

# The Early Years of the Misericordia of Manila (1594-1625)

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## PRE-HISTORY: FR. JUAN FERNÁNDEZ DE LEÓN

Twenty years after Miguel Lopez de Legazpi founded Manila, a devout Spanish priest arrived in the capital of the Philippine archipelago. Fr. Juan Fernández de León had spent some time in New Spain (Mexico), where he had given up all his earthly possessions and developed a taste for the hermit's life of prayer and self-abnegation. Soon after he arrived, he established himself near the ermita (shrine) of our Lady of Guía, located near the sea southeast of Manila,

outside the walls of the city.<sup>1</sup> Many Spaniards, both rich and poor, visited him seeking spiritual or material succour. From the rich he asked for alms so he could help the needy. Those he helped were all Spanish: sick couples, handicapped soldiers, and the *pobres vergonzantes*, or those people of means who had become impoverished but were ashamed to beg, like widows and orphan girls. As the number of the needy increased, Fr. Fernández decided to go to Manila on Saturdays to ask for more alms. Some Spaniards in town helped him collect alms for the poor; notable among these benefactors was Captain Juan Ezquerro, a well-respected citizen. Ezquerro was a good Christian of noble character, who devoted some of his time to help administer the hospital for natives that was run by the Franciscans. Fr. Fernández did not want to handle any money, so it was Captain Juan Ezquerro who collected the alms and distributed them to those who presented an affidavit signed by the priest, showing the amount to be given.

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Fr. Fernández's charitable concerns were not limited to giving alms. He also helped out at the Hospital de los Naturales, which took care of sick natives. The Franciscan lay brother Fr. Juan Clemente had founded it in 1577 or 1578 near the convent of San Francisco, inside the walls of the city, parallel to shore of the Pasig River.<sup>2</sup> On his own initiative, upon seeing the insufficiency of the hospital, Fr. Fernández decided to build a new ward where he could send the indigent sick. He convinced Fr. Juan Clemente to provide medicine and to visit his ward once in a while to perform surgery. For his part, Fr. Fernández took care of the administration, facilities and financial support of the hospital, as well as looking after the patients.

Fr. Fernández's work grew to such an extent that the idea of founding a "Hermandad de la Misericordia"—which translates literally as "Brotherhood of Mercy"—was raised as a solution to the problem of how to care for the poor Spaniards of Manila who fell ill. Many Portuguese territories had a *Casa da Misericórdia*, or House of Mercy, which was a brotherhood that looked after the needy of the place where it was established. Proponents of such brotherhoods believed that the characteristics of the *Misericórdia* institution would make it a good fit for Spanish Manila at the end of the sixteenth century.

THE CASAS DA MISERICÓRDIA  
IN PORTUGAL

Toward the end of the Middle Ages, private initiatives started to replace ecclesiastical institutions as providers of social welfare in the kingdom of Portugal. Hospitals and other organizations providing charitable services mushroomed in small villages throughout the country.<sup>3</sup> As the fifteenth century progressed, these institutions entered a period of decline caused by mismanagement and abuses; this situation prompted the local nobility to play a more prominent role supervising them. Before the century ended, the royal family also got involved by unifying social welfare institutions, like hospitals, to improve their efficiency.<sup>4</sup> Greater royal intervention in the social welfare system of Portugal took a decisive turn on August 15, 1498, when Queen Mother Leonor, the widow of King John I and sister of King Manuel I, founded the first *Casa da Misericórdia* in Lisbon. That institution was born as a

confraternity and brotherhood, which took as its mission the practice of spiritual and corporal acts of mercy for Christians in need. It was placed under the patronage of our Lady, Mother of God, the Virgin Mary of Mercy. This institution was the culmination of one of Leonor's earlier charitable projects, the Hospital of Caldas, which had essentially the same objectives as the *Casa da Misericórdia*, but did not yet have clearly defined regulations. Being a member of the royal family gave Leonor great logistic flexibility as well as abundant resources.<sup>5</sup>

The statutes (*Compromisso*) of the *Misericórdia* of Lisbon were drafted in 1498 and ratified by King Manuel I soon after. On March 14, 1499 King Manuel I sent a letter to the important citizens of Porto to encourage them to establish a similar institution. The petition was repeated in many other places, so that by the time queen Leonor died, in 1525, there were sixty-one *Casas da Misericórdia* in Portuguese territory. After the queen died, the number of *Misericórdias* grew quickly; by 1599, there were 114.<sup>6</sup>

The rapid expansion of the system of *Misericórdias* in Portuguese territory can be attributed to the privileges granted by the monarchs to the local oligarchies that ran them. Joining the *Misericórdia* exempted one from having to accept a post in the town hall and perform other civic duties. Moreover, *Misericórdias* were given incentives to practice charitable works and manage their own funds. Even if the *Misericórdias* were not strictly speaking under royal supervision, a *de facto* partnership was formed between the king and the local elite that ran the *Misericórdias*. In this way, the king found the means to help his needy subjects, and the members of *Misericórdias* obtained some social and economic advantages. At the Council of Trent, the king ensured further privileges for the *Misericórdias* by obtaining their autonomy from ecclesiastical authorities, which were not allowed to audit the funds of the brotherhood. The Philippine period of the Portuguese monarchy (that is, the reigns of Kings Philip I and II, from 1580 to 1640) brought further benefits to *Misericórdias* and those who managed them. The Spanish monarchs, who ruled Spain and Portugal simultaneously but separately, were

Our Lady of Mercy, 17<sup>th</sup> c., oil on wood  
(Church of the Misericórdia, Montemor-o-Velho).



