

Recovering Archives: The Custodial History of the Captaincy of São Paulo's Archival Holdings

Resgatando arquivos: história custodial do fundo Secretaria de Governo da Capitania de São Paulo

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RESUMO

Este artigo condensa um trabalho minucioso de tratamento documental visando a descrição do arquivo da Secretaria de Governo da capitania de São Paulo, custodiado pelo Arquivo Público do Estado de São Paulo. Tendo por objetivo compreender a lógica de acumulação e produção de documentos do fundo mediante trabalho interdisciplinar que dialoga com a História e a Arquivologia, o tratamento aqui apresentado busca resgatar do interior dos arquivos a sua própria história. Respeitando os princípios arquivísticos segundo os quais a organização de um fundo deve representar a lógica de funcionamento da sua entidade produtora, contribuindo assim para o entendimento das funções e atividades geradoras dos documentos, o artigo lança luz também para os acidentados caminhos percorridos pelos arquivos da administração luso-brasileira até servirem de fonte para os historiadores.

Palavras-chave: Capitania de São Paulo; arquivo; história dos arquivos.

ABSTRACT

This article summarizes the detailed work involved in an archival processing project to describe the historical manuscripts of the Government Secretariat of the Captaincy of São Paulo, held today by the São Paulo State Public Archive. Seeking to understand the logic of accumulation and production of the holdings through an interdisciplinary approach that combines history and archival science, the project sought to recover the history of the archives from their own sedimented layers. Respecting the archival principle that the organization of a *fonds* should reflect the organic logic of its creator entity, thus contributing to the understanding of the functions and activities responsible for generating the documents, the article also sheds light on the complicated paths taken by the archives of the Luso-Brazilian administration until eventually becoming a source for historians.

Keywords: Captaincy of São Paulo; archive; archives history.

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The history of archives in Brazil still remains sealed inside the archives themselves. Many documents produced in the colonial period are known to have been lost or scattered among various institutions. Others are simply described incorrectly (Neves, 1997). Reports exist, for example, that the collection of books of the *Junta da Real Fazenda* (Royal Treasury Council) of Minas Gerais was saved from destruction entirely by chance. In 1929, a functionary of the state government, looking for documents relating to the borders between Minas and other federal regions, learnt that employees of the National Archives and Library had gathered up many abandoned papers produced by the captaincy's government and handed over what remained to a charitable institution as waste paper. The charity had subsequently sold the documents to a cardboard factory in Juiz de Fora. Informed of the situation, the Minas government recovered 59 sacks of documents, sending to the Minas Public Archives for safekeeping (Boschi; Moreno; Figueiredo, 2006).

In São Paulo that same year, the Tamanduateí river flooded and destroyed the books of the *Provedoria da Real Fazenda* (Purveyor of the Royal Treasury) stored in the Treasury's archive, entailing the loss of a substantial portion of the records of *sesmarias*, lands ceded by the Crown, prior to 1721 (Rodrigues, 1965, p. 171). Meanwhile the historian Afonso de Taunay (1952, p. 25) relates that almost all the Santos archival material produced between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries was consumed by flames, voracious insects and the neglect of those responsible for them. As well as such cases involving the loss of entire collections, Josemar Henrique de Melo (2013) points out that, lamentably, most of the archives produced by the Luso-Brazilian administration that survived the vicissitudes of time lost their original order, dissipated as they mingled with other kinds of collections.

Among the first archives created in Brazil were those pertaining to the *capitanias*, the captaincies, more specifically the royal captaincies, those incorporated or purchased by the Crown in order to establish more vigorous governance of its domains. The Pombaline administration definitively abolished the hereditary captaincy system, putting an end to a process that had begun with the incorporation of the captaincies of Bahia in 1548 and Pernambuco in 1654 (Saldanha, 1992). In 1709 the Portuguese Crown purchased lands from the heirs of Martim Afonso de Souza and his brother, Pero Lopes de Souza, granted by the king to the two donatories during the first years of colonization. These lands gave rise to a new administrative unit governed from Vila Rica.¹ At the time this was called the *Capitania de São Paulo e das Minas de Ouro* and

encompassed a huge territory corresponding to the present-day states of Minas Gerais, Goiás, Mato Grosso, Paraná, Rio Grande do Sul, São Paulo and Santa Catarina. Eleven years later, in 1720, the king divided up his lands and created the Captaincy of São Paulo separate from that of Minas de Ouro, appointing a captain-general to reside in the city of São Paulo, raised to the status of the captaincy's seat.²

