referred to as “the pampas.” Once again, the drawing concerning the city layout remains invariable. The references appear in a simple legend at the foot of the silhouette. In Kitchin’s coloured version, the map appears to be drawn on a curving scroll as if laid upon the surface of the main map, an optical trait very fashionable during the final decades of the 18th century (Weimer 2017). In the other version, engraved in black ink, the cut-out of the city map is even more abstract, simply added to the surface, with the title located on its top and the references at the bottom. These sheets ensembled the two maps that Belin had published separately in his Atlas. And the map of the city that had remained a well-kept secret became available to the wider public eye. The layout showed an urban situation that was, by then, almost a century old and had become highly outdated. In fact, Buenos Aires had become the capital of the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata (1776), its population was reaching 25,000 people, and the built area covered a surface of approximately 120 blocks, three times more than when Massiac knew it. But the anachronism of the image must have appeared acceptable to the mapmakers or at least preferable to the otherwise lack of information about the disposition of the city.

Moving from manuscript to print, the layout entered a new manufacturing context, that of the printing and engraving shop. The operations and roles involved in its fabrication expand greatly, adding to the surveyor and draughtsman (Massiac), the engraver^{xix}, the printer, the bookbinder, and the bookseller, all working along metal and paper sheets, leather, engraving tools, ink, types, and printing presses. Printing also expanded the number of copies that entered the book and map markets to the point that only in rare cases can a copy be traced along its paths from printshop to private consumers and public archives and libraries.

From a timeless geography to an uncertain past

The copies previously discussed attest to the long-standing French and English interest in the Plata region which, as Massiac and other travellers had noticed, was a pathway into the riches of the southern lands of Spanish America. Military conquest of the region had been, in fact, discussed more than once in the context of the clashes between England and Spain throughout the 18th century. Lastly, when the naval operations of the Napoleonic wars reached the Southern Atlantic, the way was paved to attempt such conquest.

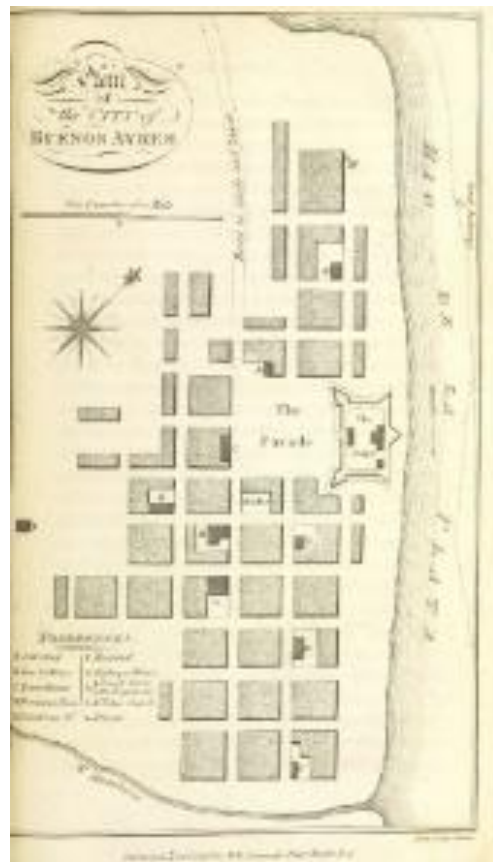


Figure 8
Plan of the city of Buenos Aires, in Wilcocke, Samuel Hull. 1807. History of the Viceroyalty of Buenos Ayres, etc., London. Facing page 58.

In 1806, a British armed force that sailed from the Southern shores of Africa landed south of the city and, within a few days, seized control of Buenos Aires. The commander in chief, General William Beresford, took office as the governor in the name of the Crown. The spoils of the attack – which were substantial – were sent to England, and stirred the enthusiasm of the British public, particularly that of traders, at the conquest of a potentially new colony in South America.

Inspired by such interest, a book on the history of the region was quickly put together and published in London (Wilcocke 1807). Nearly a century and a half after the first draft of the map, closely following Charlevoix, the book included a new copy of the 1669 map (figure 8). In this case, the layout is very similar to the previous versions by Bellin. The most remarkable differences are the width of streets, notably wider and giving the impression of a less compact town – a feature gradually popularized in travel city maps and guides – and the proximity of the Riachuelo, a river tributary to the Plata that lay farther south from the city, and that here is presented much closer, at the very edge of the built area. Notably, even though the British troops had already disembarked and invaded the city, and had reported their success to the British government, the author of the book failed to obtain a more updated map. In a way, in terms of the cartography circulating among the British general public, this points to a sort of geo-historical impasse.

