
RESEARCH REPORTS AND NOTES

RESEARCH NOTES FROM THE UNDERWORLD

The Entry Logs of the Rio de Janeiro Casa de Detenção, 1860–1969

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Abstract: The Rio de Janeiro state archive's collection of entry logs for the city's central detention center, going back to the mid-nineteenth century, provides a rare glimpse into the lives of Rio's—and Brazil's—poor and working classes who otherwise left few written records behind. During the time when the institution maintained the entry logs, police exercised broad power to make arrests. Although relatively few detainees were ever prosecuted or even formally charged, the detention center kept detailed records of detainees' physical appearance, attire, home address, nationality, sex, affiliation, and so on, as well as information about any criminal charges. This article explores the wealth of empirical data that the entry logs provide. It also suggests how scrutinizing this type of document across time shows how record keeping itself changed, in turn affording researchers rare insight into the inner workings of modern Latin American society.

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João Antonio left behind few traces of his life. He could not read or write; he did not keep a diary. At forty-eight years of age, he had never married. He worked as a cook in Rio de Janeiro, then Brazil's capital city. With neither inheritance nor legitimate heirs, he is unlikely to have left any testamentary document. But on February 2, 1891, police claim to have found João Antonio gambling on Marinhas Square, and they brought him to the city's central detention center, the Casa de Detenção (House of Detention). As a result, we learn of the conditions of his arrest and the conditions of his life. We know the name of the police officer who brought him to the detention center and the jurisdiction in which he had been apprehended, as well as such biographical details as his parents' names, his place of birth, his home address, and a detailed description of the outfit he was wearing at the time of arrest. The four days that he spent in detention produced what may be the only surviving artifact of João Antonio's life between his birth and death.

A recording clerk (*escrivão*) handwrote João Antonio's data upon his entry into the Casa de Detenção on a printed form. In compliance with the law, at the year's end, an employee in the clerk's office (*amanuense*) collected the entry records together into a large, leather-bound logbook, which was then archived. The pages recording the comings and goings of detainees in Rio's city jail accumulated;¹ the bound logbooks gathered in piles. They were transported en masse to the public library in Niterói, then the seat of Rio de Janeiro's state government. After a long, mysterious gap in the logbooks' history, some believe that they were sent in the late 1980s to a warehouse that had once served as a garage used by the city's urban public transportation company, by then decommissioned after the bus system had been privatized.² There they remained stacked under a punctured roof. Two dedicated historians from Rio and the then director of the Rio de Janeiro state archive unearthed them in the early 1990s, climbing up and down a long staircase with armfuls of the logbooks, and delivered them at last to what was then the Rio de Janeiro state archive in Niterói. Now located in the city of Rio, the Public Archive of the State of Rio de Janeiro (Arquivo Público do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, or APERJ) presently holds many, if not all, of the extant *livros de matrícula* (logbooks). Many pages have succumbed to hungry worms, Technicolor fungus, or the slow ravages of the city's year-round humidity. Yet scores of the bound volumes or fragments of them survive. The approximately 130 years that

1. I use the term *Rio de Janeiro* interchangeably with the common *Rio*.

2. Another version of this story holds that the documents were discovered in a prison (*presídio*) in Niterói. The two historians who rescued the imperiled Casa de Detenção logbooks from the warehouse were Carlos Eugênio Líbano Soares and Flávio dos Santos Gomes, and the archive director who helped them was Veldeci Catarino. Carlos Eugênio Líbano Soares, personal communication with author, April 25, 2008; Flávio dos Santos Gomes, personal communication with author, April 23, 2008.

APERJ's collection encompasses span most of the nineteenth-century Empire to the 1960s. They record information about men and women, slaves and free persons, adults and minors.³ The rescue of the logbooks and their restoration now (however tentatively) under way are nothing less than heroic acts; they provide perhaps the most complete and easily utilized collection of data on the social history of the city's popular classes.

Though a product of nineteenth-century penal reform in Brazil, Rio de Janeiro's House of Detention came to serve as a penal purgatory to which persons swept off the city's street corners, taverns, and docks were consigned for often open-ended terms. Indeed, it did not take much to get thrown into jail. Because of the irregular nature of many arrests, detainees were frequently acquitted or released without any formal charges. Yet the mere fact that they passed through the door of the Casa de Detenção left us information about their home address, age, profession, and parents' names—information that provides a physical description that includes scars and tattoos as well as eye, hair, and skin color and even the shape of the nose. In the categories of information that the state demanded, the manner of recording these data, and especially the language that the official used to explain why that person had been arrested at all, we see the priorities, fears, and procedures of the Brazilian state at the microlevel.