The archive of the Government Secretariat of the Captaincy of São Paulo enjoys a rare condition: as we shall see below, it has been fortunate enough to preserve some of its ordering. The fact that the archive was kept under the supervision of the province's presidents, stored in the old government palace, enabled the conservation of much of its original ordering, something fairly uncommon for this kind of collection, since the majority of the documents prior to the twentieth century, even those in Portugal, ended up catalogued, reorganized and, in some cases, incorrectly bound. The archive of the captaincy's Government Secretary is composed of documents produced by the 15 captain-generals who governed São Paulo and by the government's provisional council, between 1721 and 1823. It contains documents received from the kingdom's councils and tribunals, produced by judges, attorneys and captain-majors of the captaincy, as well as authorities from other captaincies and by men and women from diverse social classes pleading for favours and aid for their misfortunes. A rich array of documents can be found among it, such as instructions from the Overseas Council, licenses, notices, proclamations, patent letters, royal charters, letters of account, laws, decrees, official letters, public notices, contracts, ordinances, provisions, regulations, petitions, demands, population census, resolutions, official records and criminal reports.

Like other archives from the Old Regime, in addition to being an instrument facilitating administrative continuity, the archive of the captaincy's Government Secretariat was a tool of power. The activities of each captaincy were systematically monitored. The circulation of information and storage of documents were essential to the Portuguese Atlantic Empire. Following the example of Europe, the archives of the captaincies held documents that guaranteed the social foundations of Portuguese America, since expansion and the conquest of new territories depended on a complex system of distributing favours that reinforced the bonds of vassalage (Olival, 2006; Raminelli, 2006). All the petitions for favours had to be made in writing and needed to be recorded in books. This system allowed the Crown to distribute occupations, patents and privileges to individuals and groups, thereby establishing pacts of loyalty

with its subjects. Such concessions were the outcome of a chain that stretched back to Portugal, creating an element of cohesion within the dispersed Portuguese Empire (Fragoso; Guedes; Krause, 2013, pp. 39-40). During this period the written document had become consolidated as a tool of government, mediating social relations and imposing lasting practices. While the documents comprised instruments of respect and submission, they also established an orderly dialogue with society, opening the doors to royal grace through the acceptance of a set of rules and protocols (Gómez Gómez, 2003). These formalities meant that the documents end up reflecting, in terms of their genesis, form and content, the hierarchized world that created them, mirroring the practices of the Old Regime.

Though amounting to a collection 31.06 metres in length, the documents of the captaincy's Government Secretariat represent just a small portion of the holdings of the Public Archives of the State of São Paulo (APESP). APESP has one of the richest collections in Brazil, including 15,837 linear metres of textual documents and more than two million photographs, maps and plants, 45,000 books and more than 8,000 newspaper and magazine titles, coming from bodies of the state public administration, private entities and former institutions.³ Created in 1892 to collate documents scattered among various divisions, store the documentation produced by the new departments, and produce statistical studies for the São Paulo government, during its first years APESP received a large mass of papers coming from now defunct departments and courts, from notary offices set up in the eighteenth century and some municipal chambers from the São Paulo's inland and coastal regions (Martins, 2013, p. 235). Proceeding in this way, the authorities of the period constructed a collection extremely valuable for historians, but one unfortunately lacking order or tools for searching and recovering the information contained in it.