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willing to grant benefits to these institutions in exchange for support from local elites. It was during this period that a large number of *Misericórdias* made local adaptations of the statutes of Lisbon. It was also during this period that *Misericórdias* were granted a monopoly over the burial of all deceased residents in their locality. In a gradual manner, then, the *Misericórdia* took over the charity work formerly run by confraternities, and came to practically monopolize the field of national welfare. The confraternities continued mostly as devotional and self-help associations.<sup>7</sup>

The role of the *Casas da Misericórdia* became even more prominent in Portuguese colonial enclaves. The *câmara* or municipal council and the *Misericórdia* were the two most prestigious institutions among the Portuguese communities in these towns. The social characteristics of these institutions gave them an elitist character, as they were closed to the non-white population; this tendency was even more pronounced in the case of *Misericórdias* in Asian cities, where, due to the small size of the Portuguese population, only men of very high social status were accepted into the brotherhood. The *Misericórdias* in Asia had their heyday in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, due especially to their role in delivering money from last wills to heirs in distant continents. In this process, they became solvent and deeply involved in the financial problems of the colonies.<sup>8</sup>

The confraternal system of *Misericórdias* in Portugal was not replicated in Spain.<sup>9</sup> There were some attempts in the sixteenth century, with the backing of the king, to establish a network of *Misericórdias* throughout the Spanish territories, but the Spanish *Misericórdias* were of a different nature. They were essentially asylums for the poor and needy, wherein those admitted would be taught a trade and also be allowed to beg in order to complement whatever income they made from their work.<sup>10</sup> In contrast, however, the inspiration for and organization of the Casa de Misericordia of Manila resembled much more closely the Portuguese *Casas da Misericórdia*.<sup>11</sup>

## A SOCIAL PROFILE OF MANILA

The social characteristics of Manila in the 1590s made the city a fertile ground for the foundation of a Casa de Misericordia in the Portuguese colonial style. Even though Manila was the colonial capital of the

Spanish government in the Philippines and the largest Spanish settlement in the archipelago, the number of Spaniards in Manila was very small compared both to the native population and the Chinese immigrants, and would remain so for the next three centuries. The available data give us only a very rough estimate of population trends, and even then the numbers should be handled with caution. However, these data indicate that from the late 1580s until 1612, the Spanish population grew steadily at a moderate pace, reaching a high of 2,800 persons. Then the number started to decrease, shrinking to around 700 persons in 1634, and to a mere 300 by 1638.<sup>12</sup> These numbers referred to the *vecinos* (or citizens) and their families, meaning people who had a house inside the city walls. The statistics do not include Spaniards who lived outside the walls, friars, indigent Spaniards, or creole private soldiers living in the camps. The arrival of a new galleon, especially when a new governor-general brought with him a large retinue, could cause sudden increases in the Spanish population. There were few Spaniards who came to work in crafts or agriculture. One of the few efforts to increase their number took place under Governor-General Gonzalo Ronquillo, who brought with him families and craftsmen of different trades in an attempt to bolster the Spanish settlement of Manila; but the experiment was not successful.<sup>13</sup> Chinese labour and craftsmanship could match the work of any Spanish craftsman at much lower cost.

Thus the majority of *vecinos* were people who had come to serve in the army or in the different branches of colonial government, and had achieved a certain level of social and economic status. In the first decades of the Spanish regime, a local oligarchy started to form among the *vecinos*. This group was essentially made up of three social groups. The first was formed by men who had accompanied Legazpi and had made a name for themselves through military action. Many of them were awarded with an *encomienda* (feudal-colonial land domination under the political, legal and social system during the Spanish period) and became part of a kind of local aristocracy. Newcomers often tried to marry their descendants into this group. The second category was comprised of military men who arrived throughout the seventeenth century and moved up the social ladder by means of prestige, marriage, or privileges granted by the governor-general. The third and final group of people to join the oligarchy was



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comprised of traders, who became more important in the second half of the century. Many individuals from all three categories increased their social and economic standing by joining Manila's civil *cabildo*, or city government, and as a consequence had greater privileges in the galleon trade, which was the main source of income for the oligarchy. The majority of this upper class came from Spain; creoles were always a minority.<sup>14</sup>

A description of the houses of the *vecinos* of Manila in 1617<sup>15</sup> gives us an idea of the Spanish population that lived within the city walls four and a half decades after the enclave was founded. There were 208 houses made of stone and 214 made of wood; another fifteen houses were under construction. Most of these houses had tile roofs. Among the 422 finished houses, the census recorded that twenty-five of them were unoccupied; thirty were occupied by 35 clerics; 65 houses belonged to widows; 49 were inhabited by single males; ten belonged to public officials in the province; and another ten belonged to military officers waiting for assignments elsewhere in the islands.<sup>16</sup> That leaves only 233 more households, each of which would have had on average two to four Spaniards, because rates of mortality were high and rates of fertility were low among the Spanish population.<sup>17</sup> The range in social status among these residents is evident from the differentiation between houses made of stone and those made of wood.