This quintessentially local story reverberates powerfully in other Latin American contexts, not just because of the family resemblance that penal institutions throughout the region bear but also because the body of documentation itself can help researchers tackle problems common throughout the region: How can we study the underprivileged and illiterate segments of the population, who left no records of their own? How can we understand the changing relationship between the postcolonial state and society? How can we fathom the distance between theories of modern statecraft and the way that governance actually worked on the ground? This research note considers the documents that allowed us to peer into João Antonio's life, the lives of many thousands of his peers. It is meant to inform future researchers of the provenance of these documents and the conditions under which they were recorded; it is also intended as a call for efforts to preserve and make publicly available the entry logs for penal institutions throughout Latin America in light of the many types of precious insight that they offer.⁴

3. Men and women had separate logbooks; the vast majority of the entry logs are for men. The logbooks that recorded women detainees can be discovered only at random, as the APERJ index indicates only each book's range of dates. See, e.g., APERJ, CD-5627, CD-5414, CD-6308, and CD-6336.

4. This article concerns the entire collection of entry logs from Casa de Detenção presently archived in the Arquivo Público do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (APERJ), but it draws specific examples only from the portion of the collection that was available for consultation between 2000 and 2009, which includes selected volumes from the 1860s and 1880s,

ORIGINS AND ROLE OF THE RIO DE JANEIRO HOUSE OF
DETENTION IN POSTCOLONIAL BRAZIL

A prison operated in the city of Rio de Janeiro almost immediately upon the city's founding in 1565.⁵ Laws passed in the early eighteenth century mandated that the state castigate its lawbreaking subjects by inflicting pain through the use of such types of corporal punishment as beatings, the iron collar, and branding with a hot iron.⁶ With independence came the abolition of forms of punishment associated with a cruel, arbitrary, and retrograde colonial regime. The 1824 Constitution and especially the 1830 Criminal Code and 1832 Code of Criminal Procedure made those liberal reforms into law (Santos 2004, 140; Holloway 1989, 649–654; Holloway 1993).

The Brazilian government gradually overhauled the medieval prison system it had inherited from the colonial era. The new penal system that it sought would make punishment proportional to the crime and would separate prisoners according to age, sex, and the severity of the infraction. Legislation and administrative measures strengthened the rule of law and reinforced prisoners' right to habeas corpus, to restrict preventative imprisonment by police authorities and to diminish the involvement of police officers in cases involving common crimes (Santos 2004, 143). An official commission in 1834 investigated the existing prisons, especially the Aljube and Ilha das Cobras (used as a prison since 1624) and found them to be in lamentable condition. In 1837, the commission ruled that the prison used for slaves, the Calabouço, be shut down.⁷

In the middle of the nineteenth century, the Imperial Court had begun to incorporate new swaths of land on the outskirts of the colonial center into the city. The first thrusts of Rio's later urban sprawl turned a former coconut farm surrounded by marshy land into the site of the Brazilian capital's House of Correction (Abreu 1988, 39; Miralles et al. 1975, 45). The government purchased a large estate located between Catumbi and Mata-Porcós, two neighborhoods distant from the city's old center, where con-

all extant volumes from the 1890s though the 1920s, selected volumes from the 1930s, and only one from the 1940s (CD-5619). The APERJ holds bound volumes of entry logs dating to about 1969, but as of the writing of this article, the archive has declared the documents "unavailable for consultation."

5. In 1566, an official plan was formulated to construct a prison in Rio de Janeiro. Only in 1733 did the building, called the Cadeia Velha (Old Jail) begin to be used as a prison, and the construction was completed only in 1747 (Miralles et al. 1975).

6. APERJ, "Histórico do sistema penitenciário," unpublished manuscript, n.d.

7. Inmates in the Calabouço were relocated to the Casa de Correção in 1837 (Holloway 2009, 255–271). Constructed in the late 1730s, the Aljube was originally an ecclesiastical prison (c. 1732–1808) but was also used for those who engaged in unlicensed mining and smugglers; it became the main facility where prisoners accused of common crimes awaiting judgment were sent in Rio from 1808 to 1856 (Miralles et al. 1975, 45; Holloway 2009, 271).

struction began on the Casa de Correção da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro in 1834.⁸ The House of Correction was meant to contain persons condemned to “cellular prison” terms and introduced a new type of sentence, “prison with work,” which reflected the postcolonial Brazilian criminal justice system’s new, reformist aims: to regenerate criminals and to reintegrate them into society (Santos 2004, 141; Tórtima 2002).

It became clear by mid-century that the Casa de Correção alone would not serve Rio’s growing needs. A report from 1846 to the president of the province of Rio de Janeiro reiterated a plea made but not heeded four years earlier for an institution that would serve as a temporary holding place for those in state custody in the provincial capital of Niterói. Persons prosecuted for crimes and sentenced to labor on the many public works projects in progress in the capital city en route from a provincial jail faced a long and arduous journey and stayed temporarily in the police barracks. However, the official report explained, neither the barracks’ size nor its cramped, unsanitary conditions were appropriate for housing the prisoners. The provincial official ordered the construction of a facility that would “serve as a deposit of the aforementioned prisoners . . . close to where the works are located where these prisoners are condemned to labor” (Presidente da Província do Rio de Janeiro 1853). In the Imperial Court, officials likewise discussed the pressing need for a more modern and humane way of housing prisoners awaiting judgment. In 1851, a law mandated the construction of a new, two-level building to serve as the House of Detention to replace the Old Jail (Cadeia Velha) and the Aljube. In June 1856, the Casa de Detenção, with capacity for 160 inmates, was carved out of a section of the ground floor of the Casa de Correção (Moreira de Azevedo 1877, 411; Moraes 1923, 13–15).⁹ While the Casa de Correção had been designed exclusively to house those carrying out sentences of prison with

8. A royal edict (*carta-régia*) mandated the construction of the Casa de Correção in 1769, although the Brazilian government did not actually begin construction until 1834 (Miralles et al. 1975, 45). In December 1941, the establishment’s name was changed by federal Law (*Decreto-Lei*) 3971 to Penitenciária Central do Distrito Federal, and later, in July 1957, Law 3212 changed the name to Penitenciária Lemos de Brito; APERJ, “Casa de Detenção do Rio de Janeiro,” unpublished manuscript, n.d.