The invasion failed, and the invaders were rejected a few weeks after the first attempt in 1806. A second one, in 1807, under the command of General John Whitelocke, also failed. The 1808 trial that followed the defeat and return of the troops was followed with interest in England, and the publication of the hearings and testimonies quickly followed in the form of at least five editions of different formats and lengths.^{xx} In several of them, drawings or maps of the area of Buenos Aires were included, showing itineraries, battles and skirmishes. This meant, for the first time, the publication of the maps of the city were finally updated. The maps published in the proceedings closely resemble the manuscripts contained in a binder of maps entitled “Manuscript

Maps for the South American Campaigns of 1806-7” that were compiled and taken to England by Beresford, and which were more likely examined in court when Whitelocke was tried.^{xxi} The 1669 map no longer appeared.

For England, then, the turning point of the mentioned impasse was the trial against Whitelocke in 1808. Concurrently, a year later, another publishing novelty introduced an updated map of Buenos Aires to the French audience and had a wide distribution in Europe. It appeared as part of the work of Félix de Azara, a Spanish seaman and naturalist who had worked in the Río de la Plata mapping the borders with Portugal for twenty years (from 1781 to 1801). Published in Paris in 1809 (Penhos 2002), the book, titled *Voyages dans l’Amérique méridionale*, consisted of four volumes, an atlas and included a contemporary map of Buenos Aires.

At this point, at the beginning of the 19th century, and after the publication of the mentioned works, the 1669 map lost momentum. Shortly afterwards, the revolutionary movement started, which led to the independence of the American territories from Spanish domain and to the creation of new nations that promoted both immigration and cultural exchange with Europe. The strategies deployed to promote those ties included the printing and distribution of updated maps of the city of Buenos Aires among the governments and companies of these countries that, at the same time, offered new maps of the city and the country.

As Europe’s interest in the document vanished, the 1669 map changed its nature from geography to history, so to speak. It became clear that it was no

longer useful to know the current state of the city, but to inquire about its past, especially among local scholars. During the next century, and mainly due to the lack of other information, Charlevoix remained the main candidate for the map's authorship, and 1756 was accepted as its production date. In fact, the general assumption was that this was the oldest image available to imagine the old colonial times, that were fading away and getting dimmer as the decades went on, just as historical archives were organized, documents collected, and transcribed, and the country's history undertaken.^{xxiii}

Between map makers, printers, historians, and urbanists

Mass-production leading to popular use and the engagement and critical scrutiny in savant circles characterize the new involvements with the map starting from the final decades of the 19th century. Rapid city growth required updated street maps for a growing pedestrian market, a business opportunity seized by publishing houses that improved their products' appeal by mixing, normally without precautions, all sorts of present and past imagery. On the other hand, and perhaps induced by the map's massive presence, students and scholars began to ponder its origins. These novel engagements entailed the use of critical procedures and new ways of knowing, as well as the emergence and consolidation of the disciplines of the past and of the map.

As a sort of archetypal image of early times, endowed even with a certain dose of exotism and intrigue,^{xxiiii} the map appeared in two cartographic publications at the end of the 19th century. First, it was used as an insert in a street map signed by

Alphonse Laurent in 1887. It laid superimposed on a sector of the city that was still unoccupied and therefore left enough blank space for the inclusion of the ancient map. These sorts of empty spaces were commonly used in map making to display references or important data; in this case, the blank served to add this allegoric image, possibly as a comparative image useful to appreciate and praise the growth of the city through time. Although in this addendum the urban silhouette keeps the general traits of its predecessors, the adaptation to the available paper space required both a rotation of the drawing to fit into the general orientation of the new map, putting the north on its left side, and a displacement of the ornamented cartouche of the title to the upper part; the reference list, for its part, disappeared. Crucially, neither author nor date are indicated (figure 9).



Figure 9
Buenos Aires industrial y comercial. Alphonse Laurent, 1890. Coloured lithography, loose sheet, 48 x 35 cm.
<http://www.biblioteca.fapyd.unr.edu.ar/leaves/archivo/urbanismo/mas-informacion/buenos-aires/planos/plano-laurent-1890.jpg>.



