

THE ARCHIVO NACIONAL IN ASUNCION, PARAGUAY

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THE ARCHIVO NACIONAL IN ASUNCIÓN, PARAGUAY, IS VIRTUALLY UNKNOWN to historians of Latin America in the United States, despite the richness of its holdings on Paraguayan and Platine history. Few North American scholars have used the archive, and there is very little in print, either in English or Spanish, that can acquaint one with what documentation is available. The present writer, despite his efforts to learn as much about the archive as possible before his own extended research visit there in 1968, arrived in Asunción with little idea of what was available, how the archive was organized, or the extent and sheer mass of material awaiting him.

With these conditions in mind, the following report is offered to partially fill this information gap and provide an English language tool which may serve to orient historians contemplating research on Paraguayan history. Included are a brief description of the archive, a short history of that institution, a general view of its holdings and organization and, finally, a summary bibliographic essay of works concerning the archive and its contents.

DESCRIPTION

The National Archive of Paraguay is housed in a dilapidated 1880-vintage mausoleum of a building on Avenida Mariscal Estigarribia, only three blocks from the main plaza of Asunción. The crumbling and ill-kept exterior complements the inside of this edifice, half of which, the National Museum, has been boarded up for several years.

The archive itself is largely contained in one main room, which also doubles for the main (and only) reading room. This large, unheated, poorly-illuminated room has two long tables and perhaps a dozen chairs for the scholarly community, and very few other amenities. The walls, from floor to exceptionally high ceiling, are occupied by massive bookshelves, holding the archive's 6,200 bound volumes of documents. The upper row must be reached by a very feeble balcony some twenty feet from the floor. There are two desks and a table at one side of the room for the use of the two ladies and the *mozos* who comprise the staff. The Solano López Collection of books and periodicals is housed in a smaller room off the interior patio. A second room, to its side, is

being made over for the new director of the archive, a man who actually plans to spend time at his post.

The staff of the archive is most pleasant and, without exception, extremely helpful. There are few, if any, formalities necessary before one may begin to use the archive, and seldom is there any competition for a good seat (near the windows and, hence, the light). The morning hours are from 7:00 a.m. (Asunción rises early, and so should the researchers) until 11:30 a.m. The staff become agitated if you actually stay until the latter hour, and obviously prefer that the investigator leave by 11:00. The afternoon hours are from 3:30 (usually about 4:00) until 8:30 p.m. (read 8:00). Even allowing for the staff's restiveness, it is possible to put in a long, hard day at the archive, and the siesta period is a welcome and lengthy break, especially in the hot months (December-March), when the temperature can easily reach 120 degrees within the poorly-ventilated repository. The lighting is such that working after the sun has set becomes a painful and slow procedure.

Aside from such drawbacks, and the overwhelming noise from the ancient trolleys that pass within three feet of the building, and the raucous bursts of Guaraní from the vendors who camp beneath each and every window, there are few problems. The *mozos* will locate and bring to the researcher any and every volume requested (there are no forms to be filled out), without numerical limit, and all one must do is sign for them. The investigator is not allowed to take volumes or documents from the archive for additional work unless written permission is obtained from a bewildering array of functionaries. He may, however, microfilm any and all documents as he wishes, if he has with him his own equipment; the archive has no microfilming or xeroxing facilities of its own. Thus, while the physical surroundings are not of the highest order, working conditions themselves are very informal, loose, and generally pleasant.

There are several handwritten and typed catalogues (see below) available at one of the desks, as well as some manuscript and mimeographed material concerning the archive itself. The aid of such historians as Dr. Efraím Cardozo, Dr. Julio César Chaves, and Don Benigno Riquelme García, who frequent the archive, is open, valuable, and often voluntary.

HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL ARCHIVE

The Paraguayan National Archive in Asunción proudly traces its institutional ancestry back to the end of the sixteenth century. It was in 1596 that Hernando Arias (Hernandarias), the first *criollo* governor of the *provincia gigante*, ordered the creation of a government archive to hold official papers relating to the province.

The archive seems to have had a remarkably continuous history, functioning the entire remainder of the colonial period. During the great Revolt of the Comuneros in the mid-eighteenth century, however, the archive suffered temporary interruption, and the loss by theft or destruction of many of its documents.

After the 1811 *golpe* which overthrew Spanish power in Paraguay, the archive was maintained by Dr. José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia, the first and longest-lived of Paraguay's many political strongmen. During most of his rule, from 1814 to 1840, Dr. Francia carefully conserved the archive, appointing his secretary, the infamous Policarpo Patiño, to insure that government papers were properly filed and protected. Although the Supreme Dictator himself retained possession of many of his personal papers and reportedly destroyed them before his death, the official governmental documents of his rule have been well preserved.