9. The legislation that mandated the construction of the Casa de Detenção in 1856 is Decreto No. 1774. It was administered by the director of the Casa de Correção as an appendage of the latter institution (Ministério da Justiça e Negócios Interiores 1898, 10). The Casa de Detenção had its name legally changed in December 1941 by federal Law 3971 to Presídio do Distrito Federal, and subsequently in 1948 to Penitenciária Milton Dias Moreira; APERJ, “Casa de Detenção do Rio de Janeiro” (unpublished manuscript). “Practically deactivated” since 2006, the old prison complex in Catumbi where the old Casas de Correção and de Detenção had functioned was partially demolished in 2003, 2005, and 2006, and finally completely removed in 2010; “Com 100 kg of dinamite, presídio do complexo Frei Caneca é implodido,” *O Globo*, July 3, 2010; “Presídio do Frei Caneca deve ser implodido nesta quinta,” *O Globo*, December 26, 2006.

work (*prisão com trabalho*), the Casa de Detenção was intended for simple imprisonment (in other words, detention without work) for persons accused of or sentenced to infractions or who had broken local regulations, as well as debtors, breakers of civil and commercial contracts, and foreign subjects detained at the request of their consuls. Persons arrested and briefly detained in the small jails that many local police stations contained and the smaller detention facility run by the police (Xadrez da Polícia) were to be sent to the Casa de Detenção.¹⁰ In short, anyone who was being legally detained but not sentenced to serve time in any other institution could be held in custody at the House of Detention (Moreira de Azevedo 1877, 411).¹¹

During the nineteenth-century Empire, penal reform extended beyond the Imperial Court of Rio de Janeiro to all parts of Brazil. New penal facilities sprang up in most provincial capitals. The government of Recife, capital of the northeastern state of Pernambuco, for example, constructed a new prison in 1848 and added on a House of Detention in 1850.

The architecture of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century penal reform was not limited to the building of houses of correction and detention; it also centrally included the way information about inmates was recorded, maintained, and manipulated—as both forensic evidence and social observation. The data gathered at penal institutions fueled both criminal jurisprudence and social theory. In contrast with the dungeons of the colonial era, incarceration in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Brazil relied heavily on meticulous record keeping as a defining feature of a modern, self-consciously scientific penitentiary system. Although police and justice officials routinely flouted rules of criminal procedure, for instance in holding detainees in Rio's House of Detention for lengthy terms without charges, these same officials for the most part appear to have adhered to the law's record-keeping requirements.¹² Thus, even when a person was in custody for unknown reasons, the clerk still recorded the person's full name, parents' names, home address, level of literacy, place of birth, and so on, but left the reason for arrest blank or simply indicated "reason unknown."

For researchers interested in reconstructing the history of Rio's detention center, a variety of sources exist. The Imperial (and then the federal, after the fall of the monarchical Brazilian Empire and beginning of

10. APERJ, Casa de Detenção da Corte, Instrumento 1.1.8; Ministério da Justiça e Relações Exteriores, *Relatório do Ministério da Justiça e Relações Exteriores* (Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Nacional, 1885), 125; hereafter, all annual reports from the Ministry of Justice (and the Interior) are abbreviated as *Relatório*. Decreto 10.233 of April 4, 1888; Lei 3.397 of November 24, 1888; *Relatório* 1888, 119.

11. See also *Relatório* 1880 and 1881, 156.

12. For a federal regulation about record keeping at the Casa de Detenção, see *Actos de Poder Executivo* (1907), chap. 13, "Das Matrículas na Casa de Detenção" (articles 180–183), 756.

Brazil's federalist republic in 1889) Ministry of Justice and Interior Affairs produced annual reports that almost always dedicated several paragraphs to reporting on the Casa de Detenção. Rio's late-nineteenth- and twentieth-century chroniclers and prison reformers and diarists periodically made the House of Detention the subject of their published writings (e.g., Barbosa 1993; Senna 1907). Researchers willing to dig through folders of largely uncataloged materials will find sporadic information about the institution's day-to-day administrative dealings—the amount of money spent on food, construction, and repair projects for the building, and so on—in the National Archive. Yet no other source captures the precious, detailed microhistories of its detainees, or the intersection of formal and informal justice that the Casa de Detenção epitomizes, better than the institution's entry logs.