For a long time APESP's documents remained organized by historical period. This periodization, adopted in the nineteenth century and based on dividing history into temporal slices, was commonplace in archives and separated the APESP collection into documents produced in the colonial period, the imperial era and the republic. The main problem with this practice is that it comprises the comprehension of the natural organicity of the documents, as well as their purpose and meaning. Moreover, this kind of arrangement ignores the custodial history of the archives, which has no relation to the chronological slices proposed by history books. Until very recently, the documents of the captaincy's Government Secretariat did not appear among APESP's research

tools as a set of documents organically produced by an entity in the exercise of its functions. Grouped with documents from different sources and of distinct natures, such as wills and notary records, the bundles of papers and books accumulated by the captain-generals were treated as sundry items from a vast collection of documents collated under the label of the *Colonial Era*.

In 2013 work began on identifying APESP's archival *fonds* with the objective of adapting its holdings guide to international standards of archival description – ISAD(G), ISAAR (CPF), ISDIAH and ISDF – defining the provenance and informative potential of its documents. A study of the constitution of the APESP holdings indicated that the deepest sediments of the archive could be traced to the formation of the Captaincy of São Paulo. Technicians from the Public Textual Records Team quickly realized that they were presented with a *fonds* accumulated by the government secretaries who had served the captain-generals of the captaincy from its outset. These documents were not unknown as such, since various of them had appeared transcribed and published in the volumes of the *Documentos Interessantes* collection. But the idea of the organicity of these documents – in other words, each document's bound to its producer, to the context in which it was produced and to the other documents that surrounded it – had become lost, meaning that their completeness and scale were unknown. Hence they were neither conserved nor complete.

In the archival world it is common to draw an analogy between archives and living organisms, which grow naturally, develop and undergo transformation in response to modifications made to their productive organs. Likewise, the depositing of archives is compared to geological formations, reminiscent of rock sediments deposited by the action of time, one on top of another (Bautier, 1961). Professor Bruno Delmas (2010, p. 85) of the École Nationale des Chartes often compares the work of the archivist to that of the glaciologist, the scientist who studies the formation of glaciers. The specialist in glaciers observes in minute detail the accumulation of ice layers, their composition and stacking, and the dynamics of their flow to the sea. The archivist does the same thing with archival holdings, reconstructing the context in which documents produced over dozens of years were accumulated, rendering them accessible and intelligible to the future researcher. In this work, the archivist has to deal with a variety of later alterations made to the arrangement of the documents, which, combined with the vicissitudes of time, almost always pose a challenge to those trying to recover the history and logic of these holdings.

Generally speaking, a *fonds*' organization should reflect the operational logic of the entity responsible for its creation, thus contributing to the understanding of the functions and activities that generated the documents. In APESP's case, a sizeable part of the collection under its safekeeping was organized and modified over the years employing a variety of procedures and discontinuous interventions that privileged ordering by historical period, thereby mixing documents from different sources. Knowing the provenance of a document means knowing who produced it, why, for whom, how it was compiled and how it ended up in our hands. In permanent archives, the information provided by the provenance allows the documents to be grouped, contextualized and ordered, facilitating their localization and establishing secure parameters for their interpretation, as well as significantly improving the research tools offered to the researcher and to the general public. Consequently, identifying the source of documents comprises the starting point for describing an archive's documents.

One of the main activities of an archive is the description of its sets of documents (Heredia Herrera, 2013). The work of description requires solid historical research, based on documents such as laws, decrees and regulations. In the definition of the standard of the International Council of Archives, to describe means to explain the context and content of the documents in order to enhance access to them (Conselho..., 2001, p. 1). It is through this kind of meticulous work that archivists contribute to the work of historians, who, in turn, are responsible for researching, correlating data and interpreting the content of the documents, building coherent narratives. Although research on archives has yet to awaken sufficient attention from historians, among the archives there is no escape. Knowing the totality of the holdings under an institution's safeguarding is fundamental to promoting the preservation of its documentary heritage, since only what is known and valorised is protected and preserved.

