

Archive of the Metropolitan Curia of Rio de Janeiro:

parish records and possibilities in research in history (18th and 19th centuries)

Arquivo de la Curia Metropolitana de Río de Janeiro: registros parrochiaes y posibilidades en la investigación en historia (siglos XVIII y XIX) / Arquivo da Cúria Metropolitana do Rio de Janeiro: Registros paroquiais e possibilidades na pesquisa em história (séculos XVIII e XIX)

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ABSTRACT

The parish archives are holders of handwritten sources such as baptism, marriage, and death records. According to the treatment and approach adopted, these documents allow access to individualized and serial information on different segments of Catholic societies, such as Portuguese America. Having as its object the Archive of the Metropolitan Curia of Rio de Janeiro, the article presents paths and possibilities of research in History, based on selected records of its collection, in the temporal cut of the 18th and 19th centuries.

Keywords: Archive of the Metropolitan Curia of Rio de Janeiro; parish records; baptisms; marriages; deaths.

RESUMEN

Los archivos parroquiales son poseedores de fuentes manuscritas como actas de bautismo, matrimonio y defunción. Estos documentos permiten acceder a información individualizada y seriada, según el tratamiento y enfoque adoptado, sobre diferentes segmentos de las sociedades católicas, como en la América portuguesa. Teniendo como objeto el Archivo de la Curia Metropolitana de Río de Janeiro, el artículo presenta caminos y posibilidades de investigación en Historia, a partir de registros seleccionados de su acervo, en el corte temporal de los siglos XVIII y XIX.

Palabras clave: Archivo de la Curia Metropolitana de Rio de Janeiro; registros parroquiales; bautismos; matrimonios; muerte.

RESUMO

Os arquivos paroquiais são detentores de fontes manuscritas como os assentamentos de batismo, casamento e óbito. Estes documentos permitem acessar informações individualizadas e seriais, de acordo com o tratamento e a abordagem adotada, sobre diferentes segmentos de sociedades católicas, a exemplo da América portuguesa. Tendo como objeto o Arquivo da Cúria Metropolitana do Rio de Janeiro, o artigo apresenta caminhos e possibilidades de pesquisa em história, com base em registros selecionados do seu acervo, no recorte temporal dos séculos XVIII e XIX.

Palavras-chave: Arquivo da Cúria Metropolitana do Rio de Janeiro; registros paroquiais; batismos; casamentos; óbitos.



Initial considerations

This article aims to discuss what parish archives are, highlighting the possibilities of approaching and the potential of these spaces' guardianship of written culture for history research. The reflection has an object, the Archive of the Metropolitan Curia of Rio de Janeiro (ACMRJ), taking as the base on the records of baptisms, marriages, and deaths in the centuries XVIII and XIX. The proposal is not to carry out serial and quantitative work based on drawing from the indicated sources but to present the trajectory and documentary profile of the ACMRJ, problematizing research paths and possibilities.

The sources make up one of the main raw materials for the work of the historian. Despite the *Annales'* criticism of taking this material as in fact, the logic of its constitution was thought of as an essential step in the historiographic practice by this questioning group (Febvre, 1989). It was precisely from this "school", considered by Peter Burke as the "French Revolution of historiography", that the field of analysis of history was expanded, above all, with the study of social groups and human behaviors set aside by historians' traditional creators. This expansion was linked to the collaboration of other sciences. But also, precisely to the contact with new sources and the development of different methods to work with them (Burke, 1991, p. 89).

Amidst the varied universe of sources bequeathed by the *Annales*, which permeates from archaeological remains to material and oral culture, textual sources present a considerable diversity for the historian's craft, comprising memoirs, criminal proceedings, works of literature, periodicals, and parish records, among others. In general, written sources are guarded by the archives, which can be defined as an "institution or service whose purpose is custody, technical processing, conservation and access to documents" (Arquivo Nacional, 2005, p. 27)

Fundamental workspace for historians and archives makes up part of a relationship that should go far beyond contact, survey, and the use of sources by these professionals. As warned by Caio Boschi (2010, p. 61), when moving to the archives or having contact with the collection, many historians do not pay attention to a fundamental issue, "that the document has its trajectory; is born with a certain function and has its path finalized in property different from that of its advent". In other words, when produced, the document has a purpose and, when organized according to data, collections, series, or other denominations, more than their content, it is relevant to verify its origins and the reason for the institutional arrangements.

Considering these propositions, the article focuses on a particular case, home to a parish archive, the Archive of the Metropolitan Curia of Rio de Janeiro, and the purpose of problematizing a group of sources that are in its custody. Such sources thought here with the cut in the records of baptisms, marriages, and death, make up a rich and varied collection, which contributes to the reflection of different aspects of Brazilian society, in the colonial and imperial periods.

The Catholic Church and parish archives

Over the centuries, the Catholic Church has built up a rich and broad set of documents, housed in their own spaces. This action was essential to relevant records, which, in addition to enabling studies of the institution's history, allow contact with information from different subjects in different periods and spaces (Tognoli, 2017, p. 3).