A UNIQUE INSTITUTION, A UNIQUELY USEFUL SOURCE

The first person whose entrance was recorded into Brazil's modern penitentiary regime was a slave. On March 19, 1835, the first *livro de matrícula* for prisoners sentenced to penal labor in the Casa de Correção, the Casa de Detenção's parent institution, was inaugurated. In this first logbook, the first name registered had been transferred from the galleys (or *galés*, a premodern form of forced gang labor) and arrived there on February 7, 1834: "João, from the Cabinda nation, was condemned on December 6, 1832[,] to a life sentence of hard labor [*prisão perpetua com trabalhos*] for having killed his master [*por ter morto seu senhor*], Manoel Clemente" (Ministério da Justiça e Negócios Interiores 1898, 9). The apparent irony of a self-consciously modern penal regime introduced into society that held more than 1.5 million of its members as human chattel highlights the unique quality of the documentation that its institution produced. From the House of Detention's establishment in 1856 until Brazil finally abolished slavery in 1888, the institution housed enslaved and free persons side by side. Enslaved persons remained a substantial proportion of the House of Detention's population right up until abolition. Less than a year before the passage of the 1888 law that definitively emancipated all of Brazil's slaves, 849 slaves were in custody in the House of Detention (for detailed data on the size of the slave population in the House of Detention, see Chazkel 2009, 724n45–46). Following the techniques developed in its parent institution, the House of Correction, the recording of all its inmates was carefully codified by law—despite the messiness of the social and juridical categories that the individuals occupied in real life. In the process of recording the detainees, both slave and free, the clerks who wrote down and preserved this information accidentally left today's researchers with a poignant record of the fissures in the slave system, its most intimate workings, and the minute details of its postabolition legacies.

Under slavery, the liminal status of a large proportion of Brazil's population intensified the need for a catchall institution like the Casa de Detenção, whose slave inmates, by definition, were considered property, not legal individuals, but were subject to the criminal jurisdiction of the state (Da Cunha 2005, 298). These records bring to light the state's ambivalent and complex relationship, by way of its penal institutions, to a segment of the population that was simultaneously subject to the civil law as private property and to the criminal law as legal subjects.¹³ This body of documentation provides a rare, detailed view of the informal daily workings of Brazilian urban slavery, once believed to pose nearly insurmountable empirical challenges to researchers because of a supposed lack of sources and analytical challenges due to the particularly porous boundaries between slave and free. Persons caught between slavery and free status frequently ended up in the Casa de Detenção. For instance, the entry logs indicate the presence of *africanos livres*, slaves brought to Brazil illegally after the passage of the nineteenth-century British-Brazilian treaties to ban the international traffic in slaves and seized by the Brazilian government. The government rented these "freed" slaves out for private service; they were essentially treated as slaves, except that they could not be bought or sold (Conrad 1973; Holloway 1993, 117; Soares 2007, 292–296). The government pressed *africanos livres* in the Casa de Detenção into service with the Corpo de Bombeiros (Fire Corps); evidence from an 1857 ministerial report can be corroborated in the entry logs, which suggest that, though technically emancipated, *africanos livres* who had not been accused of any crime remained incarcerated for extended periods as they waited to be put to involuntary work. Another group of slaves whose regular appearance in the Casa de Detenção reveals for us their fascinatingly liminal status in the slave system were *escravos da nação*: slaves owned by the "nation" to be put to work on public works projects (Soares 1998). These documents also provide rich clues about individual slaves' use of the penal system for leverage against the violence and oppression of slavery. As the Brazilian historian Sidney Chalhoub has found in his research based largely on these entry logs, in the 1880s, slaves admitted themselves to the Casa de Detenção as a last resort to resolve private conflicts or to seek protection from particularly abusive masters (Chalhoub 1990, 2009).

Unlike in rural slaveholding areas that produced vast inventories of human property, city dwellers each held relatively few slaves. The Casa de Detenção's entry logs are exceptional in that they collect a wealth of demographic and other information about urban slaves in one place. The possibilities for researchers wishing to use this information for both quantita-

13. Ministério da Justiça e Negócios Interiores 1898, 3; Arquivo Nacional (AN), Série Justiça, Casa de Correção, III J-3 (n. 144).

tive and qualitative research on nineteenth-century Brazilian slavery and the translation to free labor are virtually limitless.

The Casa de Detenção's uniqueness as an institution explicitly designed to hold persons whose official, legal status was pending or chronically ill defined—somewhat counterintuitively—actually rendered it exceptionally representative of the lived reality of urban Brazil's popular classes. Throughout the period that the documents cover, the frequent, indiscriminate arrests of Rio's poor and working classes brought a vast range of people into the House of Detention. Because of this constant flow of new detainees, combined with the fact that the institution tended to agglomerate rather than disperse people, the entry logs that portray the detention center's population on any given day approximates urban society like no other penal institution. For instance, a group of men arrested together would have been detained together briefly at the House of Detention before proceeding to their final destinations. In general, the judicial process tended to scatter people; persons arrested in the same place and time were often eventually subjected to different sentences, and some, but not others, were endowed with personal resources—patronage ties or personal wealth—that would allow them a speedy hearing with a judge or release on bail.¹⁴ The records from the Casa de Detenção thus reveal patterns in both policing and quotidian urban life that are absent from any other source. These entry logs most likely constitute the only record of the collaborative nature of the crime, if there indeed had been one, the relationships between the accused, and the social implications of the arrest.

