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## THE PRINCIPLE OF PROVENANCE AS THE PRINCIPLE OF RATIONALIZATION OF ARCHIVES

### Słowa kluczowe

archiwa, racjonalizacja, biurokracja, zasada proveniencji, archiwoznawstwo

### Keywords

archives, rationalization, bureaucracy, principle of provenance, archival studies

### Summary

The subject of this article is to look at the emergence of the principle of provenance through the prism of the rationalization theories described by Max Weber and Karl Mannheim. Although this is not the first time the subject of the genesis of the principle of provenance and its importance for the development of archives is taken up, it is probably the first attempt to present this topic through the prism of sociological rationalization theories. This article also contributes to a further, broader look at archives through the prism of the macdonaldization theory described by Georg Ritzer, which is intended to show the development of archives in a globalizing world. One of the pre-



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decessors and pillars of macdonaldization is precisely bureaucracy. Such an approach allows the presentation of archives against the background of social changes taking place in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The article is a theoretical study based on the analysis of the literature on the subject.

## Streszczenie

### Zasada proveniencji jako zasada racjonalizacji archiwów

Przedmiotem niniejszego artykułu jest spojrzenie na genezę zasady proveniencji przez pryzmat teorii racjonalizacji opisanych przez Maxa Webera oraz Karla Mannheima. Choć nie jest to pierwsze podjęcie tematu początku zasady proveniencji i jej znaczenia dla rozwoju archiwów, jest to prawdopodobnie pierwsza próba ukazania tego tematu przez pryzmat socjologicznych teorii racjonalizacji. Niniejszy artykuł stanowi także przyczynek do dalszego, szerszego spojrzenia na archiwa przez pryzmat teorii makdonaldyzacji opisanej przez George'a Ritzera, pozwalającej na przedstawienie rozwoju archiwów w globalizującym się świecie. Jednym z poprzedników i filarów makdonaldyzacji jest właśnie biurokracja. Takie ujęcie pozwoli na przedstawienie archiwów na tle przemian społecznych zachodzących w XX i XXI w. Artykuł stanowi studium teoretyczne, oparte na analizie literatury przedmiotu.

## Introduction

The subject of this paper is an overview of the establishment of the principle of provenance through the prism of theories of rationalization by Max Weber and Karl Mannheim. Although this is not the first approach to the genesis of provenance and its significance for the development of archives, it is probably the first attempt to portray this topic through the prism of sociologic theories of rationalization. Therefore, the goal of the article is to give a new interpretation of this classical problem in the history of archives.

## Literature review and methods

The existing literature, however abundant, is focused on the historical dimension of the principle of the provenance development process. A complete portrait of literature is impossible in a short paper like this. However, the most important works can be mentioned, among others: Meissner H., *Aktenkunde. Ein Handbuch für Archivbenutzer mit besonderer Berücksichtigung Brandenburg-Preußens*, Berlin 1935; Brenneke A., *Archivkunde. Ein Beitrag zur Theorie und Geschichte des europäischen Archivwesens*, Lipsk 1953; Paczkowski J., *Zasada ar-*

chiwalna proveniencji, [in] *Pamiętnik IV Powszechnego Zjazdu Historyków Polskich w Poznaniu 6–8 grudnia 1925*, pt. 1, *Referaty*, Lwów 1925 and Biernat Cz., *Zasada przynależności zespołowej (geneza, wykładnia, uwarunkowania)*, [in] *Historia i współczesność*, ed. E. Frącki, B. Woszczyński, Warszawa 1987.

Nevertheless, because of the traditional view of archivists and historians, existing research gives only a small field to new interpretations. That is why historical and archival literature was supplemented by sociological literature: Mannheim K., *Człowiek i społeczeństwo w dobie przebudowy*, Warszawa 1974; Weber M., *Gospodarka i społeczeństwo, zarys socjologii rozumiejącej*, Warszawa 2002 and Ritzer G., *Explorations in Social Theory. From Metatheorizing to Rationalization*, London–Thousand Oaks–New Delhi 2001.