The practice of producing and keeping documents, as a way of registering the performance and functioning of the Church, has been present since the times when Catholicism was recognized as the official religion of the Roman Empire, a period in which it started to have its legal regulation. This can be verified through testimonies relating to the pontificate of Pope Damasus (366-384), which would have gathered the records of the Lateran Church then the administrative center of the institution in Rome in an exclusive space devoted to ecclesiastical documents, near the Basilica of San Lorenzo (Tognoli, 2017, p. 3).

At the same time, another place of its own was established, close to the Confession of Basilica of S. Pedro, which started to keep relevant documents of the time, such as the contributions bequeathed to the papacy by Pepin the Short and Charlemagne. Over the centuries, spaces were developed for the deposit of documents in chapters, monasteries, and brotherhoods, among other ecclesiastical places, and, in most of them, care was given to their conservation (Abreu, 2000, p. 130).

Despite these actions, there are no references around legislation canonical tradition dedicated to creating and organizing ecclesiastical archives during the Middle Ages, finding only laws or norms for specific aspects (Abreu, 2000, p. 130). It was only in the transition from this period to the Modern Age, from the first provincial councils and diocesan synods, that the Church began a more systematic work around the collections.

This dimension was reinforced during the Catholic Reformation,¹ which, during the work of reorganization and imposition of new decrees and competencies highlighted the urgency of seeking a mechanism to identify and control each one of the Catholics, which could be achieved through individual records (Monteiro, 2007, p. 137). This possibility was duly discussed during the Council of Trent (1545-1563), which resulted in the final resolution that clerics would become responsible for the records of baptisms and marriages celebrated in their parishes, based on carefully thought-out documents (Marcílio, 2004, p. 2). Such factors lead authors such as José Paulo Abreu (2000, p. 137) to consider the Council of Trent, in the context of the Catholic Reformation, as “the true starting point of the canonical norms regulating the ecclesiastical archives”.

After the council, in addition to baptism and marriage, the death of the faithful was another data considered important to be recorded, considering, among other factors, the possibility of control by the Church to avoid cases of bigamy, for example. Thus, in 1614, through the *Rituale Romanum* and *Liber Status Animarum*, Pope Paul V indicated, respectively, the mandatory registration of deaths, as well as a type of regular census in parishes, based on the nominal survey of family members and their households older than seven years (Marcílio, 2004, p. 15).

In the specific case of Portugal, the Constitutions of Coimbra of 1591 established the obligatory registration of baptisms, marriages, and deaths, in an organization according to which each parish should dedicate a separate book to attest to the said sacraments. This obligation was extended to the Portuguese colonies during this period. In this way, ecclesiastical records in Brazil followed the indications of the kingdom until they were regulated by the First Constitutions of the Archbishopric of Bahia (Marcílio, 2004, p. 15).

This set of laws from the beginning of the 18th century had as its main purpose to dedicate a legal order to Portuguese America, based theoretically on the Council of Trent, but considering local particularities.

In this process, the guarantee of the realization of the sacraments (baptism, confirmation time, eucharist, penance, extreme unction, order, and matrimony) was carefully thought-out, reinforcing the need for its effectiveness and records to verify them. As stated by Neumann and Ribeiro (2015), “Vital

1 Based on the perspectives of Falcon and Rodrigues (2006, p. 142), the Catholic Reformation is understood here as a set of changes implemented by the Papacy in the 16th century, amidst both the reaction to Protestantism and a form to adapt while maintaining traditions to the critical environment of Renaissance/humanism.

records, baptism, confirmation, marriage and death certificates, for example, enable the Church to monitor the lives of its customers in the various parishes in Brazil during the colonial period and, at the same time, exercise some type of control over social life”.

The relations of power and control established between the Catholic Church and the Portuguese and imperial Brazilian monarchies are decisive for understanding the production of records by parish priests as an essential practice for the Crown. This relationship, in large part, had its foundations in *Padroado*, the concession of the Holy See to the Iberian kings, which bequeathed the right and religious expenses to the jurisdiction of monarchs in their kingdoms and colonies.

This way, kings would oversee approving ecclesiastical laws, provisioning churches, appointing bishops, and paying the salaries of parish priests, while priests, clergymen, and bishops also acted as officials of the Crown (Neves, 2009, p. 309). This condition reinforced the role of the Catholic Church as an institution which, in addition to religious attributions, was important in the formation of governments of the Crown, to administer spaces such as hospitals, houses of gathering, asylums, and cemeteries (Boxer, 1989). On the other hand, given the existence of civil registry offices in Brazil until the 1870s,² the *paracos* was also responsible for baptism, marriage, and death records, as well as through pastoral visits, among others, in actions that yielded documents legally taken by the State and which were essential for its acting. As highlighted by Maria Luiza Marcílio (2004, p. 4):

The statute of royal patronage in Brazil until at least the Republican Constitution of 1891 (when they separated, the State from the Church) gave parish registers a practically universal cover of the Brazilian population (excluding only Protestants who appear mainly in the Second Reign and the pagan Indians and Africans, not yet baptized).