As immortalized in the institution's archived entry logs, the Casa de Detenção's population on any given day represents a frozen moment of a people on the move. This is true with respect to the circulation of criminal suspects not only from the city streets to the jail but also between different penal institutions. The Casa de Detenção served as a sort of way station for prisoners whom authorities were transporting between other institutions; the detention center's entry logs show inmates on their way not just to other local institutions like the Rio House of Correction or the agrarian penal colonies in the city's hinterlands but even to (and from) such distant locales as the Fernando de Noronha penal colony located on an island off the northeastern coast of Pernambuco some 1,500 miles away (Chazkel 2009). As Brazil experimented with a variety of penal institutions and as the sites of punishment spread over a larger geographical expanse at the beginning of the First Republic (1889–1930), the Casa de Detenção reflected the changing character of penalty in the country. The entry logs of the Casa de Detenção may indeed constitute one of the few artifacts—if not the only surviving record—of the existence of a large, floating prison population.

14. Examples abound of persons arrested in groups arriving together at the House of Detention (see APERJ, CD-6333).

The information contained in the central detention center's entry logs is precious not only because it lays bare the logistical complexity of Brazil's penal population. The data also allow us rare insight into Brazil's juridical complexity. Other, smaller jails existed in the Brazilian capital's local police precincts (*delegacias*), but the Casa de Detenção saw the most traffic.¹⁵ Whether ultimately found guilty or not, persons arrested in Rio in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries generally began their journey through the criminal justice system in the Casa de Detenção. Indeed, high acquittal rates meant that, if arrested, the chances were that one would not see the inside of any other penal institution.¹⁶ Those who could not afford bail or whom the law did not permit release on bail served unsentenced terms in the Casa de Detenção. Even those detainees sentenced to prison time and slated for transfer to a facility designed to "correct" rather than just to "detain" often found themselves serving out their entire sentence in the Casa de Detenção while the Brazilian justice system waited in vain for a space to become available in the Casa de Correção. Persons detained in this institution had not yet undergone judicial processing and therefore appear to us unfiltered by the judicial system, thus showing how criminal justice operated on the ground. The vast penological literature of the day virtually ignores the Casa de Detenção as an institution; the detention facility exists only as a telling hole in nineteenth- and twentieth-century criminal jurisprudence and legal theory. Yet its position at the crux of the Brazilian capital's criminal justice system renders its records indispensable for researchers wishing to comprehend the nature of the relationship between legal subjects and the state.

The unexpurgated account of everyday policing and criminal justice that the entry logs relate portrays especially well the process of the de facto criminalization of acts that have ambiguous legal status. In the postabolition era and well into the twentieth century, the frequency of arrests for vagrancy and, to a lesser degree, gambling and various forms

15. Consistent statistics for the jails in Rio de Janeiro's delegacias and the small *casas de detenção* (or *xadrezes*) in Rio's suburban parishes are not available. Detainees were also held at the Depósito de Polícia, another detention center in the capital city. In 1892, a total of 5,283 individuals were incarcerated in the depósito, of which 1,766 were removed to the Casa de Detenção. A similar number was held there the following year: 5,685, of whom 1,619 were taken to the Casa de Detenção (*Relatório 1892–1893*, 29).

16. Complete statistics on conviction rates for this period are not available. From a random sample of 460 cases from the extant manuscript sentencing records of selected trial court judges in the Federal District of Rio de Janeiro from 1906 to 1917, only four of twenty-six cases of people accused of selling illicit lottery tickets were found guilty as charged (approximately 87 percent acquitted). As a point of comparison, of the 350 vagrancy cases taken from the same sample, 107 were found guilty and 243 were acquitted (approximately 69 percent); AN, Tribunal Civil e Criminal, 5a Pretoria Criminal, Am 208 D 8898, "Registro de Sentenças – Crimes, l. 4, 1909–1912"; Registro de Sentenças Criminais 1907–1909, 5a Pretoria, Am 208, D8872.

of purportedly antisocial behavior provide especially useful examples. Individuals arrested for states of being rather than for actual crimes or misdemeanors, such as “being disorderly” or “being a habitual pickpocket,” abound in the documents.¹⁷ The common practice of detaining people who had not been charged with any crime but needed social services also produced a precious record of the development of social welfare practices over the course of the twentieth century. In 1917, in the course of one year, 1,428 abandoned, homeless, and delinquent children stayed in the Casa de Detenção en route to the colonies, where the state hoped to teach them proper values through agricultural labor (*patronatos agrícolas*).¹⁸ The entry logs not only tell us that this penal institution was used to provide social welfare where no other option existed—a fact corroborated in multiple other sources—but also reveal precious biographical information about each person incarcerated for this reason: their names, ages, place of birth, level of literacy, and so on.