After Dr. Francia's death, the new dictator, Carlos Antonio López, who ruled from 1842 to 1862, reorganized the archive and appointed a full-time director. Carlos Antonio's son, Francisco Solano López, third and most tragic of the republic's dictators, who ruled from 1862 to 1870, embroiled his nation and hence the archive in the sanguinary War of the Triple Alliance (1864–1870). Toward the end of the war, Francisco Solano had the archive crated and moved from Asunción to Luque and finally to the temporary capital at Piribebuy, where it was captured by Brazilian forces in late 1868. When the war was brought to an end, the Brazilian victors took a part of the archive to Rio de Janeiro, where some 50,000 documents comprise the Rio Branco Collection in the National Library of Brazil. There are two common misconceptions regarding this requisition. Despite what is heard to the contrary, the Brazilians were not overly selective in what they took home. If they were attempting to cover up the true origins of the War of the Triple Alliance, they left more relevant material on this subject in Asunción than they took back to Brazil. Secondly, they did not "take the Paraguayan archive" but at the most perhaps ten percent of the documents extant at the time and probably closer to five percent. The great mass of Paraguayan source materials remain in Asunción.

In Paraguay, at war's end, the new Paraguayan triumvirate reorganized the archive by decree in 1871. This decree created and opened the Office of the National Archive, and José Falcón was named its first director. Despite the fact that the office was allowed administrative autonomy, it collapsed as an independent entity, being absorbed by the Archivo de la Escribanía, where it remained until 1895. In that year the archive was transferred to the Ministry of the Interior. During this period, the archive began to acquire more documents from private and governmental sources, and Manuel Domínguez, thoroughly

familiar with its holdings, wrote seventeen pamphlets about the national historical treasure. His was the first genuine scholarly interest shown the archive.

In 1902, the archive was merged with the National Library and the National Museum and placed under the administration of the Ministry of Culture and Public Instruction. By a law of 1906, the archive was allowed and encouraged to acquire additional private collections; in 1913, it received a trove of 1094 *legajos* from a private source, its first such large acquisition. In 1932, the archive was placed under the direct administration of the Ministry of Education. The last reorganization of note occurred in 1950, when the institution was reunited with the National Library and National Museum under the Ministry of Culture and Public Instruction. One constant in the history of the National Archive is that it has never contained significant amounts of materials dated later than 1870. Documents for the later period (excepting newspapers and *revistas*) are kept in the separate ministries and are all but impossible for the scholar to use.*

In 1956 and 1957, a Mobile Team from UNESCO was in Asunción for the purpose of microfilming those documents of historical interest which were in greatest danger of destruction from natural causes. Due to the efforts of the United Nations team, the world now has a permanent copy of some 180,000 pages of the threatened documents. Since 1962, the task has been continued by the Central Bank of Paraguay and the Melamed Company of Asunción, which is handling the actual microfilming. This worthy effort was being maintained as late as November, 1968, when the writer watched several volumes of the *Sección Civil* being taken and returned daily from the archive for this purpose.

In total, the archive today contains some 6,200 bound volumes of documents. These are composed of perhaps 90,000 *legajos* (labeled folios), containing as many as 2 million documents. The archive is arranged in six large sections:

<i>Section</i>	<i>No. of volumes</i>
<i>Propiedades y testamentos</i>	983
<i>Historia</i>	448
<i>Nueva encuadernación</i>	3,417
<i>Libros de Caja</i>	79
<i>Copias</i>	20
<i>Judicial y civil</i>	6,220

* Data on the history of the National Archive was drawn from F. Victorio Manuel Riego, "El Archivo Nacional," (MS in the National Archive, dated 1963), Carlos R. Centurion, *Historia de la cultura paraguaya* (Asunción, 1961) II, 382-385, and Efraím Cardozo, *Historiografía paraguaya. I. Paraguay indígena, español y jesuita* (Mexico, 1959), 16-21.

In addition there is the Solano López Collection of books, pamphlets, newspapers and revistas, totalling 1,513 bound volumes and individual items. The latter collection is slowly being augmented by gifts from both foreign and domestic scholars.

THE SECTIONS

Sección Historia

The Sección Historia, the most valuable section from the viewpoint of the historian, is also the best organized and best preserved. Included in this section is one volume (number 213) returned by the Brazilian government in 1945, which contains the crucial documents dealing with the 1811 Paraguayan revolution.

