



RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Fondo Documental “Monseñor Leonidas Proaño”: A Fundamental Source for the History of Chimborazo in Ecuador during the Second Half of the 20th Century

Maurice Awiti*

Universidad Andina Simon Bolivar, Quito.

ABSTRACT

In 1990, the diocesan documentary repository "Monseñor Leonidas Proaño" was opened to preserve the diocesan historical archive in the Diocese of Riobamba. Taita Proaño, as indigenous people know him, is known for advocating indigenous rights in Ecuador and Latin America. The purpose of this article is to show the public the existence and importance of this fund, as well as some of the topics that we can find in this historical religious archive that can be useful to those interested in understanding and reconstructing social, cultural, and church history of Chimborazo, Ecuador, during the second half of the 20th century.

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Introduction

The Fondo Documental “Monseñor Leonidas Proaño” in the Diocese of Riobamba houses the work of most tremendous historical significance of Bishop Proaño (1910 -1988) between 1954 and 1985 [1]. The thirty-one-year episcopate linked the most pressing social, political, and religious issues related to the indigenous population and the popular sectors in the province of Chimborazo with a humanist approach through a pastoral and theological practice based on the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church, the declarations and decrees of the Second Vatican Council, and liberation theology.

The archive’s creation dates to the 29 of Diciembre of 1862, with the promulgation of the Pontifical Bull “Maiores Animarum.” With this watermark document, the Diocese of Bolivar was erected. In 1955 the Diocese was called “San Pedro de Riobamba.” On the shelves rests records of the spiritual, pastoral, and social challenges since the creation of the ecclesial See. Many social scholars consider the diocesan Documentary Fund a valuable source for narrating the past of the province of Chimborazo. It is worth noting that its constitution was plagued by controversy between people close to Bishop Proaño and the Diocese of Riobamba.

This investigation aims to expose the public existence of the Fondo Documental “Monseñor Leonidas Proaño” (FDMLP) and attempt to describe it. At the same time, it discusses the importance of the reservoir and the treatment of the cultural heritage of localities and regions. Two axes have been identified to guide the study: recovering local documentary heritage and promoting documentary repositories, libraries, and documentary centers as social and historical memory spaces.

In a limited way, the archive uses Document Management Systems (DGS), a technical tool to organize documents and a fundamental means of exercising the mission of all organizations;

therefore, it is considered the cornerstone for fulfilling the purpose of documentary collection administration [2].

In the Diocese of Riobamba, there has always been a need to achieve an integral and harmonious development of a diocesan archive in search of greater efficiency in the religious and academic public service, which has led to the consideration of standard criteria and methods for document management.

The hipótesis is that it can be challenging to disentangle the province’s history from the archives. Therefore, there is unity, and they engage with one another constantly, especially from a social perspective. Thinking of the role of religion in society and its influence on public life, one cannot deny its relationship with the conservation of historical documents.

The distant promoter of the Collection was Bishop Proaño, therefore, motivated by the impact of a known similar Diocesan Historical Archives of Monsignor Samuel Ruiz Garcia in the Diocese of San Cristóbal de las Casas in Chiapas (Mexico).

The Diocesan Documentary Collection was inaugurated in 1990 with funding from the Central Bank of Ecuador, which included the diocesan historical Archives, the writings and documents of bishop Leonidas Proaño, the old Library of the diocesan Clergy, documents, and books of the Minor Seminary La Dolorosa. The task began with rescuing documents from a diocesan store where papers, files, and other administrative documents had been kept. Later, the old Minor Seminary and the Clergy House folders were cleaned and organized. The selection process was complex, given the number of documents that had to be classified.

The collection of information and the preservation of documentation was part of the policy of the Diocese. All this information was compiled from the arrival of Proaño in 1954

Contact: Maurice Awiti ✉ Universidad Andina Simon Bolivar, Quito, Investigator in the Diocese of Riobamba Ecuador.

and during his pastoral exercise until he died in 1988. This documentary was quantified in fifteen square meters (326 boxes, 2444 textual documents, and twenty cassettes).

It should be noted that this ecclesiastical archive in the province of Chimborazo (Ecuador) has historical significance with an essential collaboration of people who were summoned to collaborate with documentation, photographs, and valuable books.

In this case, this research project focuses on the management documentary in the context of the diocesan archives of Riobamba. Therefore, it is necessary the descripción of the investigation problem within the framework of the organization of the repository, as well as the challenges it faces. The central question is how is the current situation of the Documentary collection Monseñor Leonidas Proaño, its management in the context of the Church, and its impact on institutional performance?