Also at the borderline between legal and illegal behavior were the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries’ myriad urban tumults, strikes, and such public political actions as demonstrations and meetings, all of which left traces in the records of the Casa de Detenção in a uniquely unfiltered way. The entry log from mid-March 1920, for instance, includes 415 persons for whom the “motive for arrest” is indicated as *grevista*—striker.¹⁹ The few entry logs from the 1940s that have been made publicly available reveal mass arrests for ambiguous political or “public security” reasons.²⁰ With this body of documentation, we can trace the beginnings of modern political policing and catch a rare glimpse of labor militancy and urban protest in general, for which most historians have relied heavily on police reports that fail to provide particular information about individual persons involved in these actions or on heavily biased and sensationalistic newspaper accounts.

This detention center’s unfiltered nature as a catchall institution for those en route to their final destinations also makes its entry logs an es-

17. APERJ, CD-6333 and CD-5628. A great many persons also entered the Casa de Detenção “with no declared reason” (*sem motivo declarado*); see, e.g., APERJ, CD-5612 and CD-5617 (1928).

18. *Relatório* 1914–1915, 98; *Relatório* 1917–1918, 115–116; *Relatório* 1918–1919, 94. For a work of Latin American history that draws connections among moral policing, nascent social welfare policies, scientific criminology, and incarceration, see Palmer 1996, 242–245.

19. APERJ, CD-6325.

20. See, e.g., APERJ, CD-5619; this logbook dated from August 22, 1942, to May 23, 1945, appears to have been dedicated to political prisoners, as nearly everyone was arrested “por medida de segurança pública e social.” It must be acknowledged here that some of the arrests may have been for illegal firearm possession or other infractions, not necessarily for political crimes. Much of the history of political detentions in the middle of the twentieth century remains to be told, and further investigation of these sources from APERJ, once they are made publically available, will be invaluable in that endeavor.

pecially revealing portrait of a diverse urban plebian population. Especially striking is the number of foreign nationals, particularly among the male prisoners. Other sources provide only sporadic statistical data on the numbers of foreigners in the Casa de Detenção in a given year; the entry logs compliment this aggregate data with individual portraits of those foreigners and fuel the sociological imagination.²¹ Three Norwegian men left the Casa de Detenção, mysteriously, “to reach the appropriate destination” in 1911, after arriving just a few days earlier. While in jail, they might have encountered another Norwegian sailor who resided “onboard the ship” and who, “at the request of the Norwegian consul,” was also in detention; an English sailor; and an Argentine man who was waiting “to be expelled from the national territory.”²² A twenty-nine-year-old American sailor was arrested “without a known motive” in July 1912 and released a few days later.²³ In February 1928, the group of Uruguayans interned in the House of Detention and about “to be expelled from the national territory” might have made the acquaintance of a Chinese “businessman” who remained there waiting for his place in the Casa de Correção to come available, where he had been sentenced to one year. Another inmate, a Chinese national who lived on the same street as the Chinese businessman, was accused of “contraband in opium” and waited for judicial processing.²⁴ As a port city and the nation’s political and commercial center, the Federal District’s population counted an enormous and growing number of residents from abroad during the early twentieth century. In 1906, 210,515 of Rio’s 811,443 inhabitants were foreign (República dos Estados Unidos do Brasil 1907, 122). Actively encouraged by the Brazilian government, immigrants, primarily from Portugal, Italy, Spain, and Germany, had begun to enter many regions of Brazil as the end of slavery became imminent, particularly into the expanse of land between the states of Rio and São Paulo. Expulsion laws in place since the beginning of the twentieth century mandated that foreigners accused of just about any crime be forced to leave the country. Foreign nationals who broke the law were generally expelled from Brazil rather than handed a prison sentence, but

21. Data on nationality of inmates derived from a survey of the institution’s archived entry logs; APERJ, CD. In one week in 1911, for example, Norwegian, English, Argentine, and Brazilian nationals entered the Casa de Detenção (APERJ, CD-6316). Portuguese nationals composed 76 of the total sample of 235 detained between 1896 and 1929 for illicit gambling, an offense that was associated with Portuguese shopkeepers or shop assistants who dabbled in illicit commerce on the side (APERJ, CD). Foreign detainees were not segregated from Brazilians, although foreign consuls provided money to pay for their sailors’ meals, whereas the state paid the cost of feeding and maintaining virtually all Brazilians in detention. *Detentos abastados* (well-off detainees), of which there existed few, also funded their own stay in the jail (*Relatório* 1901–1902, 87).

22. APERJ, CD-6316.

23. APERJ, CD-5633.

24. APERJ, CD-5632.

they frequently were detained at the Casa de Detenção first. Their fleeting presence there demonstrates the heterogeneity of the Brazilian capital and provides a myriad of uncommon opportunities to examine foreigners' participation in the city's social life and such organized and criminalized political activities as strikes.