There is a fairly accurate guide, the *Catálogo general, sección historia, 1536–1871*, the most complete in the archive, and a good place to begin one's study. The catalogue contains 193 pages listing the contents of most of the volumes in the section. Each page is typed on one side, and the reverse of each bears handwritten entries which are continually added in a modest effort to complete the guide. The catalogue is chronologically organized and lists the general content of folios throughout the section. Part of an average page appears:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Volume</i>	<i>Folio</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>No. of pages</i>
1819	229	14	Gastos de las casas capitulares	23
1819	229	15	Visitas de presos	6
1820	232	1	Decretos del Dr. Francia	18
1820	Ver. Vol. 371		Correspondencia de Carapeguá	
1820	232	3	Sueldos militares	2
1820	232	4	Robos de Indios acerca de Concepción	11
1820	232	6	Acuerdos del Cabildo de Asunción	43
1820	232	7	Correspondencia de Asunción	12

In some cases there are as many as twelve lines summarizing the contents of a given folio. Corrections, noted in pencil, are frequent and heartening, if often illegible. Some kind soul, noting that a folio number or summary is incorrect, allows others to profit by his experience.

The catalogue is fairly complete and accurate for the first 358 volumes of the section, which are in rough chronological order themselves. For the remaining volumes, the catalogue is all but useless, as they are arranged according to subject, with no chronological order at all. Volume 371, for example, contains a folio of 107 pages, entitled "Correspondencia del pueblo de Caazapá," with

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documents running the chronological gamut from 1791 to 1868. This is not a rare case, and the only way to ascertain what is within the folio is to plow through it page by page. This then, is the main deficiency of the catalogue, that it virtually ignores the contents of 90 volumes.

The first 358 volumes are basically chronological in their order. Volumes 1 through 177 cover the colonial period to 1800; volumes 178–212 deal with the 1800 to 1811 period; volumes 213–245 treat the Dr. Francia years; volumes 246–330 the dictatorship of Carlos Antonio López; and volumes 330–358 that of his son, Francisco Solano. There are, of course, exceptions, and a legajo of seventeenth century documents may well contain pages dated 1846. Within each period there is little organization except a tendency to advance in time as well as volume number. The individual folios throughout the *Sección Historia* are consistently topical. It should be noted that while the first 200 or so volumes which deal with the colonial period do indeed contain documents from the sixteenth century, the vast bulk of the material is dated in the eighteenth century.

Each volume in this section contains between one and twenty folios with documents relating to a given subject such as taxation, military salaries or official decrees during a limited period of time. Most volumes carry on their inside covers a typed list of the folios within and a brief statement of their subjects. Thus the list for volume 238 appears:

<i>Folio</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>No. of pages</i>
1	Visita de presos—1825	30
2	Facturas de mercaderías de Buenos Ayres	70
3	Comprobante gastos de obras públicas	13
4	Decretos del Dr. Francia—1826	13
5	Ordenes y resoluciones del Dr. Francia	81

The average volume holds about 250 pages of documents, numbered within each folio rather than by the volume. Some volumes are filled only with the cabildo records of Asunción during a certain period, but most are more eclectic.

Volumes 359–448 are of a different type and should perhaps be integrated with the others on a chronological basis. Fifty-four of these volumes (nos. 359–413) contain what is vaguely labeled “Correspondencias” of the different towns and villages of Paraguay. The documents in these volumes range in date from about 1750 to 1870, but, happily, there seem to be none from the earlier centuries mixed in. Within each folio, which in itself constitutes a given town’s correspondence, the order is strictly chronological. The “Correspondencia” subsection itself, however, is organized alphabetically by

the names of the towns; those whose names begin with "A" begin in volume 359 and the "Y's" end the subsection in Volume 413. Unfortunately, there is no order *within* each letter. Thus, volume 359 contains the correspondence of eight towns in folios ordered in the following manner: Ajos, Atyrá, San Antonio, Ysla Alta, Acaminí, Santa Ana, Aparipí and Altos. This typical volume has folios with as few as one page (Acaminí) and as many as 98 (Ajos), with documents dated between 1752 and 1869. Also typically, the volume includes some 310 pages. The correspondence of the larger towns, such as Pilar del Ñeembucú, Concepción, Villarrica, Ytapúa and Asunción, may comprise thousands of pages and fill several volumes. In the case of the capital, four thick volumes are needed to cover an 80-year period of time.

The researcher, when using these volumes, must search folio by folio and document by document for information relevant to his period and topic, possibly discovering an important letter in the correspondence of Quarepotí or Quindí. There is a negative advantage of sorts also, as the patient researcher may well find items which have eluded previous investigators. This was the case for the present writer.

The remaining thirty-five volumes are a mixed-bag. Volumes 414–419 contain a jumble of documents seemingly drawn at random from various decades and topics, from 1600 to about 1840. Volumes 420–430 hold, in chronological order from 1701 to 1853, the very important official correspondence between Paraguay and Buenos Aires. The next two volumes contain the same type of material but relate to Santa Fe, Corrientes, Paraná, Uruguay, Coimbra and even Paris, among other cities. The remaining volumes, 433–448, are composed of miscellaneous documents dealing with the 1750–1850 period, with little or no organization.