The article represents a theoretical study based on the analysis of literature.

## Results

Proper demonstration of the subject requires a brief presentation of the background of the principle of provenance. The first intensive archival work on the holdings, conducted in Archives Nationales, was related to the activities of the National Convention in revolutionary France. Pierre Claude François Daunou, who is credited with the authorship of the concept of classifying holdings according to subject groups, is considered to be the organizer of the French archives in this period. The method brought forward by Daunou consists in a division of the entire archive holdings according to a scheme composed of numerous grades of material groups, marked with letters. This division was guided solely by the content of the files, regardless of their origin.<sup>1</sup> By the law of 7<sup>th</sup> messidor of year II (June 25, 1794), the Convention introduced the principle of segregating files into four groups: 1. historical documents, 2. documents with legal evidence for the state domain, 3. irrelevant documents, and 4. feudal documents.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, in the French archives, a number of groups of subjects were created in an a priori form, to which efforts were made to adapt textual records.

There were some issues associated with pursuing this method. First, when using the subject filing system, records from one record creator were divided between a number of different classes of property, each of which constituted

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<sup>1</sup> Ryszewski, *Archiwistyka*, 19–20.

<sup>2</sup> Manteuffel, „Organizacja archiwów francuskich”, 99–100.

a series marked with capital letters of the alphabet. Each series then fell into a series of subdivisions, denoted by Arabic and Roman numerals.<sup>3</sup> Such a division of files consequently led to challenges with finding files and forced archivists to tedious work on composing them.<sup>4</sup> The practical use of methods based on material pertinence showed that these systems were characterized by too much artificiality and dependence on the skills and individuality of the archivist. As a result, an idea sprouted that the files prepared by an archivist should not lose their connection with their creator.<sup>5</sup>

The outturn of these consideration was the formulation in 1838 by a French paleographer Natalis de Wailly of the principle of *respect des fonds*. That said, the new rule was disseminated only in circular no. 14 of the Ministry of the Interior of April 24, 1841, establishing the manner of organizing archives in departmental and municipal archives in France.<sup>6</sup> Most archival historians consider this point a turning point in archival theory.<sup>7</sup> As a result of the changes that took place in France in the years 1838–1841, the factual attitude was replaced by the principle of *respect des fonds*. Thus, for the first time, archives began to combine files that were diverse in content, but originated from one record creator.<sup>8</sup>

It was stated in the circular that the most appropriate way to organize archival materials is to divide them into groups (*fonds*) and material groups, matters (*matières*). It was also spelled out that combining files of various content into sets consists in collecting all volumes that derive from one institution, family or person. In each group, the files should be arranged according to subject groups in chronological, alphabetical or topographic order.<sup>9</sup> Owing to those recommendations, the work of an archivist was based upon strictly systemic principles, because the identification of a group is possible only when the place of the archivist in the social life of a given era is known.<sup>10</sup> It should be noted, however, that due to the adopted arrangement of records, despite respecting the *fonds*, the archivist's activity was purely mechanical.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 100–1.

<sup>4</sup> Schellenberg, *The management of archives*, 77.

<sup>5</sup> Pańków, *Archiwa*, 49–50.

<sup>6</sup> Ryszewski, *Archiwistyka*, 22.

<sup>7</sup> Giroux, „A theoretical and historical analysis”, 40–1.

<sup>8</sup> Chorążyczewski, „Czy w archiwach bieżących”, 42.

<sup>9</sup> Ryszewski, *Archiwistyka*, 22.

<sup>10</sup> Pańków, *Archiwa*, 49–50.