How we ask questions determines what answers we are likely to find. In this sense, it's not just about the investigation technique or the method used. There is a relation between the process and the theory. A complete account has been taken concerning the central question, responding to the formation of the archives and its relationship with society, politics, and religion.

The fundamental impact of the entity FDMLP is understood within the framework of documentary management. This archival practice was developed and designed with time, introducing the life cycle of unknown documents, and showing an interrelation between the various stages that apply to personal or institutional archives. The Church's historical archive of Riobamba city enjoys a great tradition, given that it has been part of its development, contributing to the growth and formation of the province and the country.

The institutional commitment to the historical archives of the Diocese is vital in establishing historical memory and structure strengthening, where the local identity is conserved and reinforced. In addition, it must be specified as a commitment, economic investment to safeguard and preserve documents and information. Restoration and maintenance of documentary archives, technical works, etc., are linked to the learning and transformation of society and all human disciplines.

The research techniques are defined in the analysis and observation matrix context. The method selected involved two phases: empirical and data analysis and interpretation of results. In the first stage, I had to visit the archive, interview personnel, and familiarize myself with the environment; simultaneously, I collected data and prepared the information for analysis.

The article is composed of an introduction, results, and discussion. In the analysis and discussion of results, the idea is to highlight and diagnose the archive, its management, and administration. Finally, the debate also highlights the document management and administration of files within strategic planning and the need for organizational culture and preservation.

Results

As we have already announced, Fondo Documental Monseñor Leonidas Proaño, a religious entity, offers public service and is always free of charge. Fortunately, the services linked to the investigation and general reading began in 1990, which were, then pioneers the first in Ecuador in the incipient initiative of that time- are now numerous.

Regarding accessibility, the Diocese has a library area and archives, "Fondo Documental Monseñor Leonidas Proaño." It has a full-time librarian who attends to users from 08h30 to 13h00 and from 15h00 to 18h30, Monday to Friday. Access to the documents in the library and the documentary collection is public, though, in some instances, it is required to submit a request addressed to the bishop. The documentation therein is not digitized. Therefore, there is a rigorous process for reviewing and extracting information. Currently, there are no intentions or resources to digitize the Archive. The documents therein are originals: that is to say, the documentary fund is authentic.

It is worth noting that the thought and work of bishop Proaño favored indigenous communities and against oppression. Therefore, his apostolate recognized the human quality of indigenous peoples and the poor, thus transcending borders, and has impregnated in the memory of all Ecuadorians the sense of respect, and solidarity with the needy, echoing their doctrine dedicated to the noble cause of human rights, which seeks the social and political equality of all the races, ethnicities, and cultures of the nation [3].

The Ministry of Culture, on August 29, 2008, declared the thought and works of Proaño as an intangible cultural heritage of the Ecuadorian State. This is made for the cultural legacy that the pastor of the poor left for all generations of the country and the world at large, having adopted as a personal way of life a determined and permanent action of historical vindication of the rights of the indigenous people.

Also, the Plenary of the Constituent Assembly on August 14, 2008, declared the Proaño "Obispo de los Indios" (bishop the indigenous) as a national symbol and model to the future generations in the struggle for integral liberation: against oppression, exclusion, and marginalization in Ecuador. The National Assembly valued the work of seeking freedom and social justice as a condition *sine qua non* of peace [4].



Photos 1 and 2: Anita Moyota, librarian and caretaker of FDMLP, with Pedro Navas, a technical collaborator in the Archives. Short by Eliza Velata.

On the other hand, the members of our small team during the administration of bishop Victor Corral Mantilla (1985- 2011) [5], including Estuardo Gallegos, Homero Gracias, Eliza Velata, Mercedes Pozo de Rodríguez, and Guillermo Bustos, among others, are also getting older. We believe that the time to leave this service in other hands. Currently, Anita Moyota is the personnel responsible.

Part of the history of the diocesan archives represents the concentration of testimonies of the day-to-day actions of the bishops, especially of bishop Leonidas Proaño, and of other religious actors that marked the life of the local church and, to some extent, the Ecuadorian. There is also much information on the financial and pastoral administration of the diocese (See photos below).



Photos 3, 4, and 5: Ring binders with administrative information in the FDMLP. Shot by Anita Moyota.

Several subjects are treated in the administrative files. The themes are administration [6], apostolate [7], catechesis [8], development [9], ecumenism [10], education [11], evangelization [12], formation of priests [13], homilies [14], liturgy [15], Collective pastoral (Pastoral de Conjunto) [16], Council of priests [17], relations [18], religious [19], and vacations [20].