In general, the real strength of the Sección Historia is in its holdings on the late colonial period and the Carlos Antonio López years. Neither of these periods have been seriously mined as yet by the historian. In addition, the great part of the Asunción Cabildo records are found in this section (and a few in the *Nueva Encuadernación*), running through most of the colonial period until the 1825 abolition of that body by Dr. Francia. Unfortunately, the same may not be said for the cabildo records of the other large towns such as Pilar del Ñeembucú and Villarrica, and virtually no records survive from the cabildos of the many Indian pueblos.

Sección Libros de Casa

This section, a very small one (79 volumes), is one of the unused treasures of the archive. In well-organized, well-preserved volumes is the basic

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economic record of the Paraguayan government from 1772 until the death of Dr. Francia in 1840, and, spottily, beyond. There are gaps in the information, but the volumes progress from 1772 (vol. 1) to 1850 (vol. 50), and afford a generally good coverage. Although there are supposed to be 79 volumes in this section, this writer never encountered more than 50. Information on the late colonial period (vols. 1–13), is rather incomplete, but most of the Francia years are well-covered. A brief glance at the manner in which these volumes are organized is worth while:

<i>Volume</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Heading, or type of economic information</i>
14	1811	Real Hacienda del Paraguay
15	1816	Caxa de Hacienda
16	1819	Caxa de Hacienda (April–December)
17	1820	Caxa de Hacienda
18	1820	Tesorería de Guerra
19	MISSING	
20	MISSING	
21	1822	Tesorería de Guerra
22	1823	Tesorería General del Estado
23	1823	Tesorería de Guerra
24	1826	Tesorería de Guerra (July–December)
25	1826	Copy of volumes 24 and 26
26	1826	Tesorería de Guerra (January–June)
27	1827	Tesorería General (May–December)
28	1827	Copy of volume 27
29	MISSING	
30	1828	Tesorería General
31	1829	Tesorería General (January–November)
32	MISSING	
33	1829	Tesorería General (October–December)
34	1831	Tesorería General
35	1832	Tesorería General
36	1833	Tesorería General
37	1834	Tesorería General
38	1835	Tesorería General
39	1830	Tesorería General (Marked 1836)
40	1837	Tesorería General
41	1838	Tesorería General
42	1839	Tesorería General
43	1840	Tesorería General

For the Francia period, that period which is most complete in the *Libros de Caxa*, we lack information for 1812–1815, 1817–1818, part of 1819, 1821,

1824–1825, and 1836. Within certain volumes there are also often gaps in the information for a month or more.

Despite the crucial importance of information of the kind found in these volumes, historians have all but ignored them. Indicative of this oversight is the fact that in all the books and articles written about Dr. Francia and his regime, only one citation to the *Libros de Caja* is found. The present author, himself at work on a study of the Francia dictatorship, is attempting to fill this gap, among others.

There is no catalogue available for the *Libros de Caja*, but because of their consistent chronological organization, none is really needed. The individual volumes are very large in size, but number only from 100–140 pages each, many of them blank. The volumes are well bound and the date and volume number appears clearly on the spine. This is the best preserved of all sections in the Asunción Archive and the easiest to use.

In most volumes, the expenses and credits proceed from January through December. Each entry is individually numbered. On the left-hand side of the page there is a list of the nature of the expense or collection, and in the center there is a date and a brief explanatory note. On the right-hand side of the page are columns for credit and debit and the sum of funds on hand appears at the top and bottom of each page, for a running total. A typical page appears:

<i>Entry no. & category</i>	<i>Date & explanatory note</i>	<i>Credit</i>	<i>Debit</i>
		266,285/7	
11 Sueldos Militares	Enero 31, 1837. Pagado a 1 ^a Bat ⁿ Granaderos		2779/4
12 Bienes de Difunto	D ⁿ P. Olivares	9/4	
13 Sueldos Militares	Febrero 3, 1837. Pagado a 3 ^a Comp ^{1a} de Hussares		579/0
14 Venta de Papel Sellado	Febrero 5, 1837 Villarrica	20/0	
		Suma 262,956/7	

The final sum is carried over to begin the next page's records. Each page is numbered and signed at the bottom by the Minister of the Treasury. In this epoch, it also carried the rubric of Dr. Francia, who kept close watch on government finances.

The *Libros de Caja* represent the best sources for determining government expenditures and deserve much more attention than they have yet received from historians.

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Sección Judicial y Civil

This section, earlier labeled Sección Judicial y Criminal, or Causas Criminales, is the worst preserved in the archive. In fact, the 983 volumes of this section are chiefly notable for their advanced stage of decay. For this reason alone, the section is all but lost to the historian. Some of the volumes (all are poorly bound at best) have been literally destroyed by worms and weather, their documents being rendered illegible.