The notary functions performed by the Catholic Church, notably in what concerns the legal value of parish registers in the colonial and imperial phases, give their archives a legal character for the period, given the current legislation that recognized them, as well as the public and social interest (Tognoli, 2017,

² In the 1870s, faced with the progressive arrival of a large number of non-Catholic immigrants to Brazil, as well as members of other religions, there was a concern on the part of the Empire to establish a civil registry that would enable these groups to register outside the conventional instances of the Catholic Church, dating from this period the break of the monopoly in this area by the aforementioned institution (Antunes, 2006, p. 16).

p. 10). It is no coincidence that ecclesiastical archives are sought after by the general population to this day, to document their ancestors, considering the large volume of records of foreigners in Brazil – especially Portuguese, Spanish, Italians, and Germans – particularly at the end of the 19th century.

Likewise, if it already represented an important research site for different scholars, ecclesiastical archives gained prominence in science from the 1960s onwards, when demographers and historians of the population began to use them systematically in their jobs (Bacellar, 2005, p. 40). The significant results achieved contributed to research related to demographic and family history, as well as in the field of social history and the serial method, which progressively gained space in the academy in the following decades.

The Archive of the Metropolitan Curia of Rio de Janeiro and its collection

The prelacy of São Sebastião do Rio de Janeiro was created through the bull *In Supereminenti Militantis Ecclesiae* by Pope Gregory XIII on 19 July 1575, while a splintering of the only bishopric that existed in America Portuguese – that of Bahia, to cover a space that extended from the capital from Porto Seguro to Rio da Prata (Poletto, 2010, p. 51). According to Beatriz Catão Santos (2021, p. 137), in 1745 its jurisdiction “understood what today constitutes the states of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Minas Gerais, Goiás, Mato Grosso, Paraná, Santa Catarina, Rio Grande do Sul and still included Colonia do Sacramento”.

The change from prelature to diocese took place in 1676, when Pope Innocent XI, based on the bull *Romani Pontificis Pastoralis Sollicitudo*, made the change that established the diocese of São Sebastião do Rio de Janeiro (Steckel, 2021, p. 40).

In this context, amid the practices of production and record keeping, since the times when it was prelacy, the diocese of Rio de Janeiro has grouped a varied archive – historical/permanent, intermediate, and current³ – which today constitutes one of the most important ecclesiastical collections in the country. This collection is gathered in the Archive of the Metropolitan

3 In general, according to archival criteria linked to document cycles, until their subsequent storage or elimination, archives can be classified as current, intermediate, and permanent. This way, according to Marilena Leite Paes, the classification comprises: “Current file – where frequently used documents are kept and those in which the administrative act has not yet ended. Intermediate archive – where documents whose frequency of use is sporadic and which are preserved due to their historical, evidentiary, or informative value are kept: the permanence in these archives is transitory. Permanent archive – where documents that have lost all administrative value are kept, which are preserved due to their historical or documentary value and which constitute the means of knowing the past and its evolution” (Paes, 1998).

Curia of Rio de Janeiro, which holds extensive documentation, comprising an approximate value of 1,100 linear meters, stored in its own space, in the basement of the Metropolitan Cathedral of Rio de Janeiro.⁴ The ACMRJ has recorded with time frames between the 17th and 20th centuries, a collection made up of documents and private collections of churches, their parishioners, priests, and bishops. In addition to written documentation, the archive also has photographic and cartographic materials and a library specializing in ecclesiastical matters.

Matrimonial and priestly qualifications, bills of divorce, impediment, marriage nullity, as well as testamentary accounts, pastoral visits, and religious congregations reveal a different documentary corpus for the study of the formation of society Brazilian, to give voice to a majority that, for a long time, seemed forgotten by history.

As with most of Brazil's historical archives, including ecclesiastical ones, the ACMRJ had a trajectory marked by a lack of adequate conservation and few projects focused on archiving (Marcílio, 2004, p. 5).

This process, combined with the action of time, insects, and loss, led to the disappearance and extremely precarious physical condition of part of the sources housed in the institution. Even in the face of these adversities, it is important to highlight the commitment of the diocese of Rio de Janeiro to offer access to ACMRJ documentation and the efforts of employees such as Marcia Freire, Aloysio Martins Filho, Paulo Fernandes, and, later, Silvia Souza, who for decades, they worked hard to locate diverse and sometimes uncatalogued sources, to enable both evidentiary and academic research.

In June 2003, a project for the systematic reorganization of the archive began for the first time, under the general coordination of Professor Eliana Rezende Furtado de Mendonça. This work included ten researchers around history and eight archival interns, under the supervision of historian Silvia Souza. It is worth noting that the archive, until then, did not have research instruments or inventories that covered the existing documentary universe. Access to documentation was done through manual listings which did not cover even 10% of the total collection and/or, in most cases, through employees' visual memory.

4 The Cathedral de São Sebastião do Rio de Janeiro, known as the Metropolitan Cathedral of Rio de Janeiro, is a modern-style building opened in 1976, on Avenida Chile, 245, in the center of Rio de Janeiro, which now houses the ACMRJ in mid-1980. Until then, it operated in the Nossa Senhora do Carmo Church or "Old Cathedral", which since 1808 had functioned as the city's cathedral.