Not all the Spaniards in town were well-to-do. Low-ranking soldiers accounted for a large proportion of the less privileged. Early on, the colonial government had established a rather makeshift hospital for them, the Hospital Real; spiritual care at the hospital was provided by the Franciscans.<sup>18</sup> Even so, some of soldiers ended up in extreme poverty or became invalids. The other main group of indigent Spaniards were the *pobres vergonzantes*, some of whom still lived in houses within the city walls, while others—especially widows and their children—had moved outside the city limits. *Mestizas*, defined as the female offspring of a Spaniard and a native, formed a very unfortunate group that was repudiated by the social elite. It was this broad array of the less fortunate Spaniards in Manila that Fr. Fernández de León cared for. Their straitened circumstances were the result of the difficult living environment of Manila. The unusually high number of widows in the city was a direct result of the extremely

high male mortality rate, which in turn was due to repeated military campaigns against the Dutch, the Muslim peoples in the south, and the 1603 Chinese revolt. Two fires in the 1570s, another in 1583, and one more in 1603 wreaked repeated havoc on the city and inflicted enormous damage on the property of the Spaniards.<sup>19</sup> In addition, frequent mishaps in the galleon trade increased the chances of poverty, even among the not-so-poor. All these poor Manila residents of Spanish descent comprised a social group that the better-off Spaniards could not easily dismiss—all the more so because some came from their own ranks.

The sense of obligation on the part of wealthy Spaniards toward poorer ones was intensified by the prevailing racial discrimination toward two much larger groups: the native and Chinese populations of Manila. In 1591 there were 3,000 natives in the city who were required to pay tribute; counting their families, the number could have been three to five times higher.<sup>20</sup> Jesuit sources put the number at 6,000 in 1596,<sup>21</sup> and in 1627 it had grown to 20,000.<sup>22</sup> They worked in the large households of the Spaniards and at public works. There was a similar or perhaps even larger Chinese population, called “Sangleys,” living in and around Manila. The Spanish authorities tried to control them by forcing them to live in the Parian,<sup>23</sup> and, during certain periods, by limiting their number to 6,000; but many more Chinese moved to the outskirts of Manila and to other provinces. It is difficult to assess their numbers, partly because this was a very mobile group, and partly because many of them married native women, became Christians, and settled down on the land. But we can estimate that, at different historical moments, there were ten, twenty, or even thirty times as many Chinese as there were Spaniards in and around Manila. They ran most of the commerce and industries that supplied the needs and services of the city.<sup>24</sup>

Another social group related to the Spanish population of Manila was comprised of the black slaves that many Spaniards had in their households. These “blacks” were brought from Bengal, Malabar or Timor, although there were also some Africans.<sup>25</sup> There were fewer slaves than natives, but their numbers were still considerable. For instance, in 1621 there were 1,970 slaves in Manila.<sup>26</sup> They existed in a much worse social condition than the natives or the Chinese. Members of these last two groups could find themselves suddenly impoverished,<sup>27</sup> but at least there were large

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communities to which they belonged and on which they could count for help in troubled times. The slaves, by contrast, were entirely dependent on the fate of their masters and had no roots in Manila; they could easily fall into a state of vagrancy.<sup>28</sup> The Christian spirit exhibited by the Spanish community toward those who served them meant that the Spaniards could not remain indifferent to the fate of this group.

## A NEW FOUNDATION IN MANILA

As is the case with other Misericordias, the exact details of the foundation of the Misericordia of Manila are not well known, and there is room for different versions of this story.<sup>29</sup> The more detailed accounts come from Franciscan and Jesuit sources written some decades after the actual events occurred.<sup>30</sup> The Franciscans claim that they were the ones who proposed the idea of starting a Hermandad de la Misericordia in Manila. The Jesuits only profess their involvement in the foundation process. Throughout the preceding decades, Spanish religious men from both orders had travelled to Macao, the gateway to China, and they must have been familiar with the thriving *Casa da Misericórdia* in that city. In fact, one of the Franciscans involved in founding the Misericordia in Manila, Fr. Agustín de Tordesillas, was one the founders of the Franciscan convent in Macao in 1579.<sup>31</sup> According to Franciscan sources, it was they who suggested establishing a Misericordia in Manila to continue the work of Fr. Fernández de León. Of special relevance to this process was the presence in Manila of the Franciscan Fr. Marcos de Lisboa, a Portuguese of noble ancestry who had arrived in 1585 after spending some years in Malacca.<sup>32</sup> After the proposal of founding a Misericordia in Manila had been raised, Juan Ezquerro broached the idea with Governor-General Luis Pérez Dasmariñas, who gave his full approval. The first meeting of the brotherhood took place in the church of the Jesuits, and was attended by Fr. Fernández de León, Captain Juan Ezquerro, Fr. Cristóbal Salvatierra (representing the Archbishop), Jesuits Fr. Sedeño and Fr. Raymundo del Prado, and four Franciscans: Fr. Agustín de Tordesillas, Fr. Alonso Muñoz, Fr. Marcos de Lisboa, and Fr. Juan Bautista.