This brief discussion of the types of information that this body of documentation can provide is suggestive but certainly not exhaustive. The detention center's maximalist approach to keeping records, combined with the police's maximalist approach to making arrests, make its logbooks the widest and most detailed survey of basic information about the popular classes that one can get. For instance, even judicial records (*processos*) from this era generally do not mention skin color; the *livros de matrícula* from the Casa de Detenção, however, provide data not only on the skin color of each detainee but also on distinguishing marks, scars, and tattoos. Detailed descriptions of each inmate's attire, including the style, color, and fabric of their clothes, in the hands of a perceptive researcher, can reveal much as markers of class status and material culture, and can provide a host of other clues about the movements of the detainees. The names of each detainee's parents, his or her national origins, and level of literacy would allow researchers equipped with a simple, relational database to correlate these data, which are otherwise available only either as an aggregate (as in the census) or in individual form isolated from other cases (as in arrest, birth, or death records).²⁵

One must be cautious not to exaggerate the degree to which these entry logs portray Rio society or even the popular classes. Criminal records always depict a skewed and pathological portrait of society, because they preserve data only for those who ran up against the law. It was indeed a small fraction of the popular classes that ended up recorded in these jail logbooks. But nor are birth certificates, voter registration rolls, wills, or even census returns truly random accountings of normal life, and these vital statistics, writ large, never present impeccable likenesses of the wider population, particularly in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The detention center entry logs are a record of the state's interaction with the people at arguably the widest point of contact between the two.

THE ENTRY LOGS FOR THE CASA DE DETENÇÃO: HOW THE STATE "SEES"

These entry logs fill in missing data, but they do much more than that as well. Qualitative research on the subtleties of this ostensibly mun-

25. One additional example of the benefits to us of the central detention center's maximalist approach to record keeping is its potential use as a public health document: the logs carefully record each detainees' *baixas* (entries) and *altas* (discharges) from the infirmary, thus allowing us to track the spread of disease in prisons, and general public health history.

dane, bureaucratic expedient—the taking of information on incoming detainees—can also speak volumes about the changing approach to governance and the relationship between the Brazilian state and society. The types of information demanded on the entry *ficha* (a form filled out for each detainee and then bound into a book) changed in tandem with transitions in the way the state “saw” and sought to make society legible.

In reading these forms themselves as richly revealing historical documents, it is useful to begin with one basic axiom: the information solicited represented those characteristics that varied rather than those data that were common to all detainees. Thus, the gradual evolution of the entry forms demonstrates what the state came to take for granted as always true. For example, the earlier logbooks from the nineteenth century and through the first decade of the twentieth century still ask the recording clerk to indicate who would be paying the cost of each inmate’s detention: the form read, *Mantem-se*, and the clerk by the end of the nineteenth century invariably wrote beside it, *à custa do estado* (“at the cost of the state”). This small detail, which disappeared by the late 1910s, was a vestige of an earlier era when some inmates, primarily slaves, were either maintained in jail at private cost or forced to beg for their food. Another piece of information that disappears from the form around the same time is *entrou conduzido por* (“entered escorted by”), which by the late nineteenth century invariably stated *carro da casa* (the official vehicle of the detention center).²⁶ A careful reading of the subtleties of this changing entry form transforms it into an artifact of a century of changes in police procedure, and more broadly of the balance of public and private power in the way that the state disciplined its citizens.

Attention to alterations in the recording of data could also contribute new material to the heated scholarly debates in the social sciences and humanities around questions of race, ethnicity, and nation in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Latin America. At first, the form required data only on a detainee’s *naturalidade* (where one was born). By the 1920s, however, the forms asked the recording clerk to indicate each incoming detainee’s *cidadania* on the one hand and *pais de origem* on the other, which suggests an emerging official recognition of the separateness of citizenship and national identity. The broad survey of the existing entry logs undertaken for this article would not suffice to pinpoint the date on which the entry forms changed, calling for further, more focused research on these documents.

One can likewise usefully analyze the shifting ways in which the recording clerk answered questions on the form. The bureaucrats who registered entering detainees tended to express the reason for arrest in plain,

26. See, e.g., APERJ, CD-3970 and CD-6333. On the practice of forcing prisoners without sufficient charity or family assistance to beg for food, see Araújo (2009).

descriptive language in the 1890s. By the 1920s, however, they tended almost exclusively to record each detainee's infraction by citing the particular law or article of the Penal Code. The reasons for arrest (*motivo de prisão*) listed in the detention center's entry logs in the 1890s through the middle of the 1910s tend to be vague in legal terms, yet more detailed and explicative. In July 1894, for example, a man was admitted to the Casa de Detenção "for leaning against a door on 13th of May Street and not giving explanations."²⁷ In the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth, the institution's entry logs demonstrate a trend toward more systematic and legalistic description of the infraction of which the detainee stood accused.

Another type of information that became less vivid and detailed over the same stretch of time, perhaps relatedly, were the descriptions of individual facial and other features. In the nineteenth century, the form demanded, and recording clerks dutifully provided, the shape of each inmate's face (usually either "round" or "regular") and nose (usually either "regular" or "flat"), the texture of each one's hair, and the color and style of each item of clothing worn. The fading attention to these details may have been a function of legal professionalization. It is also, quite likely, related to developments in forensic technology. Such new means of gathering and processing data as photography, fingerprinting, anthropometric measurements came to obviate the more artisanal methods of criminal identification. Using the detention center's entry logs, researchers can use the changes in the types of information demanded and the ways of recording it as an index of technological change and its impact on the day-to-day operation of the state.