To complicate the matter further, there is no catalogue or index of any sort for the entire section or any part thereof. The combination of these two drawbacks renders the section almost unusable.

As a section, the volumes appear to have no order, no theme of organization. Within each volume what seems to have been an effort to arrange the documents chronologically in folios has failed utterly. A typical volume, number 1514, contains three large folios, whose documents date from 1817 to 1845, and the range of dates in some volumes spans centuries.

The eager historian must dig (literally) through hundreds and perhaps thousands of documents in search of material which might not be there at all, or which may have been consumed by man, nature or beast. Largely because of this, the section is unknown and almost unused.

Each volume contains from 1 to 12 folios and each folio in turn may hold as many as 15 *procesos*, or denunciations and court records, often totally unconnected and ranging wildly in time and space. In addition, many of the cases are incomplete, their various parts spread through several volumes and folios.

In short, the section remains impossible to use effectively, very difficult to use at all, and no one knows enough about it to be of any help.

Sección Propiedades y Testamentos

The use of this confusing section is somewhat facilitated by the availability of two catalogues, which while incomplete, are at least an aid in understanding the section's 1273 volumes. The section is erroneously marked on the spine of each volume as "Sección Civil," its original title, and is not to be confused with the Sección Judicial y Civil described above.

One of the catalogues is the 249-page *Catálogo de Título de Propiedades, 1541–1870*. This typewritten guide has a confusing scheme of organization; the entries are alphabetical by name, but chronological *within* each letter. There is little information but the essential given in this catalogue. Each page is actually a long list of names in chronological order of their acquisitions, recording in addition to name and year, the area, town or *partido* of the acquisition. Also, the volume in which the relevant documentation is found is given,

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as well as the folio and number of pages included. A sample page of the catalogue would look like this:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Area</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Vols.</i>	<i>Folio</i>	<i>Pages</i>
Díaz de Bedoya, José	Capital (Tacumbú)	1796	145	10
Duarte, Maria Lorenza	Isla Valle	1796	145	12	3
Díaz, Gonzalo Pedro	Itaybú	1798	462	1
Domínguez, Manuel	Ytá	1799	311	6	18

As far as it goes, the catalogue is highly accurate. Almost invariably the citations lead the researcher to the proper volume. Often, however, the paper dividers between the folios have disappeared and much time is wasted ascertaining where one set of papers ends and the next begins. If one is tracing the land acquisitions of a certain family or individual, the catalogue can be of immense value. The main fault of the guide is its incompleteness; a glance at a few random folios proves that many have not been recorded at all in the catalogue. Much more work must be done on this guide before it can be considered comprehensive for its section.

The second guide, the *Catálogo de Testamentos*, is organized in a similar manner. This catalogue contains 163 typed pages and notes documents ranging in date from 1540 to 1868. Incompleteness is also a problem, as with the previous guide. In addition to listing names, dates, volume and folio numbers, this catalogue also indicates national origins, sex, home town in Paraguay, type of documents (Testamentos or codicillos), and often profession. Thus an average page will contain:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Vol.</i>	<i>Folio</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Area</i>	<i>Type of document</i>
Juan de Vergara (Capitán Español)	417	1	1772	Asunción	Testamento
Tomás Vittio (Presbítero paraguayo)	137	6	1781	Areguá	Testamento
Costanza María de Vera (paraguaya)	419	2	1783	Capiatá	Codicilio

Despite its incompleteness, this guide can be used to afford, for example, a brief look at the personal wealth of clerics during a certain era, the economic bases of resident foreigners in Paraguay, or the fortunes of a given family over a period of time.

As for the volumes themselves, each usually contains information for a given year; there are only rare cases of disparate dates. The dates used are those of the death of the persons, but the documentation concerning the will and its possible litigation might stretch on for years, even decades. The section as a

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whole is not organized coherently. Volume 18 may contain documents concerning testaments dated 1725, and volume 271 may well have material from the seventeenth century. This can be a serious obstacle and forces the researcher to rely on the incomplete catalogues.

Each volume as in other sections is divided into folios, but the folio dividing papers may be long gone. In addition, some folios contain as many as ten or more cases of land acquisition whose principals have wildly disparate names. Again one is thrown back to reliance on the catalogue. There are also some genuine oddities in this section. The patient researcher, wading through the volumes, will come upon one, such as volume 593, which is relevant to neither properties nor testaments, but instead is composed of Alcabala records of Asunción for the years 1815–1816. A serious examination of this section would no doubt turn up many such cases, perhaps filling gaps so glaringly apparent in the other sections.

Unfortunately, the overall condition of the volumes comprising the section is deplorable. Some of the volumes are beyond saving, being worm-eaten, brittle, crumbling and illegible. At least one in ten volumes of this section is in this advanced stage of decomposition, and the best volumes are in only mediocre condition compared to those of the Sección Historia. This valuable section should be microfilmed before it is lost to the historian and the nation.