Even if the suggestion of establishing a Misericordia in Manila had originated with the religious orders, the secular Spanish elites of Manila

who would end up administering the institution could not have been ignorant of the *Misericórdia* of Macao and the possibilities that it offered to practice charitable activities. For Manila, Macao had always been one of the sources of Chinese products for re-export to New Spain, even if at times there had been disputes over, and prohibitions on, this trade.<sup>33</sup> Those who attended the founding meeting of the brotherhood on April 16, 1594, were some of the most prominent members of Spanish Manila society; and the members of the first *Mesa* or board of guardians of the Misericordia were all of high social standing.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, the *Provedor* was the Governor-General Luis Pérez Dasmariñas himself. Some of the guardians belonged to old families who had come with Legazpi or who had distinguished themselves in battle and were the core of the local oligarchy, like Antonio de Castañeda, Cristobal de Azqueta, Juan Arceo and Juan Ezquerro himself,<sup>35</sup> assistant to Fr. Juan Fernández de León. The *Escribano* of the *Mesa* was Esteban de Marquina, who had been *Escribano* of the city since 1590. Four of them had an *encomienda* of their own, implying that they had military achievements; another was entitled to the *encomienda* of his wife.<sup>36</sup>

A few months after this meeting, just as the Philippine summer was ending and before the galleon departed with the official mail, Dasmariñas informed the king, in a report along with other news, that a Misericordia had been founded.<sup>37</sup> He explained that the brotherhood was comprised of the cream of the Spanish population and that its main charity works were to feed the many *pobres vergonzantes* in town, to provide dowries for orphan daughters of *conquistadores* and people who served the king, and to look after orphan boys. Dasmariñas asked for a grant from the king to fund this new brotherhood. One other news item in the report would be relevant for the future of the Misericordia: Dasmariñas informed the king of the need for a hospital for the servants and slaves of the Spaniards, because the other two hospitals in town, the Hospital Real de Españoles and the Hospital de los Naturales, were overloaded with patients and could not accommodate all of them.

The founding of the Misericordia gave Fr. Fernández de León more time to finish the hospital he had started building near the Hospital de los Naturales. Once it was finished, he requested the Franciscans to run it, to which the friars agreed.<sup>38</sup> However, soon after,

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the brotherhood founded a hospital of its own, called the Hospital de la Misericordia.<sup>39</sup> It is not clear whether or not this hospital was part of the institution run by Fr. Fernández de León. Most sources agree that this new hospital was created primarily to serve sick slaves and servants, as well as poor Spanish and mestizo women. The first group was that which Dasmariñas mentioned in his letter to the king; the second, which accounted for the largest proportion of the *pobres vergonzantes*, was looked after by Fr. Fernández de León.

## AVOIDING SPANISH ROYAL PATRONAGE

Unlike in Portugal, where the monarchy took pains to legislate and foster the establishment of many *Casas da Misericórdia*, the Spanish monarchs' attitude toward the Misericordia of Manila was ambivalent. Strictly speaking, the Misericordia should have fallen under the jurisdiction of the *patronato real* or royal patronage. The *patronato* refers to the agreement by which Spanish monarchs had obtained a number of privileges from the Pope to oversee all matters related to the Church in the Indies. As early as 1578, Philip II decreed laws establishing his patronage over the church in the Philippines.<sup>40</sup> His patronage included not only the right to appoint bishops and high-ranking clerics and to control the expansion of the religious orders; it also gave him complete power over charitable or devotional institutions such as hospitals, confraternities and brotherhoods.<sup>41</sup> Ordinarily, the monarch would provide financial subsidies in order to actualize his patronage over a person or institution.

The Portuguese ancestry of the Misericordia of Manila complicated matters in relation to the Spanish royal patronage. So did Manila's proximity to the Portuguese area of influence in Asia, which stretched from the Moluccas to India, included Macao and passed through Malacca. The fact that the Spanish king ruled Portugal as well did not help much, as the king's legitimacy had been accepted in Portugal with the explicit condition that he would maintain separate governments.<sup>42</sup> The introduction of traditional institutions from one realm into the other was more a cause for concern than it was welcome news.