Figure 10
Plano de Buenos Aires para el año 1756, in *Guía Callejera para el año 1892*, by Pablo Ludwig. Buenos Aires: Imprenta de Pablo Ludwig.

A few years later, and perhaps inspired by Laurent’s example, the cartographer and prolific map printer, Pablo Ludwig, included Massiac’s map in one of the pages of his Buenos Aires street guide that accompanied a large and superb map of the city. The figure, fitted to the size of the page, presents several modifications. Firstly, it is coloured: the river has been shaded with light blue, the city blocks in pink, and the key places – the same that were highlighted in the original – stand out in red. The names of the prominent buildings are inside the drawing, and the only three references located on the upper left side refer to the constructions in the old fortress that, by then, no longer existed. Another important innovation lies in the title itself, which is not only austere and unadorned, but also offers the then agreed-upon date: “Map of Buenos Aires in the year 1756” (figure 10).

This inclusion of images as virtual icons resonates with what I refer to as figurative liberties that became an extended

practice in street mapmaking during the second half of the 19th century, improved by printing developments (Favelukes 2020). In these ephemeral maps and guides, current and past images surrounding or accompanying the grid of streets provided, in this case, unforeseen new engagements with the old map that must have amplified popular consumption and imagination about the city’s past (one of the key points presented by Brückner 2017) and even perhaps induced enthusiasts and students of the city (who must surely have consumed this popular cartographic product) to pay new attention to it.

The consensus that dated the map around the mid-18th century held in the savant circles. It appeared in several documents issued by official agencies, as in the historical chapter presenting the city’s development for the 1904 Municipal Census and in the chapter dedicated to urban evolution in the 1925 Plan by the *Comisión de Estética Edilicia* (Building Aesthetics Commission; Novick 2021). Undoubtedly, it had become a document of historical value, and as such, it ended up being the object of study and criticism by scholars. In the context of an increasing interest in urban planning, Carlos María Della Paolera, an Argentinian engineer who graduated as an urbanist from the *Institut d’Urbanisme de Paris* in 1928 (Novick 2004, 192), published the first systematic critical study of the map. Based on the historical chapter of his MA thesis, he thoroughly analyzed and compared the map to other documents^{xxiv} and especially to demographic calculations, a novel approach that led him to conclude that this map did not correspond to the city in 1756. On the contrary, he stated that the edification shown in it was consistent with both the extension and population

that the city must have had in the second half of the 17th century (Della Paolera 1936, 205).

His conclusion differed completely from that held by Guillermo Furlong,^{xxv} a Jesuit and prolific author that, in the same year, and in the context of the celebrations for the fourth centenary of the first foundation of the city by Pedro de Mendoza in 1536, organized an exposition of colonial maps of the Río de la Plata, with a published book and an atlas. There, he included both Massiac's and Kitchin's maps from 1783. He did not question the mid-18th century provenance of the map, but instead offered a new candidate for its authorship. He reasoned that the author could not be either Bellin or Charlevoix, who had never been in the region, but the Jesuit father José Quiroga, who had arrived in Buenos Aires in 1745 and undertook some topographic measurements at the request of the governor. In Furlong's view, it seemed likely that the Jesuit mathematician had supplied the geographical map to Charlevoix.

Three years prior, in 1933, an Americanist historian had found in the archives and published in France the memoir of Massiac and his answers to Colbert's questionnaire (Roussier 1933).^{xxvi} A fraction of these answers were reproduced, without any indication about the source or the selection criteria, by Ricardo de Lafuente Machain (1944), who authored several pieces about Buenos Aires' history. In his book dedicated to the 17th century, he included Massiac's map, endorsing the claims Della Paolera had presented in 1936. But, although he included both the 1669 map and the selection of answers from Massiac, Lafuente Machain did not make the connection between both documents.^{xxvii}

Up to this point in the mid-20th century, three hypotheses coexisted regarding both date and authorship. Taullard vouched for Charlevoix in 1756, as we already mentioned. Furlong, for his part, favoured Quiroga around 1745. And Della Paolera and Lafuente Machain pronounced themselves for a 17th century origin and unknown authorship. Massiac's map entered here another space, a new entanglement that involved the professions and disciplines of the past, of the map and of the city that were then in the process of gaining academic and social legitimation through associations and lectures, public museums and venues, universities and journals.

