

Ideas About the Formation of Alluvial Gold Deposits in Colonial Brazil - the Report by Sebastião Cardoso de Sampaio (1692).

Jefferson de Lima Picanço

The report by Sebastião Cardoso de Sampaio (1692), colonial Portuguese officer, is an interesting document about the ideas of the genesis of alluvial gold deposits in XVIIth century. In this document, Sampaio said that gold prospecting in Brazil was unsuccessful because the ideas of prospectors about gold formation was wrong. He said that the gold was not produced by the work of streams. *"The most practice and expert men said properly"* that the alluvial gold *"don't born nor is created in"* veins (betas), but its produced by the sun activity. The luso-brazilian writer Rocha Pitta also said in 1724: *"the sun [generated] in the embryos of Brazil's land a profuse copy of gold"*. As Rocha Pitta said, Minas Gerais was *"pregnant of gold"*.

Analogies between growth of metals and crystals with living beings are common since Antiquity. Cosmological analogies connecting sun and gold, silver and moon, and so on, was also common. These ideas are closely related to the ideas of alchemy, which, since the Renaissance, was an important benchmark to gold prospectors and metallurgists. Based on the report of Sebastião Cardoso de Sampaio, we conclude that Alchemy was important as the prospect of gold in colonial Brazil. Today, they yet belongs to the gold genesis popular knowledge.