In an endeavour to ascertain the State's holdings and documentary heritage in depth, APESP's technicians immersed themselves in the documents, bringing to the surface the archive of the Captaincy of São Paulo. After mapping all of the holdings inherited since 1892, it was noted that the documents of the captaincy's Government Secretariat were distributed among 135 canisters of documents and 298 registry books, some of them stored inside canisters. It was also discovered that the clues to the formation of this collection were contained in the documents themselves. The correspondence of the

captain-general Rodrigo César de Meneses, for example, revealed that one of the first measures taken by the governor of the captaincy on arrival in São Paulo in 1721 was to request copies of the regulations, provisions, laws and licenses of His Majesty in order to form an archive that could help him in his decision making. The copy of these documents, held in the archives of Rio de Janeiro, enabled the creation of the first registry book of orders and provisions of the captaincy's Government Secretariat.⁴ Examination of this book indicates that many of the transferred documents were copies of copies of royal statutes and orders that had circulated in Brazil since 1611.

The captain-generals acted as governors and military commanders of the captaincies with a degree of autonomy from the viceroy. This relative independence seems to have been encouraged by the Crown and is evident in the volume of correspondence between the captaincy of São Paulo and Lisbon when compared to the documents exchanged between the captain-general and the viceroy. In fact, the captain-general was one of the king's trusted men, integrated into the system of power through blood ties, titles and favours. The qualities that determined the choice of the captain-generals were invariably noble blood, mature age, military experience and ties of friendship in the Court (Souza, 2006, p. 45; Silva, 2013, p. 66).

The first captain-general to govern the captaincy of São Paulo was the nobleman Rodrigo César de Meneses, whose secretary was Gervásio Leite Rebelo, a learned military officer who had served with distinction in the captaincy of Maranhão. All the captain-generals had a secretary working alongside them, responsible for organizing the papers arriving from the Kingdom as well as those sent to the latter, dispatching, processing and registering all the documentation produced or received by the captaincy's government. It also befell the secretary to issue certificates, issue public notice of official acts and maintain the archive in good order. The government secretary was, in the apt expression of Margarita Gómez Gómez (2005), a professional of the quill, that is, an expert in documents and their language. The importance of the post becomes evident in the provision of the first secretary of Brazil, Bernardo Vieira Ravasco, brother of Father Vieira, nominated in 1646 to serve the governor-general in Bahia (Puntoni, 2005). In a short passage of the provision, held in the *Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino* in Portugal, the Crown demands that Brazil has well-organized archives and functionaries to keep them in order:

to govern [Brazil] well, it will be helpful to have a secretary there, just as in India, responsible for the government's papers with which affairs to be addressed can be better dispatched, putting an end to the inconveniences suffered due to the lack of a permanent person in this post, or an archive where such papers are kept, meaning that governors who arrive to run the State are unaware of the affairs already at hand.⁵

The provision of the secretary Bernardo Vieira Ravasco initiated the organization of the archives in Brazil, establishing the archival responsibilities of the government's secretaries. The secretaries of the Captaincy of São Paulo were usually low-ranking military officers with a good education and 'clean blood,' that is, of proven Catholic descent without Jewish or Moorish blood (Silva, 2013). The judge José Teixeira Coelho (1994, p. 101), an officer of the king in the Minas captaincy, wrote that the job of secretary was "a great honour" exercised by "persons of known talent, educated and honoured by their birth." The statutes passed to the secretaries contained instructions that provide us with an insight into the organizational logic of the Secretariat's archive. Concerning the books, the statute stipulates: "There will be separate registry books, some for the orders received from Portugal, and others for those issued in the captaincy itself ... and no order will be issued by the Secretariat without being registered" (Boschi, 2011, pp. 98-100).

The Secretariat held copy books, registry books and settlement books, as well as the cartularies, which were simply bindings of letters, notices, decrees and other documents received from Lisbon. Recording and storage of these books was the responsibility of the government secretary, who also had the task of recording all the administration's acts. As sovereign authority and representative of the royal will in the territory of the captaincy, the captain-generals used their privilege to grant provisions, nominate public servants and establish regulations within the scope of their powers, controlling the distribution of lands and favours, and making the documents indispensable to the certification of donation charters, the granting of favours and royal decisions. The archival documents confirm that the captaincy's administration was embedded in a complex system of land donations, favours and privileges, which needed to be registered in books "so as not to lose the memory of all the favours that come to be made."⁶