As the 20th century closed, a final consensus was achieved. Urban historian Jorge Enrique Hardoy located and identified the 1669 map as the original source for Bellin's engraving and published it in his book on colonial urban cartography in Spanish America that contained a selection of the hundreds of urban maps he had consulted in archives and libraries along his research.^{xxviii} Here, Hardoy provided the proper archive record of the map (Hardoy 1991, 117), proving the 17th century hypothesis sustained by Della Paolera in 1936. For her part, in 1999, Maud de Ridder published the results of her research on Massiac's life, and finally managed to establish the connection between the map (or really the two maps), the written documents containing the memoir and plan of conquest, and the description of the city and its surroundings prepared in response to the questionnaire of minister Colbert.

Conclusion

As we have seen, the voyages of this map were wide and long-lasting. This case

gives a fair record of the circulation of documents, frequently deprived of their production context, as well as their importance in the construction of geographical knowledge, despite the often-implicit anachronism of reusing images that come from other times and places. It is worth noting that at the same time when Charlevoix – oblivious to the map's origin – included Bellin's version of Massiac's map in his 1756 book, Spanish engineers working in Buenos Aires were, in fact, drawing updated maps that depicted a more extensive and complex city than the one presented by the Jesuit author and cartographer Bellin.

As we have seen, the map drawn by Massiac travelled from the sketches of this uninvited guest in Buenos Aires to the drawing desks of engineers and draughtsmen to binders in official archives; from manuscript to printed books, from geography to antiquarianism, from urbanism to history, along copies and changing milieu, often surrounded by suspicions about its trustworthiness. Yet, despite these doubts, it was nevertheless reproduced for a long time – first as an image of the supposed current state of the city, and then as a virtual logotype for early times of which no other maps were known – and still are not. In recent decades, as a result of archive work, the map regained its original status as part of military and political deliberations about seizing these southern territories, thus adding fresh insight to the changing views sustained for a long time about the city.

For, in fact, it can be said that a sort of non-Spanish geographical and, in a way, atemporal image of Buenos Aires – mostly French and English – developed along the 18th century, repeating with more or less conviction the basic features

of the map by the Massiac brothers. The ignorance of the current situation of the Río de la Plata transpires clearly in the pursuit of French minister Pontchartrain in 1693 for a map that might shed some light on that distant region. In a similar vein, the rejected invasion by British troops in 1806-1807 illustrates a sort of clash between the outdated map and a very different *in situ* situation that only became accessible to the English public opinion in the wake of General Whitelocke's trial, and to the French public after the publication of the *Voyages* by Felix de Azara.

This paper asked about the journeys of the map loosely applying the notion of object itineraries. As we have shown, Massiac's sketches and notes passed secretly from the Río de la Plata to Spain and Portugal and then to France. The map proper went from Brest to Paris to join Colbert's confidential papers, at some point ended in the archives of the Depot de Cartes to be later kept in the Bibliothèque nationale de France. But then copies were made that multiplied the map, first manually, then mechanically, in various formats and containers, mainly loose sheets, books, and ephemeral booklets. Today it is ubiquitously digital, popping out through not so clear algorithms in internet searches, still performing and inducing new entanglements.

This long lifespan opposes the common belief that maps, in some sort of way, are meant by definition to become obsolete as territories change in time, as survey protocols are redefined, or even as new print techniques and graphical conventions are developed. Taken from this point of view, the sustained interest in

this map is revealing. Its journeys are testimony to changing involvements and searches, to the reluctant acceptance of inaccuracies, doubts, interest, error tolerance, secrecy, and a bit of a mystery halo that scholars tried to sort out. Along the 20th century the new standards in critical appraisal of maps were also key to the consolidation of the modern professions of the map and its pasts, such as history and urbanism.

Although remarkable, the phases of this plan for Buenos Aires are not exceptional. On the contrary, this sort of winding path is characteristic of material and cultural objects, since maps, too, travel without their context of production, eliciting questions and engagements along their journeys. The various appearances and collapses of this map, and the very fact that once again it calls our attention, that we engage with it, points at the seemingly endless social life of maps, that unfolds along copies, iterations, adaptations, and reappraisals.

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* A first approach to the topic was published in Spanish under the title “El Plan de la ville de Buenos Ayres, de 1669 a 1783: variaciones sobre un tema”, in the proceedings of the 6th *Simposio Iberoamericano de Historia de la Cartografía* (SIAHC): Vega Palma, Alejandra (comp.), *Del mundo al mapa y del mapa al mundo: objetos, escalas e imaginarios del territorio*, Santiago, Universidad de Chile y Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, 2017, p. 422-438. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B-uZO7yZl9D6RGJhX1pjdWE0R0U/view?ts=58f39c8f>.