The key for the abovementioned is the issues numbered I and II. The numbering "I" is strictly Administration, and "II" corresponds to Apostolate. The divisions: it's in alphabetic order, be it persons or institutions. For example, in "I" the letter G identifies Governmental (Gubernativo).

For the subdivisions, it follows the arabica numbering, slash, and with the last two figures of the year. E.g., in "I" the letter and the year. In this way, I-C-1-67; I-C-2-67; I-C-3-67, etc.

The files contain issues that correspond to one year. If the year has more information, the documents are divided, and at the end of the numeration, the letters "a" and "b" are added. E.g., I-C-1-67/a; I-C-2-67/b.

Some documents sometimes have the same contents, vague, or have more than one theme. The classification is, therefore, determined using the principal aspect identified and put in the matching file subject. In this perspective, some documents that contain esoteric subjects are arranged in secondary files with a note to indicate the novelty.

The gallery of the bishops includes José Ignacio Ordóñez (1866-1879), who witnessed the breaking of the Concordat between the Church and the liberal government. His successor was bishop Arsenio Andrade, who celebrated two diocesan synods: the first was dedicated to the diocesan organization, and the second was about catechesis. Bishop Andrés Machado is renowned for strengthening pastoral visits and building the Seminary.

Diocese archives and library explicitly demonstrate how materials intersect with historical archives, filmotecas, fototecas, museums, and private collections. The archive comprises documents of multiple formats (textual, sound, visual, audiovisual, etc.).

Potential to promote unique activations to disseminate the same collections. Since its creation in the late nineteenth century, the Diocese did not have an explicit and systematic collection or preservation of material in archives. However, the priests in the parishes had their own collection practices, archival methodologies, and criteria for analyzing the materials in their possession. It is popularly held that the local clergy destroyed documents considered "illicit" and "obscene." In this perspective, materials related to baptism, marriages, deaths, and homilies formed the bulk. On the other hand, the missionary priests habitually kept daily notebooks where they recorded all the activities of the day and the books of the sacraments.

The Archive contains the material produced by bishop Proaño. It can be divided into four levels: a) Personal notes: notebooks, correspondence, travel diary, interviews, text notes, short notes of meetings (extra-diocesan and diocesan), drawings, and poems. b) Pastoral teachings: Pastoral address, Orders of pastoral visits, notes for conferences, book drafts, conferences, outlines, homilies, pastoral reports, and manifestations or protests. In this category, we can also consider his spirituality: personal meditations, reflections, and spiritual talks. c) Diocesan communiqués: Pastoral letters, circulars, decrees, exhortations, edicts, and messages related to special moments like birthdays, deaths, Lent, Christmas, and New year. Lastly, bibliographic materials: Published books [21], periodical articles, serial publications, documents from various events, monographs, and thesis and reports [22].

Ordering the historical memory of the Church of Riobamba is a task that was pending since Pope Pius IX (13 May 1792

Table 1: List of bishops of the Diócesis of Riobamba from 29 December 1862 to 2022.