Sección Nueva Encuadernacion

The somewhat mis-named 'Newly-Bound Section' is the largest in the archive, and after the Sección Judicial y Civil, the most difficult to use. The condition of the 3,400 volumes ranges from excellent to almost useless.

Dealing with this section is a frustrating business at best, as there is, despite its immensity, no catalogue or guide of any type available. Some advanced students of Dr. Efraím Cardozo are intermittently employed in indexing individual volumes, but have barely scratched the surface, and their results are now on file cards unavailable to most investigators.

Even worse than the lack of a catalogue is the complete lack of meaningful organization, as a section, or even individually within volumes. Documents in this section span the period from about 1600 to 1870, and may well do so in an individual volume. Generally, the bulk of the material in these volumes dates from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, with a heavy emphasis on the post-Francia years from 1840–1870. Full use of this section would be absolutely essential to a study of the War of the Triple Alliance, but it would also be a labor of years, which no one as yet has undertaken.

A few examples will illustrate the problems of using this section. Volume 707 contains a series of letters in English, Italian, French and Spanish, written between 1851 and 1868 to or by foreigners residing in Paraguay. The same volume contains documents from the 1824–1826, dealing with commerce. Volume 851 is composed of a tremendous mixture of letters on various subjects, dated from 1811 to 1860. Volume 1,242 contains sales tax (*alcabala*) records from Asunción dated 1826, and volume 3,417 has material pertinent to the church in Paraguay and trade matters, ranging in date from 1598 to 1868—a full 270 years!

Work with this section in a serious manner requires a vast and perhaps exorbitant amount of time to comb through the volumes or to select individual volumes on a random basis. The few men who have used this section have tended to do the latter in the interest of saving time. The present writer spent three full months working on the *Sección Nueva Encuadernación*, and consulted some 800 volumes, of which 71 contained some information valuable to his study. A complete scrutiny would take years. For this reason, many otherwise reputable studies on Paraguayan history contain few if any citations from this potentially valuable source.

Sección Copias de Documentos

In addition to the regular sections within the Asunción Archive, there is a small sub-section of twenty-nine volumes composed of typed copies of documents dated from 1538 to 1868. Most of these documents were copied from the *Sección Historia* because they were in danger of literally disappearing through natural causes. The appearance of the UNESCO microfilm unit in 1956 put an end to this salvage operation.

While most of the copied documents are in typed form, a few are written in a neat, legible hand. The volumes are organized in chronological order and are chronological within each volume as well. Thirteen volumes contain sixteenth century materials, four hold copies from the seventeenth century, two for the eighteenth, and the last ten are copies of nineteenth century documents. Many of the documents copied are now illegible in the original and must be used in their copied form, at least as a check on accuracy. The volumes have on their spines a chaotic and confusing plethora of numbers both Arabic and Roman, and it is best to rely strictly on the date, also printed on the spine.

There exists a very useful *Índice cronológico de las copias de documentos encuadernados 1538–1868*, an elaborate list of the copied documents, giving the date, the copy volume number, number of pages and the location within

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the Sección Historia of the original. In addition, the index presents a short paragraph summary of the subject dealt with by the document, a most helpful guide.

Sección Microfilmado

This is not properly a section or sub-section, but should be included in any discussion of the archive. There is a guide, the *Catálogo de microfilmado sección historia*, prepared by the UNESCO mission of 1956–1957, which can orient the investigator to what was copied. The catalogue is organized by volume only, making it impossible to use coherently on subject matters such as trade, diplomacy, military matters and the like. Further, the catalogue is another paragon of incompleteness, covering only about one-sixth of what was actually microfilmed.

The material copied, some 180,000 pages of documents and 5,000 pages of newspapers, was chosen according to historical value and proximity to destruction (quothe the catalogue), and is comprised of volumes 1–370 of the Sección Historia, about 50 scattered volumes of the Sección Nueva Encuadernación (mostly sixteenth and seventeenth century documents), and a few volumes from the Sección Propiedades y Testamentos. In addition, the newspapers *El Paraguay Independiente* (1845–1860), *Cabichuí* (1867–1868), and early parts of *El Seminario* (1853–1855) were also microfilmed.

It is sadly noted that this writer was informed by several people in Asunción that the Paraguayan copy of the microfilm (there is another in Mexico City), kept in the Archivo Nacional, is now unusable as a result of improper storage. This rumor was impossible to verify because the archive's primitive microfilm reader had been borrowed and forgotten many months before. Without a reader it would be all but impossible to ascertain the true condition of the microfilm, especially in the dim interior of the archive.