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ⁱ Barthélemy de Massiac (Narbonne 1614 - 1700 Brest) had studied military engineering in Lisbon, then served in the war against Spain and then in Angola from 1751 to 1660. From there he embarked on his trip to America in a Dutch ship.

ⁱⁱ Buenos Aires was founded first in 1536 and abandoned in 1541. In 1580 Juan de Garay, coming from Asunción del Paraguay with 300 settlers, made the second and successful foundation. The city layout (*traza*) consisted in a grid of 15 by 9 square blocks, a total of 141, of which 42 nearer to the coast were destined to residential plots, and the rest to orchards. Labour lands were distributed outside the *traza*, along the north and south shores of the river (Favelukes 2021, 74-77).

ⁱⁱⁱ Around the same time of Massiac’s stay in Buenos Aires, another Frenchman visited the area in two occasions, referred to as M. Acarette. During his second visit he actually met Massiac and they travelled back to Europe together. In the journey, they arranged to present reports to the French government to interest the crown in the region. Acarette presented a memoir of his journey to Potosí to Colbert, who later studied both plans (de Ridder 1999, 37-42, 89-138). Unlike Massiac’s memoir that remained unpublished, the text, under the name of Acarette de Biscay, was first published in French in 1672, and in English in 1698 and 1716 (González 1943, 6-25)

^{iv} The questions referred to the journey of Massiac and his stay in Buenos Aires, to the situation and disposition of the city and its surroundings, its natural resources, production and population, and to the required means to establish a settlement or to conquest the city (Massiac in de Ridder 1999, 89-138)

^v All the manuscripts have been kept with minister’s Colbert papers in the archives of the *Ministère des Colonies*, where they were found and transcribed in 1933 (Roussier 1933, 221). The text was later translated and published in Spanish, first a selection containing no references to the original source (La Fuente Machain 1944, 195-200) and afterwards complete with a commentary (Molina 1955, 89-133).

^{vi} The signature is *Division 6 du portefeuille 167 du Service hydrographique de la marine consacrée à la ville et aux environs de Buenos Aires et à l’île Martin Garcia* 2 D. <http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb44251139z>.

^{vii} Although this drawing covers a small extension and has a large scale that could properly be termed as a “plan”, I will refer to it as a map, in order to differentiate it from the plan of action conceived by Massiac to establish French rule over the region.

^{viii} The other map drawn by Massiac portraying the surroundings of Buenos Aires also presents a decorated cartouche with a profusion of allegoric figures celebrating the French monarchy.

^{ix} A schematic layout called the *padrón* showed the 15 x 9 *traza* of square blocks, the Plaza Mayor - not at the center but adjacent to the river coast - and the distribution of lands among religious orders and the first inhabitants of the city. The original *padrón* that was kept in the local Cabildo but was lost during the 18th century. There is a copy at the Archivo de Indias of approximately 1794 that refers to the original of 1583, entitled “Plano que manifiesta el repartimiento de solares que hizo el General Juan de Garay a los fundadores de Buenos Aires. Año 1583” <http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusqueda20/catalogo/description/16785> MP-BUE-NOS_AIRES,11), digitally available at

<http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/description/16785>

^x François-Pierre Le Moine or Lemoine (1713-1795) was a military engineer and cartographer. He first appears in 1737 at the Army's *Dépôt des cartes, plans et journaux* as second to J.N.Bellin, where he continues working until 1792. The BNF keeps records and maps signed by him prior to 1737 (Chapuis 1999, 773).

^{xi} *Date d'après la note en deux fls. signalées dans l'inventaire mais qui manquent en place.*

^{xii} He served as cartographer at the *Dépôt des Cartes et Plans de la Marine* since 1721, and, in 1741, was appointed *Ingénieur hydrographe de la Marine* (en 1741 ?). Throughout some 50 years of service, he authored a great number of maps and other printed works.

^{xiii} Among others, *Plan du Port Royale* and *Plan du Porte de la Haive, Plan de la Baye de Chedabouctou, Carte de l'Isle Royale*. The name of the engraver is Dheulland.