BISHOP	TENURE	BRIEF HISTORY
José Ignacio Ordoñez	1866-1879	Born in Cuenca on July 21, 1882. Pio Nono appointed him the First Bishop of Riobamba. It was positioned on October 31, 1866. On March 31, 1879, he resigned from the bishopric in Paris, where he was because of religious persecution.
Arsenio Andrade	1885-1905	Born in Quito on September 15, 1825. He was consecrated bishop for Bolívar on January 25, 1885. He was imprisoned along with Juan Félix Proaño and ambushed for Peru by the liberal revolutionaries. During his bishopric, Father Emilio Moscoso, then rector of the San Felipe Neri School in Riobamba, was murdered.
Andrés Machado	1908-1916	He was born in Cuenca on August 16, 1850. He was appointed bishop of Bolívar on January 24, 1908.
Ulpiano Pérez Quiñonez	1917-1918	Born in Quito on August 4, 1866. He was appointed bishop of Ibarra in 1907. He moved to the Diocese of Bolívar on December 4, 1916. He died within a year of the disease.
Carlos María de la Torre Nieto	1919-1927	Born in Quito on November 15, 1873, consecrated bishop for the Diocese of Loja. He was moved to Riobamba in 1919 and remained there for eight years. Later he served as bishop of Guayaquil and archbishop of Quito.
Alberto María Ordoñez Crespo	1930-1954	Alberto was born in Cuenca on November 2, 1872 and died after a long illness in 1954.
Leonidas Eduardo Proaño Villalba	1954- 1985	Proaño was born in Ibarra on January 29, 1910. He was consecrated bishop for the see of Bolívar in Ibarra on May 26, 1954. He took possession of the See of Bolívar on May 29, 1954. Resigned as the bishop on 29 January 1985. He died in Quito, Armenia, on August 31, 1988.
Víctor Corral Mantilla	1985 - 2011	He was born in Guayaquil on February 17, 1936. He was consecrated auxiliary bishop of Riobamba on February 14, 1982. He worked with L. Proaño for three years. In 1985 he was appointed Apostolic Administrator of Riobamba. After two years, he was appointed bishop of Riobamba. He resigned from his pastoral position in the Diocese of Riobamba in 2011. He currently resides in Quito.
Julio Parrilla Díaz	2013- 2021	He was born in Orense in Spain, on March 25, 1946. When young, he discovered his religious vocation and entered the Pious Society of St. Francis de Sales ("better known as the Salesians, S.D.B."). Over the years, on 18 April 2008, he was appointed by His Holiness on Pope Benedict XVI as Bishop of the Diocese of Loja. On January 12, 2013, he was appointed by Benedict XVI as the new Bishop of the Diocese of Riobamba, He officially took possession of this diocese on May 2 of the same year.
José Bolivar Piedra Aguirre	2021 Current	Monsignor José Bolívar Piedra was born in Nabón (Province of Azuay) on November 25, 1965, he was ordained a priest in 1990.



Photos 6 and 7: Fondo Documental Monseñor Leonidas Proaño in Curia of Riobamba. Shots by the author.

– 7 February 1878) issued the Apostolic letters to create the Bishopric of Bolivar, on December 29, 1862, and since the Executive Decree was issued on July 7, 1865 [23]. Since then, they have registered the adventures of the bishops in the center of Ecuador since the Bishopric included the provinces of Chimborazo and Bolivar.

This collection is one of the most extensive that protects the Diocesan Archive of San Pedro de Riobamba, occupies 15 square meters of the surface, and is vital to reconstructing the history of Chimborazo and even Latin America during the second half of the twentieth century. The Archive has seven shelves: there is a shelf that contains the cataloged documents

the in the Winiss database; these are filed in 50 boxes and have 7.6 linear meters; the other shelf includes the administrative records of Bishop Proaño, these are 140 folders. The remaining five shelves are classified materials with topics like diocesan evaluations and indigenous pastoral work. These are 273 filing boxes that correspond to 47 linear meters.

The pastoral visits that constituted the pilgrimage for the Diocese, a historical vision and prophetic ministry of bishop Proaño, have been registered in his dairies [24]. These have remarks and some central ideas of the meeting with the clergy and the common folk. The bishop also noted some telephone numbers and names of people he had encountered for the first time. It was also the record of his pastoral and social concerns [25]. Some agendas contain the calendar of meetings inside and outside the Diocese [26]. Museum tours reference objectivists to the contemporary life of indigenous people approach.

Some Suggestive Topics

Liberation Theology

We can find several writings about liberation theology from Bishop Proaño and texts by other priests from other countries, especially in South America. In particular, the documents stand out the ovation of the Peruvian priest Gustavo Gutiérrez, one of the foremost exponents of Liberation theology.

To rethink the role of the Church in Riobamba, in light of the challenges after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), Proaño asked if it was possible to be Christians in an oppressed continent. According to Daniel Levine, “Theologians and activists identified with this body of thinking... the necessity and primacy of action to promote justice, and look to everyday experience - above all, the experience of the poor – as a source of religiously valid values.” [27].

As an activist-pastor, he focused on agendas related to poverty, violence, lack of housing, and poor land distribution. From this, he shaped his almost ten years (between 1971 to 1980) of discourse on radio “Hoy y Mañana.” [28].

Therefore, his actions are recognized within the liberation theology trend based on his life and spirituality. It is therefore understood that the bishop confronted the tension between liturgy (rites and solemn ceremonies) and social justice. It is also affirmed that his concerns for social justice, inequality, and peace were not only interested in analyzing the situation of the poor and the oppressed in the province and the continent. Proaño gave himself the task of contributing, with the support of the most lucid mind as a pastor, to think and design the future of the vulnerable in Ecuador, primarily the indigenous. In this way, the pastoral liberation he promoted is a significant part of the revolutionary events in Latin America and the world.