Colección Solano López

This valuable collection is now properly a library. It is composed of books, pamphlets, revistas, and newspapers. Documents formerly belonging to this collection are now in the Sección Historia. There is a catalogue for this collection, which divides the books into 29 sections, but within each section the book is merely listed by date of acquisition: thus a volume donated in 1968 by this author is the last entry in category eight, the Paraguayan War. The catalogue should, however, be consulted prior to the use of the collection.

The books are divided into the following categories:

THE ARCHIVO NACIONAL IN ASUNCION, PARAGUAY

1	Paraguayan geography	72 vols.
2	Anthropology, ethnology and philology	30 "
3	History of Paraguay. General; conquest, colonial period, Jesuits, etc.	109 "
4	History of Paraguay. The independence period	4 "
5	History of Paraguay. The dictator Francia	16 "
6	History of Paraguay, Carlos Antonio López	27 "
7	History of Paraguay. Francisco Solano López, biography, critique, tyranny, Madame Lynch, etc.	31 "
8	The Paraguayan War. General, memories, biographies, lessons, literature, plans and illustrations, official publications, diplomatic questions, battles, etc.	131 "
9	History of Paraguay. Contemporary history and politics (not very contemporary)	40 "
10	Biography	2 "
11	Bibliography and archives	21 "
12	Fine Arts	2 "
13	Literature	20 "
14	Sciences	28 "
15	Religion. History, official publications, pastorals, conferences, orations, etc.	31 "
16	Masonic philosophy	6 "
17	Official publications. Decrees, constitutions, presidential messages, Ministry reports, statutes, banking, etc.	351 "
18	Law and social sciences. General, legal monographs, doctoral theses, litigation, etc.	58 "
19	Limits, treaties and diplomacy	50 "
20	Public instruction. Old texts, reports and memorials, programs, legislation, manuals, etc.	91 "
21	Political economy and treasury	13 "
22	Militia, war and marine	9 "
23	Agriculture, livestock raising, industry and commerce	13 "
24	Immigration and colonization	9 "
25	Expositions and congresses	4 "
26	Industrial and commercial guides	17 "
27	Railroads, mails and telegraph	22 "
28	Old imprints and manuscripts in Guaraní and Castilian	8 "
29	Periodical publications.	343 "

In total, the collection contains 1,180 books and pamphlets, and 233 bound volumes of revistas, with 110 bound newspaper volumes. Category 29, noted above as "Periodical publications," is the most valuable part of the collection. The genuine scarcity (actually, rarity) of Paraguayan newspapers re-

quires a closer look at this category, which represents the most complete such collection extant. The catalogue lists twenty-five newspapers:

- El Paraguay Independiente* (Asunción, 1845–1860)
- El Seminario* (Asunción 1853–1868)
- Aurora* (Asunción, ?–?)
- Cabichuí* (Paso Pucú, 1867–1868)
- Estrella* (Piribebuy, 1869)
- Regeneración* (Asunción, 1870)
- El Paraguay* (Asunción, 1873, 1894)
- El Fénix* (Asunción, 1873)
- La Verdad* (Asunción, 1885)
- El Látigo* (Asunción, 1885–1893)
- Ylustración paraguaya* (Asunción, 1888)
- El Porvenir* (Asunción, 1882)
- El Diario Oficial* (Asunción, 1889, 1890, 1892), and *Boletín* (Asunción, 1865–1866)
- La Democracia* (Asunción, 1886–1892, 1893, 1901–1902)
- La República* (Asunción, 1891–1893)
- El Tiempo* (Asunción, 1891–1892)
- Combate* (Formosa, Argentina, 1892)
- Eco de la Campaña* (Concepción, 1892–1894)
- La Libertad* (Asunción, 1893–1894)
- El Cívico* (Asunción, 1872, 1901–1902)
- La Prensa* (Asunción, 1898–1901)
- El País* (Asunción, 1902)
- El Paraguay* (Asunción, 1902–1903)
- El Enano* (Asunción, 1902)

This collection of newspapers is of extreme value to the historian. Many of the titles were short-lived and only a few copies are known to be extant today. The majority of the nineteenth century newspapers published in Paraguay are in the collection, and some are simply not to be found elsewhere. Gaps in the Solano López Collection may be partially filled by consulting the *diario* holdings of the National Library.

The condition of many of the newspapers in this collection limits their value. They have, like all other material in this neglected archive, received little preservative attention over the years. The effects of man, mouse and nature are made even more serious, however, by the poor quality of the paper used in publication. Many of those bound volumes contain pages so brittle that to turn them is to break them. This makes reading and microfilming a delicate task at best. Whole pages, broken off in the past, have disappeared and cannot be located, having been carted off in the trash in years gone by. The general condition of the newspapers is deplorable. It should be noted that newspapers in the Biblioteca Nacional, most of them of twentieth century vintage, are equally

uncared for and in a similar condition, whipped by wind slashing in through the many broken windows in the main reading room. Few parts of the Asunción Archive more deserve careful microfilming.