In spite of the clear grounds that the king had to claim the Misericordia as an institution of royal patronage, he did not do so until 1733. Early

correspondence between the royal officials in Manila and the monarch reveals the implicit intention on the part of the founding members of the Misericordia to remain outside of this system of royal patronage; it also reveals an implicit unwillingness on the part of the monarch to make the Misericordia join the patronage. Dasmariñas never mentioned the role played by Fr. Fernández de León or the religious orders in the process of founding of the Misericordia. It looks as if there may have been a desire to hide this religious connection, in case the king decided to consider the brotherhood an ecclesiastical organization and therefore rightfully subject to royal patronage. Similarly, Dasmariñas did not ask permission from the king to found the hospital of the Misericordia, even though every new hospital needed explicit approval from the king because they all belonged to the patronage. Future deeds and words would confirm this apparently mutual desire to keep the Misericordia outside the influence of the royal patronage.

A ROAD MAP FOR THE FUTURE:  
THE 1606 STATUTES

After founding the Misericordia in Manila, the brethren procured a copy of the statutes of a Misericordia. In Portuguese territory most *Misericórdias* simply used the same *Compromisso*, or statutes, used by the *Misericórdia* of Lisbon, though some of them opted to adapt these statutes to their own needs.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, the *Mesa* in Manila decided on May 11, 1594 to ask the *Misericórdia* of Lisbon to send a copy of their statutes to serve as a model in formulating their own. This copy arrived in 1596. The *Mesa* revised them and adapted them to the circumstances of Manila. A general gathering of brethren of the Misericordia held on January 14, 1597 approved the revised statutes.<sup>44</sup> It seems logical that the Portuguese in town, like Fr. Marcos de Lisboa, were the ones who came up with the initial guidelines and helped to translate Lisbon's statutes when they arrived, explaining how things were done in Portuguese *Misericórdias*. In 1598 a copy of the statutes of a *Misericórdia* from India arrived, which was used to help perfect the previous one.<sup>45</sup> The document that arrived from Lisbon may have been a hand-copied version of the 1577 statutes.<sup>46</sup> The document that arrived from India was most likely the adaptation made in Goa in

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1595, since the *Misericórdia* of Goa acted as a mother institution for subsequent ones in the region.<sup>47</sup>

In 1606 a select group of brothers of the Misericordia of Manila drafted its final set of statutes, and a general gathering of the brotherhood approved them on November 2. By then, King Philip III had extended to the Indies the rule stipulating that ecclesiastical and royal approval were needed for the founding of any confraternities or brotherhoods, as well as for their statutes.<sup>48</sup> As a result, the brotherhood sought ecclesiastical and royal authorization, and then intended to print the statutes. After obtaining ecclesiastical approval, Governor-General Rodrigo de Vivero granted permission for publication in 1608. The published document was entitled *Ordenanzas, y Constituciones de la Sancta Misericordia de la Insigne Ciudad de Manila reformadas conforme al estado, y disposiciones de la tierra por los Hermanos de la dicha Hermandad, conforme por las Ordenanzas de la Ciudad de Lisboa se dispone, y aunados a ella*<sup>49</sup> al año de 1606.<sup>50</sup>

The 1606 statutes of the Misericordia of Manila are clearly inspired by the 1577 statutes from Lisbon<sup>51</sup> and the 1595 statutes from Goa.<sup>52</sup> Most of the text is a literal Spanish translation of the Portuguese sources. Just like the 1577 *Compromisso* from Lisbon, the Manila statutes had 38 chapters. The most important difference is that the drafters in Manila incorporated eight annexes from Goa's statutes into the main text of the other chapters. Other changes related to the specificities of place and circumstances will be discussed later.

The approval of these statutes had important consequences for the future of the Misericordia. These written laws governing the brotherhood were both a declaration of principles as well as a listing of concrete obligations on the part of the members,<sup>53</sup> even if they were not always followed to the letter.<sup>54</sup> For the members of Manila high society who comprised the Misericordia's governing body, accepting the statutes meant two things. First, they were convinced that the statutes would benefit them as a social group. Second, they were willing to adopt a formula that had proven successful in other places in order to achieve their general goals. From a larger perspective, the Misericordia of Manila became a type of organization that existed only in Portuguese territories, and would therefore be unique among the other brotherhoods in the Spanish territories.<sup>55</sup>

Just as with other Misericordias elsewhere, the one in Manila had its idiosyncrasies and a unique history that made it different from similar institutions. Those differences began at the level of the 1606 adaptation of the statutes, and continued with the process of their implementation. One important difference already noted above is that the Misericordia of Manila did not become an institution of royal patronage.<sup>56</sup> During the first decades of its existence, the Misericordia of Manila developed its own mode of operation, adjusting the mostly standardized model of the Portuguese *Misericórdias*.

## THE BROTHERS: A MEETING OF THE ELITE

Just like Misericordias in other colonial settings, the Misericordia of Manila was elitist by nature. Only males<sup>57</sup> of high social standing among the members of the colonizing nation had access to it.<sup>58</sup> The statutes included a number of conditions for membership that ensured this social exclusivity. Applicants had to be *Cristianos viejos*,<sup>59</sup> which effectively excluded converts from other religions. If in Europe this regulation was intended to exclude those with Jewish or Muslim blood, in Manila it excluded the native and Chinese populations, both non-Christian and those of recent conversion. The statutes also stipulated that in order to join the Misericordia, one could not have *oficios obligatorios*, or a regular job. In reality this meant that it was possible for members to hold a regular job, for example in the army, government or even business, but they needed to have enough stature to be able to excuse themselves from this work in order to participate in the activities of the brotherhood whenever required.<sup>60</sup> This ordinarily was not a problem for the oligarchy of Manila.