Faced with this problem, the project was divided into some phases, highlighting the stages of physical and intellectual interventions in the process of processing textual documents. The physical intervention was related to the organization in series, as well as the reconditioning in suitable and standardized boxes and casings of the records, which until then were placed in rusty or aged cardboard boxes. On the other hand, the original bindings were reconditioned, and a topographic inventory was prepared to guarantee the location of the units archived in the deposit. In the process of intellectual intervention, general data from the records that included the collection were identified in specific spreadsheets. At this stage, it should be noted that the largest set of archives, consisting of matrimonial qualifications or bathing processes,⁵ also underwent the identification of a large part of its collection, comprising around 2,233 boxes.

After collecting the documentation, an arrangement system was developed with a single fund – Archdiocese of Rio de Janeiro – subdivided into the following series: matrimonial qualification; priestly qualification; divorce libel; impeachment notice; nullity libel; civil libel; libel against priests; testamentary account; pastoral visit; religious association; religious congregation; brief apostolic; priest provision; pastoral letter; bound; parish settlement; and parish report.

In addition to these actions, an important phase of the reorganization process was assembling a database to retrieve the information in the spreadsheets completed by the team, related to the topographic inventory, aiming at the location and correct storage of documents in the warehouse.

During ACMRJ's trajectory, the completion of the project described here took the institution to an unprecedented condition, as the organization of documents and the development of research instruments began to allow, on the one hand, more appropriate working conditions to employees and, on the other hand, greater access, and use of the sources under their custody by researchers and society in general.

5 The bathing process constituted one of the first phases for the Catholic Church to carry out the marriage, consisting of a series of documents and findings relating to the bride and groom. Among the proofs that had to be made to qualify for marriage were: a baptismal certificate; proof of single status and no commitment to another person or institution (in the case of vows of chastity and religion); death certificate of the deceased spouse, in the case of widowers; proof of freedom, in the case of freed slaves; in addition to "proclaiming" the marriage in all places where the bride and groom were for more than six months, to prove its non-existence or report impediments (Faria, 1998, p. 58).

Baptisms, marriages, and deaths of the ACMRJ: scope of sources and analysis possibilities

One of the most attractive characteristics of ecclesiastical archives for the study of the colonial and imperial periods which, in general, makes them unique comes from their ability to cover the population as a whole, to include past groups, when recording in written form information about the birth, living, and death of white, black, indigenous and mixed-race individuals, whether free or slave (Peraro, 2002, p. 5). According to João Fragoso, Portuguese America was formed as a colony and later empire with populations fearful and/or disciplined by the Catholic Church and its sacraments, which “transforms parish sources, I insist, into massive and reiterative ones” (Fragoso, 2014, p. 22-23).

Maria Silvia Bassanezi (2009) assures that the mandatory practice adopted by the Catholic Church produced in the records a universality, representativeness, a serial and chronological character. From this perspective, it is noteworthy that the possibility of using ecclesiastical records serially gives this documentary corpus a relevant potential for historical research. For José D’Assunção Barros (2012, p. 205), the serial approach expanded the way of thinking about documents beyond the singular, in a chain perspective, consisting of sources of the same nature, comparable and with the capacity to be thought of in a universe of continuity.

Despite their broad and general dimension, these sources have unique characteristics. As stated by Marcílio (2004, p. 16), it is necessary to consider the individual and collective character of the ecclesiastical record, in which “each individual is registered with their characteristics and in each vital moment of their existence and each of them integrates a series chronological record of events, kept in specific books and covering a physically well-defined region, that is, a parish”.

It is from this perspective, and turning to other research possibilities, that we will discuss some possibilities for using the parish sources held by the ACMRJ, in a time frame that covers Colonial and Empire Brazil and that comprises a significant series of its collection: the parish settlements baptism, marriage and death.⁶

There is a wealth in the universe of these sources that provides us with an immense number of elements to understand the daily life of the population and the presence of social relationships created through their study. Documents contain information with relevant historical content, whether observed

⁶ We would like to thank Eduardo Cavalcante for his collaboration in transcribing the documents used, as well as Marcia Freire and Silvia Souza (in memorial) for their reports on the trajectory of the last decades of ACMRJ.

serially or privately. Some of these seats are very well described, with detailed information, and others not so much. This factor would be directly linked to the profile of the parish priests and even the social class to which those who received the sacraments belonged. Even understanding that, according to the First Constitutions of the Archbishopric of Bahia, there were rules for preparing the seats, they were not always followed, and sometimes data was suppressed (Scott; Scott, 2013). This issue explains, to a certain extent, the variation in information and patterns found in the seats.

According to the Constitution, baptisms, marriages, and deaths should only be entered by the parish priest or his substitute in specific books, bound, well-kept, and duly filled out, each in its form. Law n. 2,040, of September 28, 1871, in its 1st article, decreed the obligation of special books for the children of enslaved women who were born in the Empire from that date onwards, highlighting that each omission would generate a fine of 100,000 to the parish priest.⁷

By way of illustration, we bring a model of how baptisms should be transcribed, remembering that, for each of the sacraments, there was a specific way of recording:

To the many of that month, and of that year, I baptized, or baptized on my leave, Father N. in this, or in that church, N. son of N. and his wife N. and I put the holy oils: they were godparents N. and N. married, widowed, or single, customers of that Church, and residents in that part. (Constitutions..., 1720, Title XX)

