

Abstract

Municipalities in imperial Brazil were responsible for providing public services to their communities, yet the state often failed to provide the resources to finance the full complement of these services. Municipal financial ledgers for four municipalities in the province of São Paulo confirm that local governments operated with a perennial shortage of funds, which constrained the provision of public services and infrastructure. Municipal councils paid for the immediate needs of urban life out of their limited resources and used a form of official begging to procure funds from the provincial legislature to pay for major expenses. These requests were required by law but did not always result in the needed funding. The legal framework in which municipalities functioned during the Brazilian empire, therefore, was one of institutionalized subordination and financial penury that compromised their ability to provide government services to municipal residents.



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Biographies

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