<sup>11</sup> Brenneke, *Archivkunde*, 65.

new principle was not yet scientific, but strictly practical. This is evidenced, inter alia, by the fact that the fonds were not reconstructed but only their division was forbidden. It must be stressed that the introduction of the *respect des fonds* was motivated precisely by practical reasons and the need to control the mass of archival documents kept in departmental archives since the revolution.<sup>12</sup> The decisive factor in introducing the circular of 1841 was not, therefore, the concept of archives' development, but considerations of convenience, as the aim was to spare the archivists unnecessary work in separating masses of documentation.<sup>13</sup> The new principle therefore offered two groups of benefits: intellectual control and physical control. The first group of benefits related to easier access to archives by avoiding the pitfalls of organizing material. The second one facilitated the physical management of the holding.<sup>14</sup>

That said, it is worth bringing forward that although the achievement of Frenchmen had a decisive impact on the further development of archives, this principle of *respect des fonds* had been applied in Europe before. Its use has been reported, among others in Halle (1777), Denmark (1791), Naples (1812), the Netherlands (1826),<sup>15</sup> the Grand Duchy of Tuscany (1822) and Papal States (1839).<sup>16</sup>

The *respect des fonds* and its development were gradually adopted in other European countries. In Italy, in 1867 Francesco Bonaini formulated the so-called *metodo storico*.<sup>17</sup> This rule, initially introduced in the Florentine Archives, ordered the records of a given office to be combined in accordance with its history and internal structure.<sup>18</sup> In 1875, the method was adopted throughout Italy.<sup>19</sup> Another attempt to introduce the principle of provenance was made in Vienna in 1869 by Theodor Sickel. Nevertheless, he was not successful, because it was not accepted by the director of Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv von Arneth. What is considerable for the aforementioned solutions, Sickel based his concept on the observation of form and the activities of the office from which the records had been archived. On this basis, he created a quite clear formulation on the rule of provenance, which required to arrange archival ma-

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>14</sup> Giroux, „A theoretical and historical analysis”, 45–6.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 41–2.

<sup>16</sup> Duranti, „Origin and Development”, 50.

<sup>17</sup> Giroux, „A theoretical and historical analysis”, 60–1.

<sup>18</sup> Chmielewski, „Od archiwistyki «bez zasad»”, 59.

<sup>19</sup> Giroux, „A theoretical and historical analysis”, 60–1.

terials as they were produced in offices. Another step towards establishing the principle of provenance was executed in the Danish ministerial archive, which established a system of records' arrangement according to registers. Such a development was possible thanks to the creation of the ministerial archive on the basis of official archives, which were closed units.<sup>20</sup> It was therefore natural to group them together.

One of the more considerable moments on the path towards establishing the principle of provenance was represented by regulations issued in 1881 for the Secret State Archives in Berlin by director Heinrich von Sybel, who on July 1 introduced the principle of respect des fonds. The introduction of this principle stemmed from practical needs, since at this time the Berlin archive was receiving modern files, equipped with office regulations and files classification schemes, that did not fit into the patterns used thus far. Therefore, it was most practical to treat them separately.<sup>21</sup> The provisions issued in Article 4 assumed that upon transfer by the authority of documents to the archive, they would receive their separate "repository" and couldn't be mixed with the records of other authorities.<sup>22</sup> These records were to be kept in the order and with marks issued by the competent authority. Importantly, the assumptions of this principle remained in full compliance with the activities of the offices, which allowed to preserve the context of archives.<sup>23</sup> The provisions of the regulations of 1881, by the ordinance of Rainhold Koser of October 12, 1896, were also extended to other Prussian archives.<sup>24</sup> That said, archivists did not have to apply the new regulations to older archives.<sup>25</sup>

The new principle, slowly paving the way to European archives, received its academic justification in the Netherlands. Demarcation into archival fonds was used in Utrecht from 1826 and recommended in written internal instructions. The recommendation of using this arrangement was also included in the introduction to the inventory of the records of the Province of Utrecht, published in print in 1875 by Petrus Jacobus Vermeulen, director of the local archives and his predecessor in this position, Samuel Muller.<sup>26</sup> The thought was first expressed by Varmeulen in 1850, who wrote that one of the preconditions

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<sup>20</sup> Brenneke, *Archivkunde*, 66.