This should be the basic information contained in free baptism records, that is, it should include the day, the month, the year, the name of the baptized person, the name of the priest, the church, the name of the father, the mother, godparents, whether married, widowed, or single, the church they attended and housing. For the baptism records of enslaved people, regarding innocents, that is, children under seven years of age who did not receive their first communion, they generally included: name and sex, color, legitimacy, owner, date of birth, if he was baptized in danger of his life and was freed in the font. About the parents of the person being baptized, there is a reference to their name, place of birth, origin (when African), marital status, and color. For the godparents, mention was made of their name, legal status, sometimes their color/social condition, their place of birth, their marital status, and, when they were enslaved or freed, their origin. Regarding the owners

7 Law n. 2,040, of September 28, 1871 [Free Womb Law].

of enslaved parents or godparents, the name, sex, legal status (when not born free), position or title, marital status, and the name of the spouse were mentioned. Some of these seats also contain the name of the farm or the address of the spaces in which those involved lived.

The frequency of certain information, however, varied a lot, as different priests wrote the notes in the books, and each had their style and style of writing. Some recorded the dates of birth of the innocent, while others did not do so with the same frequency. Some even wrote down this information on separate sheets of paper and only released it later. It is very common, even today, to find these notes posted in books. This lack of rigor in the records gave them a disorganized character and, at times, caused the absence of chronological order in the settlements. This means that the making of the seats involved the writing power of the priests, who were information filters (Faria, 1998).

Parish priests needed to obtain data on individuals. Most of the time, there is no way to be sure, but, in one way or another, the records demonstrate perceptions of social agents (Faria, 1998, p. 308), which can be thought of, for example, through information about the places people occupied in that parish. In addition to the conception of the priests and the Church's discourse, parish records were a way of identifying the people mentioned there. They are, therefore, records of (and about) social actors at the time. In short, documents that reflect the social profile of those involved and of a given society (Gudeman; Schwartz, 1988).

The same standardization of baptism books is presented in marriage and death books. Also produced by the Church, in series, they have a practically invariable format, but as noted, could be modified according to who is responsible for them. Marriage records inform the date, place, and name of the bride and groom, their parents, grandparents, place of birth, witnesses, rank, rank, title, and owner, in the case of captives.

When it comes to death records, Sérgio Odilon Nadalin (1994, p. 95) states that, among the three types of documents presented, this is the most problematic and least reliable of them. This criticism is directly related to the fact that parish priests do not always have information about those who had the body ordered or do not have access to the family for the correct demand in the books. This way, for the author, the experience of death was not equal to the settlements related to the living since attention to the dying person was exclusive to the family and no one else.

It is to understand that the effects that the sacraments had in the 18th and 19th centuries differ from the perceptions that were shaped over time of years,

thus understanding the symbology of a given term, which brought a differentiated religious representativeness, in which “baptizing, marrying and dying in the Catholic context has become a social convention, being a process of interaction with peers, under the watchful eyes of Church” (Lacerda, 2020, p. 15). Such practices contributed to the creation of an image of people who are trustworthy, stable, and ready to form solid bonds in Catholic Christian traditions, in an environment where faith and modernity were mixed, sacraments, and social status. Therefore, as referenced by Maria Luíza Marcílio (1979, p. 260), parish sources are essential for the study of family history and are demographic documents par excellence.

Based on the above, we present the baptismal seat of Amaro, a slave baptized in the summer of 1801, in the parish of Candelária, as stated in the Archive of the Metropolitan Curia of Rio de Janeiro:

On the 27th day of January 1801 in this parish, I baptized and put the holy oils to Amaro, brown, innocent, son of Paulina Parda, slave of José Diogo de Gusmão, who lives in this parish: Reverend Father Antônio de Azevedo was godfather for the power of attorney presented by Antônio da Costa Silva, and godmother Úrsula Rita Clara, what made this seat. The coadjutor Dom Alexandre Fidélis de Araújo.⁸

Note that, although the seat above is very close to the specific model, some observations can be made. It is about the baptism of an innocent, brown, in which only the mother’s name is reported, although the source does not mention the designation. “Natural son of”, which corroborates the hypothesis that the father could be identified remained, however, was not recognized in the eyes of the Church.⁹

The owner’s name is informed, which would guarantee him possession of the captive Paulina, a Creole (born in Brazil), and his son, in addition to confirming the parish of the celebration as a place of mother’s residence. The document, however, does not allow us to know the address of the godparents and not even the parish they attend.

8 ACMRJ, AP, Book of baptism records of Candelária, 1801-1809, p. 2v.

9 Natural children are those not originating from a consensual union, celebrated via marriage, but coming from single mothers, even understanding that there was the presence of the father, who was hidden by the source. For the child to be considered legitimate, the parents would have to be married in a union recognized by the Church which, therefore, would meet the requirements required by current legislation, in this case, the Philippine Ordinances. On the other hand, natural or illegitimate children would be the result of various types of unions not recognized by the Church (Libby; Botelho, 2004). Natural or illegitimate families are the predominant model in Southeastern Brazil for enslaved people, with rare exceptions. See: Santos (2019), Faria (1998).