Proaño’s contributions to liberation theology are as follows: Liberation theology is born of action and motivates new action; Its budget is to approach every human being: oppressed, excluded, marginalized, and abandoned. Compassion is not a vague feeling; it is a profoundly interior attitude, which allows one to become neighbors.



Photo 8: Bishop Proaño during a press conference. Source Fondo Documental Diocesano “Monseñor Leonidas Proaño”.

Agrarian Reforms

The centrality of the poor, primarily the indigenous, explains much about the land problem in Chimborazo and Ecuador. Proaño gave importance to land, considering it a fundamental means of liberation. Given that the indigenous were landless and exploited in the haciendas, the land was a cause of social and political conflict.

We can find information regarding various agrarian conflicts in the province between 1948 and 1985. In this regard, we can mention the disputes between the community members of Toctezinín in the Chunchi Canton (1974): the peasants were attacked, beaten, and mistreated by the police while harvesting on a Magna hacienda. During the conflict, Lázaro Condo was assassinated.

Within this framework, land as the axis of social inequality in Chimborazo was the place of the reproduction of hegemony through a complex relationship of pacts that guaranteed loyalties back and forth [29]. From 1964 to 1984 -the pastoral period of Monsignor Leonidas Proaño-, a total of 108,368.18 hectares were awarded to the indigenous organizations of Chimborazo, without counting the haciendas of Zula and Monjas Corral (just over 31,000 hectares). The said haciendas were the property of the Diocese, which was eventually given to the indigenous peasants as part of the land reforms program initiated by the bishop. The idea was to establish a new order, with the indigenous as landowners. Subsequently, the Church could not be neutral regarding social injustices and abuses: it had to get involved in organizing, mobilizing, and conscientizing, at the same time, searching for allies and legitimacy.

Debate and Conclusions

Document management in the field of public administration in the Diocese needs to be formalized not only through the creation of the General Diocesan Archive. Therefore, promoting, organizing, and strengthening religious archives is crucial to ensure the effectiveness of Church management and heritage conservation documentaries. At the same time, with norms, it is possible to strengthen the importance of archival function and efficient document management within the church in

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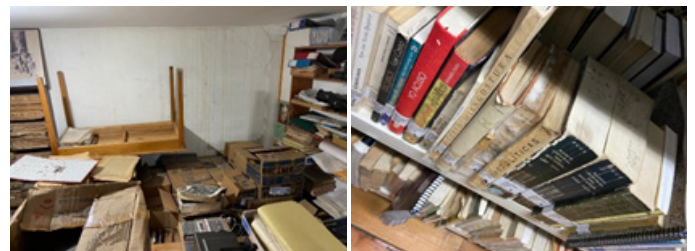
Photo 9: Page 4 of the Guide of the Documentary Collection Fondo Documental Monseñor Leonidas Proaño.

general, particularly in the parishes. The Canon Law 491 Art. 2 and 3 stipulates that each Diocese must have a Historical Archive for documents of exceptional value, administrative documents, and juridical instruments that refer to and bear witness to pastoral life and care. The diocesan Bishop should regulate and ensure the excellent use of the entity.

The direct observation of shortcomings and tensions in the processes concerning Document Management directly impacts the procedures and services of the entity, the bishop, and the property council need to consolidate an environment of efficiency, including ICTs, in the processes of documentary conservation and access.

According to the above, the following question arises: What is the current situation of Document Management in the context of religious and public administration in the Diocese and its incidence institutional performance? Below are photographs that manifest an urgent need for a better management system.

Photos of the documentary, photographic, audiovisual collections, furniture, and floors seriously affected by the flood due to a fault in the water pipes of the Diocesan Curia building.



It is considered that the Diocese has an obligation and responsibility to manage the documentation and information generated by the bishops in the exercise of their functions and the priests, religious, and lay people; this is a moral and social responsibility and obligation to safeguard, duly classified and

arranged chronologically and indexed all documents, data, and information.

Photos of the historical archive that shows deterioration by years and use.



The documents are unique and unrepeatable; therefore, they accurately record events, a profound reflection on the reality and repertoire of the memory of Bishop Proaño and other historical actors.

This investigation is the interim conclusion of what has been a long journey. The core argument is that the Documentary Collection has been and continues to open new horizons with and contributes to a broad understanding of the Ecuadorian Church, society, and culture. The entity must be acknowledged as a credible local and national history source.

The preceding discussion recommends the documentation as a sample of a determined and permanent action of historical vindication of the indigenous people, the local poor, the

defense of human rights, settlement issues, and advocacy of women and workers' rights.

Acknowledgement

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