The power to grant *sesmarias* in order to populate and cultivate the land was a royal prerogative, extended to the captain-generals, purveyors and

officials of the municipal chambers, with the aim of distributing lands more effectively (Porto, n.d.; Gleizer, 2008). In exchange, the recipient was obliged to make the land productive and comply with royal stipulations. In the case of lands granted by the captain-generals, the specific document for this donation was the *carta de sesmaria*, the land concession charter, which, following its registration in the books of the captaincy's Government Secretariat, had to be sent to Lisbon for confirmation by the king with the period of two years. The captain-general was responsible for monitoring the use made of the land and arbitrating disputes. This system of granting favours allowed the Crown to distribute posts and privileges to groups or persons and, through these donations, generate the revenue needed to cover the allowances paid to royal servants (Gouvêia, 2001).

As well as the books, the captaincy's administration assembled a vast correspondence organized in bundles. These bundles were composed of diverse kinds of documents, produced by authorities from the metropolis and the colony, as well as by private individuals requesting favours and lands or appealing a sentence. Rodrigues and Silva (2012) explain that the bundles were not just a form of wrapping the documentation, but a unit constituted by predetermined criteria. The constitution of the bundles was linked to the need to recover part of the information, not all of it, as in the case of the books. The criteria for the arrangement of documents in bundles varied but generally they were related to administrative acts, document types and the issuer of the documents (Martins, 2007, pp. 202-231). The archive of the Government Secretariat of the Captaincy of São Paulo was predominantly arranged by acts and types of documents (royal orders, petitions and lists of militia companies) and issuer (letters from residents of the captaincy, town chambers, Lisbon and the Secretariat of Rio de Janeiro).

Both the content of the bundles and the books were located by consulting inventories carefully compiled by the government secretaries. The purpose of the inventories of the eighteenth century was threefold: first, to be used to search for and recover documents; second, to register the existence of the documents in the archive; and, third, to guarantee the order and preservation of the papers safeguarded by the secretaries for their successors. The first inventory of the documents of the Government Secretariat was prepared by the secretary Gervásio Leite Rebelo, which registered 20 books and 12 bundles of documents. In the opening term of the inventory Rebelo explains the purpose of the instrument:

This book must serve therefore as an inventory of the books first established by this Government Secretariat of São Paulo on September 5th 1721, as well as the papers to be registered in it, namely statutes, laws, licenses, provisions, letters and various papers brought from the Secretariat, Attorney General's Office and the Royal Treasury of Rio de Janeiro by Gervásio Leite Rebelo, first secretary of this government; and others from the Secretariat of this state, as well as the orders and letters issued by His Majesty that God safeguards for this government, and all the other papers found in this Secretariat in bundles with their titles and numbers. All of which I have put in this book to improve its safekeeping and where the future secretaries of this government will store those of their own time, so that overall it will be easy to find the orders contained in it, even if someone were to assume the post with such expertise that they may wish to amend this order, given that it is simple for the modern to undo what their predecessors have done. Because I have judged this form necessary, I have elected to make this inventory in the following form, separating the books from the letters and these from the bundles of loose papers, with separate titles so that in the future each can be stored in the part to which it belongs, thus facilitating the Royal Service and making it possible to know with ease not only the orders pertaining to this Secretariat but also the year in which they were made and what they contain.⁷

The inventories elaborated by the government secretaries (the first begun in 1721 and the last in 1807) were indispensable to the reconstitution of the holdings, providing an insight into how its documents were compiled, as well as attesting to the completeness of the holdings. At the end of the first inventory we learn that Gervásio Leite Rebelo, on leaving the Secretariat in 1732, handed over the archive to the captain-general Antônio da Silva Caldeira Pimentel, since there was no secretary to whom he could formally deliver the material. All the transmissions of secretaries were recorded in the inventories and, following the abolition of the captaincy in 1749, its papers and books were conferred and stored in chests, deposited at São Miguel College in the town of Santos. During this period, the governor of the Town of Santos continued to administer part of the captaincy and produced documents that would later be incorporated into the Secretariat's archive. In 1765 the Captaincy of São Paulo was re-established and its archive restored. The following year the captain-general Luís Antônio de Souza Botelho Mourão settled in São Paulo, occupying the Jesuit college, transformed into the seat of government. The Secretariat's archive was established there, which, as the years passed, grew and

accumulated a variety of documents that provided support to the government of the captaincy and later the province.

