

# DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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**CAMARGO, Paulo Florêncio da Silveira** (Cabreúva, 1886 - São Paulo, 1972)

Paulo Florêncio da Silveira Camargo was born on 25 January 1896 in Cabreúva, São Paulo. He was the son of Pedro Florêncio da Silveira Júnior, a merchant, and Rosa Lina de Almeida Camargo. He completed his early studies in the nearby city of Itu, known as the "Brazilian Rome" in the late 19th century due to the Church's significant influence— particularly that of the Jesuits— on the city's organisation and local politics. He studied at the Cesário Motta School Group and the São Luís College, a Jesuit institution founded in 1867. In 1911, he entered the Minor Seminary of Pirapora. After finishing school, he continued his studies at the *Seminário Provincial de São Paulo* [Provincial Seminary of São Paulo], now the *Seminário Central do Ipiranga* [Central Seminary of Ipiranga] (Correio Paulistano, *Bodas de prata sacerdotais*, 1946, p. 5).

With several relatives in the clergy, Camargo was ordained as a priest in 1921. From 1922 to 1924, he served as curate in the parish of St. John the Baptist. He then became vicar in Santana de Parnaíba, where he chaired the committee for the tercentenary celebration of the founding of the village that later became the city. Drawing from his studies while serving as vicar, he published *Notas para a história de Parnahyba* [Notes for the History of Parnahyba] (1935), which he later revised and expanded as *História de Santana de Parnaíba* [History of Santana de Parnaíba] (1971). In these works, the author narrates the role of the *bandeirantes* (settlers) in founding the village and developing the region, as well as the Church's involvement. In both books, he stated that "pas de documents, pas d'histoire" ("no documents, no history"). Although he did not explicitly reference *Introduction aux études historiques* (1898) by Charles-Victor Langlois and Charles Seignobos, his use of the French expression reflects the influence of the Methodical School. Despite this empirical approach, however, Paulo Florêncio da Silveira Camargo's narrative was largely apologetic toward the Church, which may explain, for instance, his omission of the presence of Moors and Jews among the founders of Santana do Parnaíba— kinship ties noted by José Gonçalves Salvador (*Os cristãos-novos...*, 1976).

Camargo returned to São Paulo in 1926 and became a canon in 1939, assuming various responsibilities within the metropolitan chapter: he worked in press activities for the archdiocese, served on the Ecclesiastical Tribunal, and contributed intellectually through his writings on the history of the Church in São Paulo. In 1945, the year he became a full member of the *Instituto Histórico e Geográfico de São Paulo* [Brazilian Historic and Geographic Institute] (IHGSP), Camargo published *A instalação do Bispado de São Paulo e seu primeiro bispo* [The Installation of the Bishopric of São Paulo and its First Bishop] to commemorate the bicentenary of the diocese's founding.

From then on, he delivered lectures and courses, published numerous articles in the Institute's magazine,



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and presented papers at historical conferences (IHGSP, 1994). He was also made a corresponding member of the Historical and Geographical Institutes of Minas Gerais and Paraná. In 1951, the same year he was named monsignor, Paulo Florêncio da Silveira Camargo founded the Paulista Institute of Religious History and Art. Under the guidance of the high clergy, the Institute published Camargo's most significant work, *A Igreja na História de São Paulo* [The Church in the History of São Paulo], between 1952 and 1953. This extensive seven-volume work, with more than 2,700 pages, covered the period from 1530 to 1851. In 1955, *História eclesiástica do Brasil* [Ecclesiastical History of Brazil] was published by Vozes [Voices], a publishing house also connected to the Catholic Church. The context for these publications was the 4th Centenary of the City of São Paulo, during which the Church made substantial efforts to align its image with the history of São Paulo and Brazil. Camargo served on the organising committee for these commemorations, and he also participated in religious ceremonies as a priest.

A non-academic historian, Paulo Camargo can be described as part of a distinct group within the Brazilian clergy dedicated to preserving the Church's corporate memory, similar to the Bahian monsignor Manoel de Aquino Barbosa (1902–1980) (S. Miceli, *Fontes para o estudo da elite eclesiástica brasileira...*, 1984, p. 53). One of the advocates of the view that to understand Brazilian history, one must understand Church history, Camargo drew on Portuguese historiography and authors like Simão de Vasconcelos, Serafim Leite, Miguel de Oliveira, and Fortunato de Almeida for his portrayal of Brazilian Catholicism. He described the Jesuits' expulsion from Brazil as a tragic consequence of state absolutism under the Marquis of Pombal's rule. His work presented the Church as an essential force in Brazil's independence from Portugal, highlighting the role of priests in this process.

Camargo established himself as a historian during the Getúlio Vargas era (1930–1945), including the *Estado Novo* [New State] period when the Church regained its central role in power, lost since the late 19th century. His most productive years, marked by his most influential works, were between 1945 and 1955. In 1955, the International Eucharistic Congress was held in Rio de Janeiro. This year also marked an important turning point for internal Church politics, with the creation of the *Conselho Episcopal Latino Americano* [Episcopal Conference of Latin America] (CELAM). This, in turn, paved the way for the establishment of the *Comisión para Estudios de La Historia de La Iglesia en América Latina* [Commission for the Study of Church History in Latin America] (CEHILA), which from the 1970s onwards advocated for a more critical historiographical approach. This approach focused on the experiences of ordinary people, challenging the traditional, apologetic histories that emphasised prominent figures and events while concealing internal Church conflicts (E. Dussel, *Historia de la Iglesia...*, 1972).

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