The 1606 statutes, however, did not include the usual distinction made in Portuguese *Misericórdias* between brothers of higher and lower classes.<sup>61</sup> This was also the case in the *Misericórdia* of Macao.<sup>62</sup> Both cities were far-flung colonial outposts with small numbers of citizens of European ancestry, who were mostly engaged in colonial government, the military or maritime commerce. There were too few Spaniards in Manila working in a trade—one defining characteristic of a lower social class—to make such a distinction.

Reports about the Misericordia, from its beginnings throughout later periods in its history,



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emphasized the high social status of its members. Governor-General Luis Pérez Dasmariñas wrote that its members were the “most illustrious and prominent people of this city.”<sup>63</sup> Governor-General Francisco Tello de Guzmán stated in 1599 that it “includes the richest people of this country.”<sup>64</sup> The lack of complete membership lists makes it difficult to illustrate these statements. The names of the brothers have to be compiled from the signatures of the *Mesa* members on documents sent to civil or ecclesiastical authorities, as well as on legal contracts related to the execution of last wills. A few governors-general joined, as well as a few Archbishops and a larger number of *Oidores* and *Fiscals* of the Audiencia, but there is no evidence that such high-ranking members were many.<sup>65</sup>

A good number of the relatively few persons known to have joined the *Mesa* during the century belonged to the local oligarchy. They had come to the Philippines to stay, moving up the social ladder by means of military and government assignments, trying to obtain an *encomienda*, and engaging in the galleon trade. Some of them joined the civil *cabildo*, or city government,<sup>66</sup> indicating a certain level of wealth and of social prestige within the Spanish community.<sup>67</sup> The composition of the first *Mesa* in 1594 revealed the presence in the brotherhood of the local military elite and their descendants. The trend continued in the succeeding *Mesas*, with people like Pedro de Ortega, one of the first colonizers, or Martin de Esquivel, son of the pioneer settler Juan de Esquivel. Simultaneously there appeared in the *Mesa* the names of individuals from other families of more recent arrival who managed to join the local oligarchy either on their own merit or by marrying into one of the pioneering families. Gabriel Gómez del Castillo arrived in Manila in 1606, and made a career first in the military and then in the colonial government. *Licenciado* Juan Fernández de Ledo arrived in 1609 and worked as a lawyer for the *cabildo* and the Audiencia. Manuel Estacio Venegas also arrived in the first decade of the seventeenth century, earned some prestige in the military, married a daughter of one of the early settlers, and joined the local oligarchy, eventually wielding great influence with Governor-General Diego Fajardo. The coming decades would witness the same pattern.<sup>68</sup> Thus joining the Misericordia, and especially the *Mesa*, became another path to social prestige and mobility<sup>69</sup> for both old and new members of the local oligarchy.<sup>70</sup>

One way in which Portuguese *Misericórdias* consolidated and preserved their elitist character was by setting an upper limit on the number of brothers.<sup>71</sup> The statutes of Lisbon fixed the number at 600 brethren; those of Goa, at 400.<sup>72</sup> Manila was a much smaller place, so the 1606 statutes limited the number to 150.<sup>73</sup> At that time, the Spanish population of Manila must have been between one thousand five hundred and two thousand people.<sup>74</sup> Further data reports that the membership quota was increased to two hundred in 1621, in a population of 2,500,<sup>75</sup> and to 250 in 1639,<sup>76</sup> even though the population of Manila had shrunk to 900 people in 1634.<sup>77</sup> These numbers seem a little large considering the reduced size of the population. This increase in the quota indicates the desire to include, rather than exclude, more people. This is also implied by the clause in the 1606 statutes that lowers the minimum age requirement for unmarried candidates to 25 years, compared to the 40 years stipulated by Lisbon's statutes and 30 in the case of Goa. To date we do not know what process the Misericordia followed in accepting new brothers, whether it was done in a general gathering or by a special *junta*.<sup>78</sup> The characteristics of these statutes and the early data on the brethren suggest that the Misericordia had become an important component of the social life of the elite in Manila.

The Misericordia of Manila required its brethren to fulfil the same obligations as did the Misericordia of Lisbon. These duties had to do with fulfilling their assignments, attending several yearly gatherings, and participating in the burial processions of deceased brothers. The Misericordia of Manila also stressed the importance of wearing the *balandran*, a cassock-like robe, during processions.<sup>79</sup> In reality, much of the work fell on the shoulders of the *Mesa*. The *Mesa* of the Misericordia of Manila was almost identical to that of all other Misericordias. It was headed by a *Provedor*, who had twelve guardians under him. Decisions were made by majority vote. The *Mesa* could make decisions in all matters except those that affected the future of the brotherhood. In those cases a general gathering of brothers chose a special *junta* of twelve prestigious former *Mesa* members to join the *Mesa* in making a decision. Two brother lawyers and two theologians from the religious orders gave their opinions on these matters before they were put to a vote. A few other brothers were given special assignments in the *Mesa*.