<sup>21</sup> Ryszewski, *Archiwistyka*, 23.

<sup>22</sup> Szukała, *Archiwum Państwowe w Szczecinie*, 37.

<sup>23</sup> Brenneke, *Archivkunde*, 68.

<sup>24</sup> Paczkowski, „Zasada archiwalna proveniencji”, 4.

<sup>25</sup> Brenneke, *Archivkunde*, 67.

<sup>26</sup> Biernat, „Zasada przynależności zespołowej”, 342–3.

for the scientific arrangement and inventorying is the restoration of the original arrangement.<sup>27</sup>

Formulation of the principle of provenance was also significantly affected by Theodoor Van Riemsdijk, a municipal archivist in Zwolle and a close colleague of Samuel Muller, who in 1877 stated that archival materials should be placed in their natural and original context, in which they would best demonstrate their nature and meaning. He continued that the system for arranging archives should be based on their original organization. That said, in his research he focused not so much on the records themselves as on the record-making process. Owing to this, already in the 19<sup>th</sup> century he came closer to the concept of Aktenkunde developed by Heinrich Otto Meisner several decades later. He exchanged his experiences with Muller by means of correspondence and during personal meetings.<sup>28</sup>

However, in all of the Netherlands, the principle expressed by Varmeulen and Van Riemsdijk was adopted as the basis for the arrangement of archival materials only in 1897.<sup>29</sup> That said, in 1898 it was called the principle of provenance and published in the textbook of archivists Samuel Muller, Johan Feith and Robert Fruin.<sup>30</sup> In 1910, the principle was adopted by the International Congress of Archivists and Librarians in Brussels as the basis for the arrangement and description of archives. The participants of the congress pointed out not only its link to the logical grouping of records, but also the well understood interest of historical studies.<sup>31</sup> There was practical unanimity among the archivists of continental Europe in this regard.<sup>32</sup> The basic assumption of the reasoning of the Dutch was the belief that records originating from one creator (from one office) formed an organically related whole, therefore it was inappropriate to violate this whole or even change its internal order.<sup>33</sup> Thus, according to the principle of provenance, not only should each record return to the fonds it comes from, but also take the place it occupied when it was part of a living and operating office.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Sweeney, „The Ambiguous Origins”, 199.

<sup>28</sup> Ketelaar, „Archival Theory and the Dutch Manual”, 33–4.

<sup>29</sup> Brenneke, *Archivkunde*, 69.

<sup>30</sup> Ryszewski, *Archiwistyka*, 24.

<sup>31</sup> Bachulski, „Zastosowanie zasady proveniencji”, 1.

<sup>32</sup> Schellenberg, *The management of archives*, 44.

<sup>33</sup> Ryszewski, *Archiwistyka*, 25.

<sup>34</sup> Pańków, *Archiwa*, 51–2.

However, thought should be given to what has laid the foundations for creating both of the mentioned archival principles. It appears that it is not enough to point only to the increasing number of records transferred to the archives and the related problems in holdings' management. We must take a wider view of the presented problem through the prism of the development of bureaucracy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which not only produced these records, but also transferred a considerable share of its principles of operation to the archives themselves. In France, which was at the forefront of creating archival principles, the development of the bureaucratic machine was associated especially with Bonapartism,<sup>35</sup> since it was the Napoleonic wave that had brought with it a comprehensive modernization of the record-creating process, i.e. bureaucracy. It was associated closely to the model of one-person decision-making with simultaneous internal deconcentration, i.e. the supervisor commissioning clerks to identify and prepare a given case. A further consequence of the following shifts was the popularization of case records.<sup>36</sup> The qualitative expansion of tasks assigned to administration became the limit for honorary administration and collegiate administration, which was also much slower and less precise due to the friction and the need to agree on opinions. On that basis, the monocratic bureaucratic machine had to expand with all its consequences.<sup>37</sup>