The power of attorney presented could include the residence of Father Antônio de Azevedo and his representative, Antônio da Costa e Silva, still, nothing is notified. It is worth noting that, according to the Constitutions, the priests and vicars could not serve as godparents, not even the friars, the nuns, the canons, the mother, the father, the heretics, the infidels, the excommunicated, the deaf and the dumb. Also, only one godfather and one godmother (Constitutions..., 1720, Title XVIII, p. 64).

This was a model of slave baptism taken from one of the book's results, but it is noticeable that, as the vicar changed, the information also varied. Even if the source does not bring all the mandatory data in its notification, it is possible to perceive celebrated families, whether natural or legitimate, social relationships made, and social profiles being described. Still, about the cited seat, it is important to note that the role of sponsoring was delegated to a free woman and the reverend, which allows us to conclude that this collection was carried out within a higher social layer than the mother. Traces of cat-social history, name, color, parents, godparents, illegitimacy, responsibility for the celebration, etc. are noticeable and, if crossed with other sources or even worked serially and quantitatively, allow us a range of information, opening space to analyze the family constitution and a series of agreements and/or interests that are affected via celebrations.

Some vicars add new details to the basic information, including in celebrations of enslaved people, according to the following model:

On the 11th day of January 1800 in this cathedral, I baptized and placed the holy oils to Ana, natural daughter of Florinda, Toothless nation, slave of Rita Ignácia Maria, a single, free black, Cassange nation; was godfather Caetano, slave of Friar Julião Religioso do Carmo: and the said lady Rita Ignácia attended this act Maria, said, and declared, that of her own free will, and without any constraint gave freedom to the said innocent Ana as if she were born with a free womb, without any clause, all in full view of the witnesses who were present, Matias da Silveira and Joaquim José de Oliveira, who said and declared to be the lady herself; you which with me they signed with their names, and their signatures, and of which for the record I made this seat and signed. The coadjutor Manoel Afonso da Costa.¹⁰

10 ACMRJ, AP, Book of baptism records of the parish of Santíssimo Sacramento, 1799-1803, p. 25.

Ana was a slave from the parish of Santíssimo Sacramento, who received his manumission in the baptismal font, and, for this, the testimonies were presented to validate what applied. She was a natural daughter, just like Amaro; however, his mother, Florinda, was a Benguela, from the coast of Africa, and his lady was also an African from the Cassange nation, single, black, and free. In other words, Rita Ignacia Maria, its owner, was a former slave who acquired her manumission on another occasion.¹¹ We notice that the seat has only one godfather and no godmother, violating the model of legal norms. However, the ties of sponsorship are carried out with a slave, as well as Ana's mother. When we highlight a free baptism, we see so much other information, far beyond what was determined by the Constitutions, as follows:

Luiza. On the 11th day of January 1800 years in this cathedral I baptized and placed the saint's oils solemnly to Luiza, legitimate daughter of Joaquim José Cardoso, born and baptized in the parish of Santa Luzia in the city of Angra on Terceira Island, and Francisca das Chagas, born and baptized in the parish of Nossa Senhora da Candelária in this city, granddaughter on her father's side of Anastácio Cardoso, and of Catarina Josefa, that located in the parish of Santa Luzia on the said Ilha, and in the parish of São Bento on the said Ilha, and the maternal side of José da Silva Barros, born and baptized in the parish of Mártir São Sebastião do Lugar de Câmara de Lobos on Madeira Island, and Ana Maria da Conceição, born and baptized in the parish of Nossa Senhora da Candelária of this city: he was born on the 22nd of July last year, his godfather was licensee José Pereira da Silva and protector Our Lady. I made this seat, that I signed. The coadjutor Manoel Afonso da Costa.¹²

The information contained in the above record allows us to build the genealogy of three generations present in the family structure of Joaquim José Cardoso and Francisca das Chagas, from a single seat, as we are informed the names of paternal and maternal grandparents, parents, and daughter. It is a legitimate daughter, unlike the two examples above, as Luiza's record presents his mother and father and the place of residence of both, the names of the grandparents and their birthplace, in addition to their date of birth. It is interesting to notice that the godfather was José Pereira da Silva graduate, and the godmother was a non-carnal protector, in this case, Our Lady.

¹¹ Baptismal fonts are not the best documents to prove manumission for adults, but rather for children who are baptized and receive manumission from the font, a model present at the celebration.

¹² ACMRJ, AP, Book of baptism records of the parish of Santíssimo Sacramento, 1799-1803, p. 24v.

As seen, although it is not conventional and legal, the saints appear in a recurrent way doing this function, as a way of introducing the sacred from within the family. However, through research, we noticed that it is more common for the presence of saints serving as godmothers, in a much higher proportion to the saints as godparents, which makes us believe that the concept of the sacred is “introduced through godmothers and not through godfathers, as they had a very important role in society, perhaps so relevant that the position does not could be filled by a saint” (Ramos, 2004, p. 66). For Renato Pinto Venâncio (1986, p. 95-102), “this selectivity, godmother in heaven and godfather in the land, corresponded to a singular devaluation of women, that is, the godfather was used as a means of access to material and symbolic goods”. We note that this practice could mean, in addition to the devaluation of women, a payment for a grace obtained, danger of the child’s death, or even lack of godfathers or godmothers during the act.