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Illuminated frontispiece of the Accounts Ledger of Funchal's Holy House of Mercy (1652-1653). In Ivo Carneiro de Sousa, *V Centenário das Misericórdias Portuguesas*, Lisbon, Clube do Colecionador dos Correios, 1998.



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The *Escribano* had the job of recording all matters of importance. The *Tesorero y Limosnero*<sup>80</sup> was in charge of disbursements. The *Mayordomo y Cobrador de Limosnas* collected all alms or donations given to the brotherhood, sold donated goods, and represented the interests of the Misericordia in court. Each month, the *Mesa* chose a few *Mayordomos* or stewards from among its members and other brothers to look after the chapel and the charities of the brotherhood.

Elections to the *Mesa* were indirect, like in other Misericordias.<sup>81</sup> A general gathering of brothers would choose an electoral panel of twenty brothers, which in turn would choose the *Mesa* on the following day. The traditional day for the election in Portuguese *Misericórdias* was the feast day of the Visitation of the Virgin Mary; the 1606 statutes of Manila specified instead the Feast of the Presentation of the Virgin Mary in the temple, celebrated on November 21.

## PRACTICING CHARITY, MISERICORDIA STYLE

As their name indicates, Casas de Misericordia were established in order to practice the fourteen deeds of mercy in the Catholic tradition. In reality, the statutes from Lisbon had standardized the activities of all *Misericórdias*, with some differences according to place. Early reports about the Misericordia of Manila describe the adoption of that tradition prior to the approval of the 1606 statutes. Due to the loss of the Misericordia archives, data about the activities of the Misericordia of Manila in the first decades of its history are often not very specific and hardly quantifiable.<sup>82</sup> The information comes mostly from official correspondence, especially two reports by the *Audiencia* of Manila in 1602 and 1607, and one by Manila's Archbishop Miguel Garcia Serrano in 1621. Their descriptions of the activities of the Misericordia of Manila provide enough material to substantiate that the brotherhood followed the general direction of most Misericordias, especially those in colonial outposts.

## GIVING ALMS TO THE POOR

The activities of any Misericordia focused on providing help to people in need; giving alms to the poor and sick was one of the main tasks of most Misericordias, and so it was in Manila during the early

days. *Casas da Misericórdia* selected their beneficiaries from among the many needy, giving priority to those who had some connection to the social milieu of the brethren.<sup>83</sup> In the case of Manila, the brethren of the Misericordia logically placed at the top of their list the Spanish members of the community who came from their ranks, like *pobres vergonzantes* and orphan children, followed by other poorer Spaniards, and finally their own servants belonging to other racial groups. The Misericordia also indirectly reached other social groups by administering bequests which specifically instructed that help should be extended to particular individuals or institutions in need. Even so, in Manila most bequests still favoured the Spanish population.

The 1602 and 1607 reports that describe the charitable work of the Misericordia of Manila provide both an overall picture of this work as well as many details about the identities of the beneficiaries.<sup>84</sup> The Misericordia style was to give alms regularly to a chosen set of people. The *Mesa* gathered every Wednesday morning for a meeting that at times extended into the afternoon, as the statutes commanded, to discuss the distribution of alms for the poor. In this task, the *Mesa* counted on the help of the *mayordomos visitadores de pobres y enfermos* or *de barrios* (stewards in charge of visiting the poor and the sick, or stewards in charge of neighbourhoods). These were brothers chosen every month to visit, in pairs, assigned areas of Manila. They would check on the poor in need of alms and would distribute, every Saturday, the amounts decided by the *Mesa* for specific persons. The statutes divided Manila and its surroundings into four areas, each to be assigned to one pair of brothers.<sup>85</sup> Surprisingly, the 1607 report mentioned only one pair of *visitadores* for the whole city, which would indicate there were not many indigents at that time. The amount of alms given to the poor was just enough for them to subsist on and, if they were *pobres vergonzantes*, to preserve an appearance of dignity as well. In times of sickness the *visitadores* provided extra alms. Following the new ideas on social welfare espoused by Spanish humanist Juan Luis Vives, the 1606 statutes had placed two conditions on giving alms to the poor, conditions not supported in the statutes of other Misericordias: alms were only given to people who lived upright lives but were not able-bodied.<sup>86</sup> These requirements implied that poverty and mendicancy were social maladies and that the



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Misericordia should not provide for individuals in these situations.<sup>87</sup> To ensure that these conditions were met, the *visitadores* checked on the recipients of alms twice yearly.