The ongoing changes were also affected by the progressing advance of technical means of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, including in particular the emergence of the telegraph, which, like the requirement to quickly transmit public announcements – economic and political – exerted continuous pressure, forcing the administration to react faster. The most appropriate solution to remedy the situation that had emerged was a buoyant bureaucratic organization.<sup>38</sup> The capitalist economy developing in the 19<sup>th</sup> century also influenced the requirement of the fastest, precise and unambiguous and continuous handling of official matters. Weber also pointed out that capitalist enterprises were often an unattainable model for a thriving bureaucratic organization.<sup>39</sup> As indicated by him:

The decisive reason for the spread of a bureaucratic organization has always been a purely technical advantage over all other forms. A fully fledged bureau-

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<sup>35</sup> Weber, *Gospodarka i społeczeństwo*, 714.

<sup>36</sup> Chmielewski, *Polska myśl archiwalna*, 9–10.

<sup>37</sup> Weber, *Gospodarka i społeczeństwo*, 706.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 707.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 706.



cratic mechanism relates to them as does a machine to non-mechanized methods of producing goods. Precision, speed, unambiguity, knowledge of files, continuity, discretion, uniformity, rigorous compliance, reduction of friction, material and personal costs in a strictly bureaucratic, especially monocratic administration, exercised by trained individual officials, achieve their optimum, in relation to all collegial forms or honorary offices and treated as a side activity. When complicated tasks are involved, paid bureaucratic work is not only more precise, but as a result even cheaper than the formally unpaid honorary exercising of office.<sup>40</sup>

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was advancement of bureaucratic administration in various areas: in the state, the church, the army, political parties, economic activity, customer unions, associations, foundations, etc. Its emergence was also the germ of a modern Western state.<sup>41</sup> Weber also indicated that:

Where total bureaucratization of administration has been introduced, a virtually inviolable form of ruling relations was created. A single official cannot act against the apparatus into which he is harnessed. [...] Those subject to reign, in turn, can neither replace nor do without the once established bureaucratic apparatus of reign, because it is based upon professional training, professional specialization in the division of tasks and the constant fulfillment of hackneyed and virtuosically mastered single functions that make up a planned synthesis. If he suspends his work or it is terminated by force, chaos follows, and it is difficult to improvise a substitute for it, both in the public domain and in administration in the private economy. [...] Because of this evolution, “files”, on the one hand, and the discipline of officials, on the other, that is, the attitude of officials to the precise execution of orders as part of their usual activities, constitute, in both public and private activities, the basis for all order.<sup>42</sup>

Thus, Weber, already analyzing the operation of the state in his time, indicated that records, which formed an inherent part of bureaucracy, must grow quantitatively by covering an increasing number of new areas. At the same time, they must reflect the actions of bureaucracy and appear in the context given to them. Therefore, the logical consequence of these changes also involved pres-

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 716.

ervation of the records context after they had lost their current usefulness, which in turn had to lead to the creation of the principle of provenance. This process was accelerated by a considerable increase in the number of records received by archives from the 1860s. Which made it necessary for them to deal with the mass influx of documentation created in the case files system.<sup>43</sup>

The development of bureaucracy and documentation was also related to the advance of education. Documents ceased to be created mainly through the preservation of certain rights, and began to be established by means of administration. In this respect, documents of similar content began to be grouped. Owing to their collection, they received a context that made them credible. The necessity to maintain this context was also noticed by historians, for whom it became indispensable for discovering the past. With the emergence of the idea of organicity, it became necessary to maintain the primary arrangement, which influenced the creation of the principle of original order.<sup>44</sup>