The periodical collection also contains a trove of revistas of extreme value to the historian, although not of such relative rarity as the newspapers. All of the main scholarly journals are represented, although few are complete runs. There unfortunately have been few recent donations or additions, and the bulk of the material dates from the 1880–1920 period. It may be hoped that sometime in the future these revistas will also be microfilmed or otherwise copied; the originals in the Asunción Archives will not much longer be with us in usable condition.

In general terms, the Solano López Collection is a very valuable one. It includes many books, pamphlets, newspapers and revistas not found in the Biblioteca Nacional or in other good libraries, private or public. There are several works of genuine scarcity, if not rarity. While the National Library contains more books, the Solano López Collection, from the point of view of the historian, has a generally higher quality in its limited holdings. The Collection will, as always, continue to depend mainly upon charity for expansion, for the government is unlikely to provide funds for the purchase of additional material.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WORKS CONCERNING THE ARCHIVO NACIONAL

There is little good, accurate information available about the Archivo Nacional in Asunción. In fact, there is little information at all in printed form which might be used by a researcher contemplating future work on the history of Paraguay.

As a general point of departure, and most readily available to historians in the United States is Efraím Cardozo's huge *Historiografía paraguaya. I. Paraguay indígena, español y jesuita* (Mexico, 1959), which devotes a small section to the National Archive (pp. 16–19), and contains other information throughout on the documentary sources relevant to different periods in Paraguay's colonial history. Especially valuable, since it contains a short history of the archive itself, is chapter 43 of the second volume in Carlos R. Centurión's excellent *Historia de la cultura paraguaya* (2 vols., Asunción, 1961). An article in the archive section of the *Hispanic American Historical Review* is also worthy of note; Francisco Sevillano Colóm's "Lista del contenido de los volúmenes microfilmados del Archivo Nacional de Asunción," (XXXVIII, Feb., 1958, 60–120). This can be a most useful guide, and is equipped with an index, but is only partially complete for a small number of volumes in a large archive.

Having examined the readily available material, one must turn to guides and articles, which while useful, are extremely difficult to obtain in the United

States. Chief among these are the seventeen pamphlet publications written in 1899 by Manuel Domínguez, which comprise *El Archivo Nacional*. These pamphlets are filled with useful information on the holdings of the archive, but are badly out of date since so much more has been added to the archive and so much older material has either disappeared or been rendered useless. There is a slim volume by Juan F. Pérez-Acosta, *Los archivos de la Asunción del Paraguay* (Buenos Aires, 1923), which is said to be useful, but this writer has yet to encounter a copy despite a prolonged search. A partial manuscript copy exists in the archive itself, and can be of some help to the researcher in trying to acquaint himself with the archive. Also in manuscript in the archive is a very interesting article by Victorio Manuel Riego, "El Archivo Nacional," which is basically a history of the institution. This short article is dated August 3, 1963, and is the best work on the subject that the writer has yet encountered.

Also of interest for a history of the archive is a short article by Viriato Díaz Pérez, "Para escribir una historia del Archivo Nacional," which appeared in *Revista del Instituto Paraguayo* (No. 62, 1909, pp. 813–819).

The serious researcher can refer to several other publications of interest, one of which is the rather rare and useful *Bibliografía paraguaya. Catálogo de la biblioteca paraguaya "Solano López"* (Asunción, 1906), but this volume can tell one little that cannot be speedily learned from the archive's own unpublished catalogue, which, constantly updated, is far more complete. Also published in Asunción to furnish historical aid is a partial *Catálogo de testamentos y codicilos del Archivo Nacional* (1936), which the writer has not personally seen.

Finally, there is the valuable work of José Doroteo Bareiro, who published in the revista *Guaranía* (Buenos Aires) a series of lists of the archive's holdings such as the "Catálogo de los documentos de la sección historia de los años 1534–1871 del Archivo Nacional de Asunción" (in sixteen installments in numbers 17–37 of this journal, 1935–1936). This effort is now largely outdated by the list found in the Sevillano Colóm article, but Bareiro contributed many short listings of documentary holdings on Paraguayan history in several journals during the 1930's.

In addition to the separate articles and books dealing with the subject of the material in the National Archive, several Paraguayan revistas, past and present, have included valuable selections of printed documents in their numbers. Chief among these are the *Revista del Instituto Paraguayo* (1896–1899), *Revista del Paraguay* (1913–1914), and *Historia paraguaya. Anuario de la Academia Paraguaya de la Historia* (1956 ff). There are other publications of this nature which contain printed documentation from the Asunción Archive, but the three named above are the basic sources, and the most easily located in the better libraries of the United States.