^{xiv} The full title was *Histoire du Paraguay / par le P. Pierre François-Xavier de Charlevoix, de la Compagnie de Jesus*, printed in Paris by François Didot, Pierre-Laurent Giffart, and Jean-Luc Nyon. The book was translated and published in German in 1768, in English in 1769, and in Spanish in 1910.

^{xv} "Avertissement sur les cartes géographiques que M. Bellin a dressées pour l'Histoire de Paraguay" (Charlevoix 1756). Bellin's authorship of the Buenos Aires map faded in the translations of the book, and historians attributed it to Charlevoix, as we will see below. The case is not unusual, as shown by Rodrigo Moreno Jeria (2018) through two 18th century maps of Chile and Santiago de Chile. His study sheds light on the slippery character of map authorship, especially those printed in books, where draughtsmen and engravers frequently fade behind the author of the book. In her study of 1646 *Tabula geographica Regni Chile* by Alonso de Ovalle, Alejandra Vega (2012) identified changes and variations according to the printing size of the map.

^{xvi} The picture was also included in tome 16, before page 79 of Abbé Prevost's *Histoire générale des voyages, ou Nouvelle collection de toutes les relations de voyages par mer et par terre qui ont été publiées jusqu'à présent dans les différentes langues*, Paris, Didot, 1756

^{xvii} On the opening page of volume 1, Bellin dedicates the Atlas to the Minister, Duc de Choiseul. In the previous decades, French authorities had undertaken the improvement of its cartographic production, leading to a critique of contemporary English and Dutch maps, so far highly reputed. An example of this is debated in a leaflet by Bellin (1751).

^{xviii} Several maps and nautical charts of the Río de la Plata were made and published in France and England during the second half of the 18th century. So far, these two appear to be the only to include the map of Buenos Aires.

^{xix} In the case of the Petit Atlas, the opening pages are signed "Arrivet inv. et Sculp."

^{xx} The longest version was the one published from the official shorthand notes (Whitelocke 1808).

^{xxi} The binder became part of the collection of the John Carter Brown Library in 1969. An inscription on the back of plate 3 reads "Plan of Buenos Ayres shewing the disposition of the British Troops at the Assault on 5th July 1807 This Plan is reduced from the large Spanish Atlas belonging to General Beresford," available at <https://jcb.lunaimaging.com/luna/servlet/detail/JCB~1~1~1754~2660003:Buenos-Ayres-in-the-Rio-de-la-Plata>. The maps published with the proceedings are not shown here but are digitally available at Internet Archive.

^{xxii} As exemplified by the journals *Revista del Río de la Plata: periódico mensual de Historia y Literatura de América* (1871-1877) and *La Revista de Buenos Aires historia americana, literatura y derecho: periódico destinado a la República Argentina la oriental del Uruguay y la del Paraguay* (1863-1871), as well as the transcription and printing of documents in official collections such as the *Actas del Cabildo de Buenos Aires* from 1889 onwards.

^{xxiii} The questions that arose insistently related to the apparent contradiction between the size of the urban area and the testimonies of mid-18th century by several authors and official documents, that mentioned an estimated population that could not have been housed in the limited built surface indicated in the map. Also, it was intriguing that the Plaza Mayor encompassed almost four blocks, when it actually covered only two blocks. These uncertainties cast doubts about the intentions and skills of the author of the plan.

^{xxiv} Such as a Dutch painting from 1628, or Acarette du Biscay's 1662 account, as well as the 18th century maps being identified in Spanish archives by Argentinian scholars, in the context of increased documentary research triggered by the celebration of the centenaries of the revolution (1910) and of the city's first foundation (1936).

^{xxv} Guillermo Furlong (Argentina, 1889 - 1974), Jesuit and historian, was a prolific researcher in colonial and church history of Spanish America and the Río de la Plata.

^{xxvi} Ricardo Molina (1955) translated and published the Massiac brothers' memoir, as well as

their written exchange with minister Colbert, but failed to make the connection between these documents and the maps.

^{xxvii} Still in 1981 (Difrieri, 1981, 54–55) the attribution of the authorship to Bellin and Charlevoix, as well as the date of 1756, was a matter of discussion. In this case, following the analysis of the moment of construction of several religious

buildings, it was suggested that the map might have been made during the third decade of the 18th century.

^{xxviii} Jorge Enrique Hardoy (1926-1993), an architect with a PhD in urban planning, was a key figure in Latin American urban studies and urban history.