Though Weber's deliberations regarded only countries of Western Europe, the socio-economic shifts of capitalism taking place in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and their consequences are also evident in other parts of the continent, including in the Kingdom of Poland remaining in a personal union with Russia. The emerging changes manifested primarily in the functioning of central and local administration and influenced the activities of offices. These moves also affected the archives, which were forced to deal with the challenges of archiving the most recent records. This, in turn, was often associated with the necessity to change the modes of operation, make necessary preparations and establish closer relations with the records creator.<sup>45</sup> As implicated by Zdzisław Chmielewski, the popularization of bureaucracy in Poland is also evident in literature, including in the works of Maciej Dziedzicki, an archivist from the period of the Congress Kingdom.<sup>46</sup>

Already in the interwar period, archivists saw the relationship between the arrangement of archives and their creator very clearly. The office of the institution creates records (German: *Registratur*), which is subject to archiving and turns into a fonds.<sup>47</sup> The prominent Polish archivist Józef Paczkowski noted that an administrative clerk could, as a rule, give more careful thought to

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<sup>43</sup> Chmielewski, *Polska myśl archiwalna*, 36.

<sup>44</sup> Giroux, „A theoretical and historical analysis”, 56–60.

<sup>45</sup> Chmielewski, *Polska myśl archiwalna*, 55.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>47</sup> Chorążyczewski, „Czy w archiwach bieżących”, 48.

the arrangement of records, adapted to the needs of administrative practice, which he usually was more familiarized with than the archivist. It was the archivists of Western European countries who, in his opinion, held this position. For that reason, adapting to the office management excluded the completely subjective operation of the archivist's views and was based upon the office activity of the clerks as the sole and certain basis.<sup>48</sup>

The 19<sup>th</sup> century was a period of development of capitalism and bureaucracy. The expansion of the forms of administration led to an increase in record production that archivists had to cope with. Only from that moment one can talk about the development of government institutions in its modern sense, i.e. the advance of large ones with a divided framework and hierarchically structured.<sup>49</sup> This also coincided directly with the development of the archival theory.<sup>50</sup> As a follow-up to the shifts caused by the revolution and the Bonapartist era, this issue first emerged in France, and in the second half of the century also in other countries of the European continent. Importantly, the impact of the occurring moves was in substance noticeable regardless of latitude. All of these shifts together have resulted in the necessity to alter the working methods of archives and, consequently, to the formulation and implementation of the principle of provenance.

The most dazzling achievement of European archival thought in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which was a clarification of the principle of provenance, was born out of the practical need to tackle the problem of archiving 19<sup>th</sup>-century records. The authors of the Dutch Manual have modified the principle of *respect des fonds*, adapting it to the requirements of the administration of developed capitalist countries. It must be stressed that they had good reasons for this, because their reference point was the offices of large Dutch offices.<sup>51</sup> Only from that time, one can also talk about archival studies as a science.<sup>52</sup>

The advance of bureaucracy and capitalist enterprise became the cornerstone of the rationalization theories developed by Max Weber and Karl Mannheim. Both of these concepts, although they have a few differences between them, share many common elements, so it is worth referring to both. Weber's rationalization concept has not found full expression in any of his works. Nev-

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<sup>48</sup> Paczkowski, „Zasada archiwalna proveniencji”, 2.

<sup>49</sup> Hurley, „Problems with Provenance”, 249.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 250.

<sup>51</sup> Chmielewski, *Polska myśl archiwalna*, 36.