The emergence of new kind of documents and the modification of others highlighted the transformations occurring in the administration of the captaincy and the Kingdom during the period before Brazil's independence. In 1765, for example, the king ordered a survey of all the inhabitants of his domains. This gave rise to the populations census, produced by the ordinances and summarized by the government secretaries on a general map, which described the number of hearths (dwellings), the names of the inhabitants, their age, colour, civil status, profession and wealth (Marcílio, 2000, pp. 33-38). It can be observed that during the eighteenth century the official letters gradually took the place of the charters, regulating their use and the rules for producing official documents. The registry books multiplied and the *livros de porta* – as the books used to register the entry of documents and the Secretariat's dispatches were called – became consolidated. From these books originated the current protocol procedures. In 1792, a notice from the captain-general stipulated that improper expressions would no longer be accepted in the petitions. Courtesy was demanded in official language. In 1808, with the opening of the ports, all the captain-generals received orders to control the circulation of ships, filling the archives with passports and books detailing the entry and departure of people from the captaincy (Mattos, 2015). As a result of these changes, the work of the Secretariat increased significantly and, by 1821, the secretary Manuel Chichorro was complaining to his superiors of insufficient staff to keep track of all the orders received and issued, as well as the official letters sent to the Court, asserting that, even working day and night, it would be impossible to complete all the tasks.⁸

The government of the captain-generals lasted until 1821, when the Courts of Portugal installed the government Provisional Councils in an attempt to take control of the Brazilian provinces (Cabral, 2015, pp. 20-23). In 1823, following consummation of the separation from Portugal, Pedro I abolished the Councils and created the post of provincial president in the government structure of the Brazilian Empire.⁹ The Government Secretariat of the province of São Paulo remained installed in the building occupied by the captain-generals, inheriting the archive accumulated by the governors of the captaincy and by the government's Provisional Council. At the moment when these documents lost their legal value, the archive of the captain-generals

became inactive, but in no sense forgotten, as revealed by the reports of the province's presidents.

In 1842, the Baron of Mont'Alegre, exercising the post of provincial president, approved a law creating a public archive in São Paulo. Inspired by European institutions, the law stipulated the transfer and safeguarding of the documents of the secretariats and purveyor's offices prior to the separation from Portugal, holding "everything that may interest the history of the province."¹⁰ However the initiative did not take root. Alleging a lack of resources and other priorities, the baron's successor failed to put the law into practice, though recognizing the existence within the Secretariat of a set of documents "precious to history," which lamentably remained "consigned to the dust and the moths" (Discurso..., 1852, p. 38).

The reports of the provincial presidents affirmed that the captaincy's documents were held in the archive of the province's Government Secretariat until its abolition in 1892. With the aim of protecting these documents, the regulation concerning the archive issued in 1855 recommended that the documents produced by the captain-generals should remain stored in their own cabinet, separated from the other papers.¹¹ Deemed to be a collection of historical importance, the documents produced prior to Independence drew the curiosity of members of the Brazilian Historical and Geographic Institute, among them the brigadier José Joaquim Machado de Oliveira (1978), who wrote a historical account of the province for use in schools, published in 1864. In 1881, the president Laurindo Abelardo de Brito asked the Provincial Assembly for funds for the removal and organization of the holdings accumulated in the time of the captaincy.¹² The work of classification, carried out between 1882 and 1885, produced an index of papers called *Catálogo nº1 - Tempo Colonial*. This catalogue listed 144 bundles and 298 registry books compiled in the period prior to Independence, conserving the order of the documents.¹³ In 1888 the government secretary Estevão Leão Bourroul made corrections to the catalogue and criticized the freedom with which the archive was left open "to the collectors of documents and historical clarifications," whom he blamed for the gaps in the documentation (Sucinta..., 1888, p. 10).

