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MUNICIPAL ARCHIVES IN SPAIN

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One cannot really speak about municipal archives' policies in Spain until the recent establishment of autonomous provinces.¹⁾ Until then, these archives have depended on isolated initiatives, individual or institutional, not always within archival standards and above all without any coordination that would take into account the differing territorial domains, i.e. province or the region.

Since the administrative political division into seventeen Autonomous Communities, each one has become responsible for municipal Archives. Until now, the strategies that have been followed are very different for each Autonomy. A very large reorganisation is taking place, which ranges from the issuing of laws (Seville, Barcelona), to the establishment of regulations and auxiliary measures. Hence the very different results obtained across the whole set of Autonomies.

The recent bibliography speaks with eloquence about this rise in interest. (see Appendix I). The meetings, round tables and the publication of numerous instruments of description are also witnesses to this awakening.

Although my Andalusian background will naturally lead me to emphasize the situation in Andalusia - the largest Autonomous Community - I believe I can sort out what I consider to be the key points relating to the Spanish Municipal Archives at the present moment:

- . There has been a development of a generalized political interest in the Municipal Archives, parallel to the interest in the study of historical popular roots. This development coincides with the take over of responsibilities by the Autonomies.
- . This political interest does not always support or guarantee professionalism.
- . There is no official archive diploma in Spain; therefore the training of municipal archivists is not uniform, and may be even deficient, because of the lack of archival standards at the moment of admission tests.²⁾ This lack of professional coherence has logically had consequences on the organization, description and other professional practices.
- . Theoretically there should be as many municipal archives as city halls and at least an equivalent number of archivists. This is not so in practice. There are documents which are assembled in storehouses which are not always suitable for archives and even the number of archivists is inferior to the number of archives.

In order to give some data, I'm going to refer to the province of Seville, one of the eight that constitute the Andalusian Autonomy.

Seville has 102 City Halls; since 1981 81 municipal archives have been organized, but only 5 of them have an archivist. The city halls, particularly the small ones, lack the economic means to be able to support a proper archival provision.

The recent legislation concerning municipal archives is not paralleled by the co-ordinated development and execution of archival norms.

These key points are the consequence of a problematic reality which one should confront with clear measures and from a professional point of view.

The solutions given by the Organizational plan and the description of municipal archives of Seville, for which I am responsible, try to overcome these deficiencies. Among others, these solutions are:

- . The lack of archivists in each municipality has been alleviated by the creation of zone-archivists, under whose responsibility are the archives of several municipalities.³⁾ These archivists depend on the budget of the organisation which rules the Province, which is the Provincial Deputation; they also depend on the archivist's co-operation.
- . The bases of coordination relevant to all the municipal archives of the province have been defined and settled. These include the organization and description of holdings, by means of a single frame of classification and a descriptive programme, which includes the inventory and a general index for each one of the holdings kept in the repository. While modelling this plan, we have started from a previous idea: municipal archives are not different from other public archives in the ways documentation has to be handled.⁴⁾

Another important criterion has been the unity and continuity of the municipal holdings i.e. classification, inventorizing and numbering. Dissemination of information has been one other aim. The 81 organized archives have produced 64 inventories in the 17 volumes which have appeared in the collection 'Archivos Municipales Sevillanos'.

Notes

1. Heredia Herrera, Antonia: *Deputations in the archival development of the Local Administration* 'Acts of a National Congress of Archives and Libraries of the Local Administration, 1982, Valencia, 1987.
2. Heredia Herrera, Antonia: El archivero de Administración Local, *Boletín de Anabad*, XXXI, 4, 1981.
3. To this date there are four areas attended by four archivists who depend on the archive of the Provincial Deputation, covering the following municipalities:
Area I: Constantina, Cazalla de la Sierra, El Pedroso, Las Navas, San Nicolas del Puerto, Alanis de la Sierra, Almaden de la Plata, El Real de la Jara, Guadalcanal.
Area II: Lora del Río, Puebla de los Infantes, Peñaflores, Alcolea del Río, Villanueva del Río, Cantillana, Villaverde del Río, Brenes.
Area III: La Luisiana, Fuentes de Andalucía, El viso del Alcor, Mairena del Alcor, La Campana, Cañada del Rosal.
Area IV: Sanlúcar la Mayor, Santiponde, Albaida, Olivares, Salteras, Umbrete, Espartinas, Benacazon, Bollullos, Huelva, Carrion, Pilas, Aznalcázar, Villamanrique, Castilleja del Campo.
4. We follow up the main lines of: *Archivística General, Teoría y práctica*, Seville, 1988.