<sup>52</sup> Konarski, „Podstawowe zasady archiwistyki”, 19.

ertheless, it can be pointed out that, in his opinion, there have been several types of rationalization in history, adapted to the level of social development. Firstly, there was practical rationality, in which the actor accepts the world as it is and looks for the most appropriate methods of coping with its challenges.<sup>53</sup> Then followed theoretical rationalization characterized by increasing theoretical power over reality gained through ascending accuracy and abstract concepts.<sup>54</sup> At long last, society has developed substantive rationality in which the choice of means to an end is indicated by a broad set of human values. At the same time, the nature of these values is irrelevant; what matters is only that the choice is indicated by their system.<sup>55</sup> The last step, which took place in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was the development of formal rationality, which means that the best measures to an end are selected on the basis of universally agreed (accepted) rules, regulations and laws.<sup>56</sup> According to Weber, the best example of formal rationality is precisely bureaucracy, which, in his opinion, was a structure best suited to dealing with the so-called “paper work”. Concurrently, bureaucracy attempted to quantify as many tasks as possible, which allowed to increase its effectiveness. Thanks to deeply ingrained regulations and laws, bureaucracy functions in a highly predictable manner. Importantly, it seeks to replace human judgment with a dictate of laws, regulations, and structures. The second area that Weber considered highly formally rationalized was capitalist enterprise,<sup>57</sup> strongly influenced by a formally rational army and its discipline in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>58</sup> Hence, those were two areas of social activity particularly important for the emergence of the principle of provenance. It should also be pointed out that Weber’s rationalization theory focused on what he considered to be a unique feature of the occident in his day,<sup>59</sup> specifically the geographical area in which the rules governing the tectonics of the holding have been developed.

The second of the aforementioned theories was developed by Karl Mannheim, who wrote about substantial rationality, which, in his opinion, was a mental activity revealing a rational consideration for the mutual relations

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<sup>53</sup> Ritzer, *Explorations in Social Theory*, 178.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 179–80.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

<sup>57</sup> Weber, *Gospodarka i społeczeństwo*, 166–8.

<sup>58</sup> Ritzer, *Explorations in Social Theory*, 182.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.

of events within a given situation.<sup>60</sup> The second type of rationality discussed by Mannheim is functional rationality. This kind of rationality did not involve the process of thinking or knowing, but represented a series of activities organized to lead to a predetermined goal. Each component of this series of activities has a clearly defined place and role. The functional value of the organization of a sequence of activities is evidenced by the fact that individual measures of action are combined as efficiently as possible in terms of reaching a given goal.<sup>61</sup> Mannheim also points out that behavior can be defined as rational because it is organized, i.e. every action has a certain functional role to play in achieving the ultimate goal. Whether a certain number of activities is functionally rational or not is determined by two criteria: a. the functionality of the organization in terms of a specific goal, b. the logical consequence of a given system of actions from the perspective of the observer or a third person trying to adapt to it.<sup>62</sup> He pointed out that while in earlier societies an individual acted in a functionally rational manner only randomly and in a limited scope, in modern society he is forced to act in this way in an increasing number of areas of life.<sup>63</sup> The development of bureaucracy and industrialization have contributed to an increase in functional rationality.<sup>64</sup> The highest level of functional rationalization is achieved by the society among administrative employees.<sup>65</sup>

Both concepts of rationality, similar in essence, are based on the increasing role of bureaucracy and capitalist industry. As indicated above, the first of these institutions formed the basis for drawing the principle of provenance. It was indicated as early as Michael Lutzker that the Weber model was adopted by professional archivists and formed the basis of the archival system.<sup>66</sup> Since the concept of archival fonds has become the focal point of both the theory of the respect des fonds and the principle of provenance, it is here that the point of contact between these principles and rationalization should be sought.

Much as the discussion of the principle of provenance most often involves emphasizing the meaning of an organic metaphor that compares the fonds to a living organism, and the archivist to a paleontologist who analyzes each

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<sup>60</sup> Mannheim, *Człowiek i społeczeństwo*, 77–8.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 78

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>66</sup> Lutzker, „Max Weber and the Analysis”, 124.