After the proclamation of the Republic in 1892, the archive of the Government Secretariat passed into the custody of APESP, created as an adjunct to the Secretariat of the Interior under the name of the *Repartição de Estatística e Arquivo do Estado* (State Division of Statistics and Archives), in order to gather and preserve some of the documentation of historical value

in the keeping of the São Paulo government.¹⁴ Along with the records of the defunct Secretariat were incorporated holdings from other sources, in particular the registry offices and courts of the capital prior to the nineteenth century.¹⁵ One of the most industrious directors of the division, Antônio de Toledo Piza, ordered the transcription of hundreds of documents taken from the archive of the captaincy's Government Secretariat, which he published in a collection called *Documentos Interessantes para a História e os Costumes de São Paulo* (Interesting Documents for the History and Customs of São Paulo). Toledo Piza was a railway engineer who demonstrated an active interest in São Paulo's past. Although he had examined almost all the papers of the captaincy, selecting items for transcription and publication, Toledo Piza never got to compile a catalogue of these documents, passing away suddenly in 1905.

During the first half of the twentieth century, APESP's documentation remained organized in bundles, wrapped in covers produced in their institutions of origin with an indication of the subject and the year to which they pertained. To better assist historians, the bundles and books were classified according to their historical period with little in the way of archivist concerns. After the 1930 Revolution, the State Public Archive exhausted its capacity to store documents and began to languish, ceasing to collect new holdings and publish transcriptions. In 1945, the São Paulo city council ordered clearance of the building where APESP was installed in order to widen the central avenues of the city. In some ways, it is unsurprising that a project with eyes set on the future would disregard old buildings, narrow streets and an Archive that, due to not being a revenue-producing division, for some it was no more than a 'dead weight' in the administration's organizational structure.¹⁶ At the end of 1949, the State Public Archive was left homeless overnight. Trucks and city council employees unloaded almost 10 million documents in a warehouse belonging to the Sorocabana Railway. The Archive's employees accompanied their transportation, preventing losses and damage to the documents. Given the lack of shelving, lines were drawn on the ground in chalk to separate the sets of documents and maintain their order.

In 1954 APESP was transferred to the building of a former carpet factory, reformed to safeguard its historical holdings. The documents were stored in aluminium canisters, manufactured to protect the papers from humidity, the risk of fire and the danger of insect infestations. In practice, the information on the covers of the bundles was transferred to the canister labels. Labels contained the letters TC (*Tempo Colonial*), TI (*Tempo do Império*) and TR (*Tempo*

da República), keeping the organization of the holdings bound to the historical periodization. The canisters were controlled using typed record cards with brief indications of the subject and date of the documents. As the years passed, each canister began to be treated individually, as though it were a book on a particular subject, losing the dimension of the holdings that had made up the collection.

In 1970, given the continuous growth of the holdings, the historical section of the Archive elaborated a topographic catalogue to enable better control and localization of the documents. This work was undertaken by two long-serving female employees, who copied the order number and label of each canister. In 1975 newspapers reports denounced that APESP was facing a situation of near abandon.¹⁷ On this occasion, the secretary of culture José Mindlin invited the writer and editor of the National Book Institute, Francisco de Assis Barbosa, to take on the post of technical consultant to APESP, with the mission of presenting urgent suggestions that guaranteed the safety of the holdings and the institution's renovation. Barbosa criticized the most recent secretaries, who, in his view, had lacked the capacity to understand the importance of the Archive and had allowed moths to consume 30% of the collection. In a report, APESP's technical consultant argued for the need to publish a catalogue of the captaincy's manuscripts, adhering to the holdings organization procedures implanted at the National Archive by the French archivist Henri Boullier de Branche.¹⁸

Encouraged by the archive modernization initiatives that had gained momentum in Brazil in the 1980s, the University of São Paulo (USP) professor Ana Maria de Almeida Camargo began to prepare a historical study of the São Paulo public administration, with the help of young archivists, compiling organizational charts and guides to legislation in order to support the compiling of a description of archival *fonds*, but the work was never completed. In 1990 the topographical catalogue was transformed into an improvised holdings guide. The initiative was to be a first step towards the partial identification of the material making up the institution's collection. Volume 1 of the guide listed 1,629 canisters, grouping all the sets of documents produced during the period before Independence (Guia..., 1999, p. 3). Seven years later, APESP published a guide presenting a broad panorama of its entire holdings of public origin, albeit still on partially identified. In the guide, the documents of the captaincy's Government Secretariat appear dispersed in sets designated "correspondence of the captain-generals," "royal notices" and "land registers."