It is good to point out that, in general, for baptism records of free people, the information masons were more regularized compared to those of the enslaved, as seen above, which could be related to the social group of the then-being baptized, but we can say that they presented, in a general way: date and place of baptism, date or time of birth, baptized name, color/social status, legitimacy and illegitimacy (whether or not he was the child of married parents) and legal status (if free, *forro*, freedman or Indian). In addition to this information, the records alluded to titles or positions (captain, lieutenant, mistress, etc.) of parents and godparents, sometimes their occupations, their colors, and the reference to whether there was a kinship between the godparents.

Like baptisms, marriage records books also tell us to allow some elements to understand the constitution of families, such as dispensations of consanguinity or even interests for the marriage, which refers us to certain “businesses” that could be present. Still, these supposed “marriage markets” were not explicitly attested. Therefore, for the case of studies focused on this issue, an essential care is the against-transposition of the source with other parochial ones, such as the matrimonial bath processes legal, and even civil, such as *post-mortem* inventories, for example.

In the next case, we can observe a series of related information to the marriage of José Maria Rodrigues and Ana Maria da Conceição:

On the 18th day of January 1800, in this cathedral, at five o'clock in the afternoon, they received in marriage by words of gift in my presence, and of the witnesses below signed José Maria Rodrigues do Espírito Santo, legitimate son of Domingos

Rodrigues das Neves and Francisca Xavier da Ressurreição, born and baptized in the parish of Candelária of this city; with Ana Maria da Conceição, natural daughter of Ignacia Maria da Glória, born cultural and baptized in the cathedral of this city, all in the form of the Sacred Tridentine Council and Constitutions of the Bishopric as everything appeared in the provision that they presented to me at the very reverend doctor judge of marriages Francisco Gomes Vilas Boas and received the blessings nuptial in the form of the Roman ritual, being witnesses to everything Captain João Pinto da Silva Guimarães, and Ensign José Joaquim de Santana, as well as many other people who those present thought that for the record I made this statement and signed it. Coadjutor Antônio Teixeira Álvares de Souza. João Pinto da Silva Guimarães. José Joaquim de Santana.¹³

As in Luiza's baptism record, in the case of this marriage, we are also presented with data that allows us to cross-reference, compare, deduce, and conclude. The place, the time, the day, the parents, their birth, the grandparents and their family profile, the place of baptism, the witnesses with their respective positions, etc. This is information evidenced in the seat, making it possible to analyze the behavior of those involved, their social ties, and their networks of sociability and solidarity, which were established via marriage registration, and which can extend far beyond a minute or a celebration.

When it comes to enslaved marriages, interests are also evident, and, generally, the celebrations took place in smaller numbers than those of the free (Schettini, 2020). The reverse rarely happened, except in parishes where there was intense Atlantic traffic. The permission and encouragement of the great owners to legal marriage, merged with the numerical balance between the sexes, could contribute to the high degree of legitimacy among the captives, as in the case of Nossa Senhora das Neves, in Macaé, between the years 1798 and 1850 (Faria, 1998, p. 327; Santos, 2019, p. 66). One of the analyses that can be made is the verification of the ethnic composition of those who joined and their preference for this union. Some surveys point to the predominance of marriages endogamous in several Brazilian regions, both for the eighteenth century and for the XIX. It is up to us to inform you that, around these relationships, there could be removing borders and controversies, as in the marriage of Creoles and Africans, in a tendency towards the union of ethnic groups in a community or marriage involving ethnic groups different, which resulted in exogamous marriages (Freire, 2009, p. 9).

13 ACMRJ, AP, Book of marriage records of the parish of Santíssimo Sacramento, 1791-1801, p. 408.

The wedding ceremony of José Benguela and Isabel Quissamã, slaves of Francisco de Torres Homem, gives us an example of what we say. It's about two Africans who were married at six o'clock in the afternoon, without any hindrance from part of the vicar and the witnesses. A simple seat without much information and the names or signatures of the witnesses present, but it allows us to understand that both were African and owned by the same lord, in addition to knowing the month of the link, the time, and the name of the vicar who performed the celebration and sat down.

On the other hand, the marriage certificate of José Maria Creole and Brígida Maria Cabral forra informs us of the day, month, year, time, witnesses, maternal parents and parents, their social category, place of birth, former owner of the mother of the child, the witnesses, and their respective signatures, in addition to other person members who were present, as well as the interim priest and the official.¹⁴

This is an example of a seat full of information that can be worked on, viewed from different angles and options. The social categories of the betrothed are presented seated: a creole and a free goat. Regarding the designation "creole", we know that they are enslaved born in Brazil, but the expression "cabra" is still controversial, and its interpretation needs to be better analyzed by region, which becomes a certain challenge for the researcher. According to Sílvia Lara (2004), before the arrival of the Portuguese, the term was used for indigenous peoples; afterward, it started to have a direct connection with miscegenation and, although it has not been a precise definition, is linked to the black population. The said record, therefore, deals with the marriage of a freed creole with a goat also freed, to provide meaningful analysis data.