bone and adjusts it to the right place in the skeleton;<sup>67</sup> however, it should be remembered that the term organic means systemic.<sup>68</sup> Which does not go to say that “systemicness” has always been understood in exactly the same way. Initially, the fonds, although originating from one systemically separate creator, were more closely related to its office, which created its own filing system. For that reason, one institution with several offices was allowed, and thus several registers would create several fonds.<sup>69</sup> The definitive victory of the concept that one record creator constitutes one fonds occurred in various countries shortly before<sup>70</sup> or only after the Second World War.<sup>71</sup> As emphasized in the literature, archives are therefore organic material, a product of the activity and deliberate action taken by any record creator.<sup>72</sup> It should also be stressed that documenting is an immanent feature of bureaucracy. Weber observed that modern, so in his case 19<sup>th</sup>-century, administration was based on written documents (files), preserved in original or in draft, and a staff of lower officials with the appropriate apparatus of tangible property and files making up the office.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, the principle of documenting administration is one of the categories of rational control.<sup>74</sup> It therefore follows according to general, more or less permanent and exhaustive, rules.<sup>75</sup> The role of the archivist organizing the fonds is only to examine the structure of its creator, observe the organizational guidelines, check whether the fate of the records in their journey from the office to the archives has not caused further alterations therein, and if these have in fact taken place – try to restore the original state of affairs.<sup>76</sup> Organic metaphor is therefore an expression of the rules of functional and formal rationality (depending on the adoption of the Weber or Mannheim perspective), thus also the principle of provenance that aggregates the principles of *respect des fonds* and the original order is a strictly rational rule. The emergence of archival principles was an expression of the increasing

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<sup>67</sup> Schellenberg, *The management of archives*, 87.

<sup>68</sup> Ryszewski, „Struktura zasobu”, 13.

<sup>69</sup> Chorążyczewski, „Zasada proveniencji”, 130–1.

<sup>70</sup> Meissner, *Aktenkunde*, 168–69.

<sup>71</sup> Chorążyczewski, „Zasada proveniencji”, 130–1.

<sup>72</sup> Schellenberg, *The management of archives*, 66.

<sup>73</sup> Weber, *Gospodarka i społeczeństwo*, 694.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 694–5.

<sup>76</sup> Konarski, „Podstawowe zasady archiwistyki”, 47.

submission of archivists in their work to the principles and rules of the world of bureaucracy. While the arrangement of material left plenty of room for archivists for their own invention (even when a certain pattern had been determined from above), the reconstruction of the archival fonds merely represents transfer of the office's work and the rules applicable in it to archival ground. At the same time, introduction of the principle of provenance with all its consequences has reduced the work of the archivist to the necessity of performing a series of actions aimed at the goal set not so much by the archive, but by rules and external institutions. The aim was to petrify their image in archival materials as accurately, quickly and predictably as possible, and at the same time include quantitative indicators. The means to that objective were to, at times, carry out a reconstruction of the archival fonds.

It must be accented that the archivist joining this work was not free in his endeavors and did not undertake any considerable mental activities aimed at organizing his duties. His actions were also limited to a large extent by the information provided to him by the creator of records, such as signatures, office marks or included in the repertories attached to the records. Obviously, this does not mean that the whole process did not require intellectual effort of a scientific nature. It was necessary to properly implement subsequent activities aimed at achieving the desired objective. This would result in a logical, from the point of view of a third party, arrangement of archival materials, which were therefore searchable in a relatively simple and rational way.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude, hence, the adoption of the principle of provenance as the basis for the arrangement of archives meant that archives that had previously operated in a mechanical but relatively irrational manner were forced to subordinate their work to rules and principles imposed by the bureaucracy.

On the one hand, their internal organization was changed in a bureaucratic manner. On the other hand, archives were forced to adapt their working methods to the rules prevailing in bureaucratic offices, which the collected records reflected.

Thus, the entire process that led to the emergence of the principle of provenance also mirrored society's gradual rationalization in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The principle of provenance, strictly rational on its own, has become the corner-

stone of the rationalization of archives, first in Europe and later in a major part of the world.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Duchain, „Theoretical Principles and Practical Problems”, 66.



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