The first concrete attempt to organize a description of APESP's *fonds* was finally made in 2010 in the form of a guide with a number of deficiencies. Its main flaw was the failure to specify the nature and origin of the documents, lacking any consistent information on the history and context of production of the majority of its holdings. In response to this assessment, a group of technicians from APESP proposed a detailed revision of the guide, seeking to bring it into line with international standards of archival description, recovering the organicity of the *fonds* and offering the researcher a more complete and efficient research tool. In 2013, the Public Textual Records Team began archival processing of the documents known in the topographic instruments as the *Colonial Era* (Tempo Colonial), carrying on the work first begun by professor Ana Maria de Almeida Camargo at the end of the 1980s. This work resulted in the description of the archive of the Government Secretariat of the Captaincy of São Paulo and in an inventory based on the comprehension of the functions and activities that generated its documents (Inventário..., 2016).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The case of the archive of the Government Secretariat of the Captaincy of São Paulo related here allows us to understand how the history of archives can be recovered from within the archives themselves, reconstructing the context of production and accumulation of their documents. We need to recognize that, historically speaking, the archives have always been exposed to a variety of threats, ranging from the risk of losing their completeness as a result of dispersal and dissolution of the holdings, to the simple destruction of the documents, caused by calamities, poor storage and neglect. Currently these threats are compounded by the technological obsolescence and intrinsic vulnerability of digital archives. Some archives from the captaincy nonetheless survived all these perils and deserve to be described, restored and divulged, allowing them to once again dialogue with other holdings, especially with those of the other captaincies and with the documents kept at the *Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino* (Overseas Historical Archive) in Portugal. This is a challenge capable of uniting historians and archivists, stimulating a promising interaction between these two professional fields. But perhaps the most important fact for the historian and archivist alike is the observation that every archive is historically

produced and that its transformation into a historical source is a process that cannot remain at the mercy of mere good fortune.

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NOTES

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³ See: http://www.arquivoestado.sp.gov.br/site/institucional/arquivo_numeros; accessed March 2, 2018.

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⁶ License of 28 August 1714. Collection of licenses, notices and royal charters of the Government Secretariat of the Captaincy of São Paulo [1.1.802]. APESP.

⁷ Inventory of the books and papers of the Government Secretariat of São Paulo (1721-1749). Book 259 [1.1.771]. APESP.

⁸ Official Letter of the government secretary Manuel da Cunha Azevedo Coutinho de Souza Chichorro, 18 September 1821 [1.1.148], bundle 26, folder 2, doc. 4. APESP.

⁹ Legal Charter of 20 October 1823. In: LEGISLAÇÃO..., 1838, pp. 148-150.

¹⁰ Law n. 196 of 8 March 1842, art.6, § 3. In: LEIS..., 1842.

¹¹ Statute of 4 May 1855. In: REGULAMENTOS..., 1874, p. 292.

¹² Provincial Law n. 12 of 13 February 1881. Available at: <https://www.al.sp.gov.br/repositorio/legislacao/lei/1881/lei-12-13.02.1881.html>; accessed May 15, 2018.

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¹⁶ *Correio Paulistano*, São Paulo, July 21, 1940.

¹⁷ “A Destruição do Arquivo Público.” *O Estado de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, June 11, 1975.

¹⁸ Archive of the São Paulo State Government. Problems and Solutions. Report presented to his Excellency Max Feffer, State Secretary of Culture, Science and Technology by the technical consultant of the State Archive Division, Francisco de Assis Barbosa, from the period January 1976 to 21 January 1977, pp. 6-33.

Article received on February 13, 2018.

Approved on May 11, 2018.