Just as significant, the historical trajectory of the forms—from elaborate physical descriptions to more basic and standardized ones—can provide useful fodder for scholars of race and ethnicity. The mundane ways of thinking about phenotype that the forms embody can furnish researchers with important evidence of the changing language of racist thinking (Da Cunha 2005). The manner in which the Casa de Detenção handled its daily wave of new detainees shows the tension between the relative stasis of bureaucracy and the dynamics of social, cultural, and political change.

Hidden within the simplicity of this bureaucratic record-keeping routine lies evidence of the very human interaction between the person who wielded the pen and the person under arrest. Historical ethnographies of record-keeping work in other historical contexts show some of the rich possibilities that the study of such interactions contain; they were the principal points of convergence between the people and the state, and they may be key to understanding the creation of modern social categories.

27. The original reads as follows: "por estar encostado em uma porta da rua 13 de maio e não dar explicações" (APERJ, CD-5628).

ries as a function of liberal modernization (Blouin and Rosenberg 2006; Burns 2010; Da Cunha 2005). Future research using these logbooks that pays attention to the actual work of forensic record keeping, with its perhaps surprisingly “artisanal” nature, could produce new insights about the experience of both the jailors and the jailed, as well as the social, cultural, political, and legal worlds that they helped make.²⁸

CONCLUSION

Having survived their journey from rotting piles in a forgotten warehouse to one of Rio’s most used public archives, the documents from the House of Detention are inspiring a generation of scholars who are struggling to reconstruct the lives of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Brazil’s otherwise-silenced multitudes. Across the region, the reasons these rich archival collections remain neglected range widely, from a lack of funding to preserve the documents to willful official attempts to suppress public memory of controversial historical periods or to protect the privacy and good name of each person detained, especially during times of political repression. Recent scholarship on the prison in Latin America as a way of exploring the region’s social, cultural, political, and legal history points the way to some of the contributions that researchers utilizing these documents could make to the scholarly literature on Brazil, Latin America, and the comparative and transnational study of prisons and the law and society. These documents empower researchers to heed the calls made by such scholars as Michael Ignatieff, David Garland, Ricardo Salvatore, and Carlos Aguirre to study not just penal reform or policing but also the social history of life inside penal institutions (Salvatore and Aguirre 1996; Chazkel 2009; Maia et al. 2009). They also can give researchers a clearer view of penal reform, even in its international dimensions. The history of the Casa de Detenção as revealed through its *livros de matrícula* probably shows the limits and failures of penal reform rather than its implementation (Chazkel 2009), but that, too, is useful and revealing historical data. The fine-grained view of everyday penal practice that these documents afford could provide insight into the on-the-ground effects of the internationalization of penal regimes and policing in twentieth-century Latin America.²⁹ Changes in the record-keeping practices evident in the Casa de

28. Referring to the criminal judicial records (*processos*) from early-twentieth-century Brazil that he uses to reconstruct social history, the historian Boris Fausto (1984, 30) writes, “[E]ach processo in this period was an artisanal production, with its own physiognomy, revealed on the face of the [official documents in the case], in the careful handwriting or illegible of the recording clerk, in the way of tracing a line that crosses out blank pages.”

29. In end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, the U.S. military set up constabularies in Central America and many Caribbean countries. Simultane-

Detenção entry logs also had political implications, and paying attention to the precise chronology of those changes can refine our understanding of the century's political transitions, especially the multiple transfers of power between the federal executive and the states, from civilian to military rule, and in and out of the multiple states of siege that were in place in the twentieth century.³⁰ As the Rio de Janeiro state archive makes more recent entry logbooks available to the public, further research will be possible, especially on political imprisonment from the 1920s on, through the Cold War era, and into the period that witnessed the onset of military rule throughout the Southern Cone. One wonders how many similar collections of old logbooks exist for penal institutions elsewhere in the region, unused and unknown, or simply underutilized.

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ously, as those countries modernized their prison systems, they looked to the United States (Huggins 1998, 27–34). The U.S. involvement in political policing in twentieth-century Latin America (especially Brazil) that Martha Huggins documents remains to be analyzed with respect to prisons.

30. The limit dates for this document collection reflect major policy watersheds and administrative changes in Rio and in Brazil; as long as the documents from the later period are not available for consultation, the complete story will not be known. When the APERJ made its original request in the 1990s to collect and archive the documents, the institution received only the documentation that went up to 1969; the rest of the documentation was probably archived in Penitenciária itself, according to APERJ staff. There were legal changes after 1960 that may account for the 1969 limit date. For instance, with the transfer of the federal capital to Brasília, a law (Lei No. 3752, April 14, 1960) handed over the administration of the Presídio do Distrito Federal (the name of the Casa de Detenção as of 1941) to the newly created state of Guanabara. The 1969 limit date also coincides with the beginning of the most repressive phase of the military dictatorship that began in 1964. Paulo Knauss, APERJ, personal communication with author, October 25, 2010; Gabriela Maria Costa da Silva, APERJ, personal communication with author, October 27, 2010. The author is especially grateful to Carlos Eugênio Líbano Soares for sharing his vast knowledge of these documents.

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