From the parochial series, those related to deaths, as highlighted earlier, are more complex and present greater problems, since their content varies greatly about the identification of the deceased, the place, the date, the priest, etc. Very rarely was the cause of death reported. Sometimes the symptom of death was included, such as, for example, "he died of shortness of breath", "from a wound in the legs", "from a tumor", "from consumption", and "died in a hurry", among others reasons, which creates considerable complexity for those interested in investigating morbidity and mortality, as in the case below:

14 ACMRJ, AP, Book of marriage records of the parish of Candelária, 1782-1809, p. 200v.

On the 10th day of January 1800, Antonia Maria Viana passed away from her present life. Forra Creole, a resident of Rua da Cadeia, without sacraments for dying in a hurry, was commissioned by me and was shrouded in the habit of San Francisco and buried in the chapel of Nossa Senhora do Parto did not make a will that for the record I made this seat I signed. The coadjutor Manoel Affonso da Costa.¹⁵

The data collected allows the intersection with other information from the minutes, making it possible to know the profile of deaths in children, women, young people, and elderly, and, in a considerable number of cases, age, social category, location burial lime, whether they had a will, whether they received extreme unction if they did penance, etc. Some minutes also inform the form of burial, specified by the clothing worn by the deceased. Also noteworthy is that, in the case of enslaved people, it is possible to report their form of acquisition, according to the following model:

On the 12th of May 1800, he passed away from his present life in this parish in Doctor Francisco Xavier de Lima's house with the sacraments of penance and extreme unction Francisco Crioulo, bought by his predecessor Captain Domingos Gonçalves Gago who was its depositary in the attachment made at the request of João Batista da Silva with whom he disputes about the said slave: he was commissioned by me and shrouded in a white shroud and buried in this church, from which I made this seat. The coadjutor Dom Alexandre Fidélis de Araújo.¹⁶

What is certain is that the disposition of the Church, the whim of the vicar, or even the importance that society gave to information were factors that directly reflected in parish register communications (Nadalin, 1994, p. 61). As presented, the parish records refer us to the profile of births, marriages, and deaths in past societies, making it possible to perceive variations in temporal actions about one or several communities. Therefore, the need must be worked on in such a way as not to erase the history of people still hidden through the nooks and crannies of Brazil.

15 ACMRJ, AP, Book of records of wills and deaths of the parish of Santíssimo Sacramento, 1797-1812, p. 60.

16 ACMRJ, AP, Death registration book of the parish of Candelária, 1793-1833, p. 7.

Final considerations

Ecclesiastical archives and their dynamics of written culture production (Olson, 1997, p. 271) enable the historian and other interested parties to recognize the cement of the past in a broader sense, by allowing access to societies and their various segments, in addition to the elite groups, which, for the most part, as scholars, they are left other kinds of records. It should be noted that such sources bring together a diverse and extensive universe of data about the history of Brazil's society and demographics.

Throughout the article, we discuss what parish archives are, the constitutional creation of its first custody spaces, and the logic of its production in Colonia and in the Empire, based on the activities of the Catholic Church and the State. More directly, we seek to highlight the Archive of the Metropolitan Curia of Rio de Janeiro and its collection, emphasizing the scope and research potential of the baptism, marriage, and death records kept in this space.

The analysis of the population, from a demographic or family perspective, was presented sitting as a possibility, using these sources, which can take a more serial or singular production, according to interests. On the other hand, it is important to point out that, over the last few decades, individually or through research groups spread across postgraduate programs in the country highlighting the Elza Berquó Population Center (Nepo) of the Universidade de Campinas (Unicamp) and the Center for Development and Regional Planning from the Universidade de Minas Gerais (UFMG), both based on demographic training stays, as well as to databases available on the internet such as FamilySearch,¹⁷ work methodologies have been created and new concepts are being built, which allows us to affirm the evolution of this field of analysis.

With this enlargement, problems linked to the level of growth, marriage cycles, the number of children, the choice of name, bioanalyses graphics, the family and population movement, the choice of godparents and witnesses, sociability networks, as well as mortality and morbidity, that are brought to light as a way of understanding the social profile of families, groups, and communities. Works of greater consistency are also carried out, with rigid serial variations, aimed at more robust demographic analyses. But it is worth mentioning

17 FamilySearch is a worldwide website, organized by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which provides more than one billion digital images and indexes of records related to genealogy. The extensive and voluminous work of indexing and digitizing ecclesiastical sources, among others, constitutes a relevant tool for research in the area. Available at: <https://www.family-search.org/pt/>. Accessed on: 25 Jun. 2020.

that these studies dialogue with demography, history, geography, economics, anthropology, and sociology, specifically. Therefore, it is a field that has an extremely interdisciplinary profile, and there is much room for improvement in Brazil (Bacellar; Scott; Bassanezi, 2005).

In conclusion, we can state that the social experience of those involved, the relationships established, the behavior of the population, the families involved, and the deaths open up perspectives for us, based on some vital sources brought here, for the exercise of better understanding the population under a historical bias, even understanding the limitations of an article to cover such a vast topic.

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Archive of the Metropolitan Curia of Rio de Janeiro

Background: Archdiocese of Rio de Janeiro

Series: Parish Settlement

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Marriage registration book of the Parish of Candelária, 1782-1809.

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