Among all of Manila's poor, the Misericordia gave top priority to the *pobres vergonzantes*. Many of them were widows,<sup>88</sup> whose numbers remained high throughout the century.<sup>89</sup> The *visitadores* gave them a weekly allowance ranging from half a peso to four pesos according to their social status and material needs. In some cases, alms were discontinued if a woman did not change her behaviour after having been admonished for a failing in virtue.<sup>90</sup> Another subset of *pobres vergonzantes* were poor married people who had come from New Spain and had neither housing nor money for clothes. The brothers took care of collecting clothes to donate to them, especially so that women could attend Mass and be seen in public in the attire appropriate to their social class.<sup>91</sup> In 1607 the Misericordia was giving out between 60 to 70 pesos a week in alms, a respectable amount for those days.

Orphan girls of Spanish descent and *mestizas* came next among the beneficiaries of the Misericordia. Concern for orphan girls was a long-standing tradition in the social welfare of the European Christian world of the late Middle Ages and modern times. The statutes of most Misericordias had several chapters regarding dowries for orphan girls who wished to marry or enter a convent. The intention was to prevent them from falling into vice and ending up in regrettable social situations.<sup>92</sup> The 1606 statutes did not include the option of dowries for joining a convent because there were no convents in Manila yet. In terms of the deciding who would receive money for dowries, the statutes gave priority to girls whose fathers had died serving the king, and to Spanish girls over *mestizas*. Girls from the higher social ranks received larger amounts, up to a maximum of 300 pesos. Following the Misericordia tradition, girls who had been granted dowries had to marry in the church of the brotherhood. And, just as in Goa, the marriage had to take place no later than two months after the approval of the dowry. In 1602, Manila had a large number of poor Spanish and *mestiza* orphan girls, mostly the daughters of conquistadors and soldiers. Many of them ended up as prostitutes. The Misericordia gave dowries to some of them and even awarded scholarships so that some

of the girls and a few poor women could stay at the boarding school of Santa Potenciana.<sup>93</sup> The help of the Misericordia was not entirely disinterested, because taking care of these girls was a long-term investment to ensure the availability of brides of European descent in a colonial environment with a greatly reduced Spanish population. Caring for orphaned Spanish boys was another way in which the brothers looked after their own kind. The boys were placed in private homes where they could be well looked after, ensuring that they did not experience any need. Those who had an aptitude for studies were given scholarships to the Colegio de San José of the Jesuits, a school for sons of the local Spanish elite, which charged a yearly fee of one hundred pesos.<sup>94</sup>

There were also a number of cases of Spaniards of lower social status receiving alms from the Misericordia for specific needs. Some army men, such as lower-ranking officers and soldiers who had been assigned to the country for misconduct but had proven themselves worthy of returning to New Spain, received the money they needed for their return ticket. The Misericordia also provided some financial help to enable incurably ill soldiers from the Hospital Real to travel to Los Baños hot springs, where the Franciscans had built a small hospital.<sup>95</sup> Other beneficiaries of alms were poor soldiers from the Campo Real (the city barracks), the Camp of Ternate (in the Moluccas) and other camps. The Misericordia helped the Portuguese from the Moluccas and Ambon, largely soldiers and civilians who had transferred to the provinces of the Pintados (Visayan Islands) of the Philippines when they were expelled by the Dutch in the early seventeenth century. More alms went to rescue Spanish and Portuguese soldiers captured by the Dutch.<sup>96</sup>

An exception to the preferential treatment of the Spanish population took place in 1599 when there was a plague among the native population and the members of the brotherhood took it upon themselves to supply the sick with food and medicine. The brethren of the Misericordia attended the wakes and burials of the dead. These charitable works won the sympathy of the native population;<sup>97</sup> however, they were never replicated. The decision to attend to natives in need may have been motivated by self-interest to prevent the disease from spreading, but it also spoke highly of the Christian spirit of the brothers, which overcame racial distinctions.

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Another charitable work typical of Misericordias was looking after prisoners. The *Mesa* appointed two brothers for this job monthly. They were called the *mayordomos visitadores de cárceles*. One of them belonged to the *Mesa* and was in charge of looking after any emergency that might arise among the convicts and handling the legal cases of those who could be freed. The other *visitador* was in charge of providing the poor in jail with daily rations of food, which he would have cooked at his home, and water, which was even more important than food. However, he did not distribute the food in person; he would have someone bring it to the prison on his behalf. The recipients of this food included poor inmates of all nationalities: Spaniards, natives, Sangleys, and others. The task of caring for the people in both royal jails (*de Corte*) and municipal jails (*de Ciudad*) officially belonged to the *Audiencia*,<sup>98</sup> but the work of the brothers of the Misericordia was a welcome one.

The *Mesa* also undertook what can be considered spiritual works of mercy, implementing a chapter from the statutes<sup>99</sup> that had been copied from the statutes of Lisbon. The *Mesa* would ask someone to give counsel to married couples experiencing relationship difficulties, or to patch up disagreements or enmities between various people. They also “corrected” people with vices that the *Mesa* came to know about secretly.

In 1621 the beneficiaries of the Misericordia were essentially the same as in the earlier years, as confirmed in the report by Archbishop Miguel García Serrano, who listed the following: male and female *pobres vergonzantes*, prisoners, the girls in Santa Potenciana, patients in the Misericordia hospital, male students of San Jose and Santo Tomas, girls in need of dowries, priests and religious people.<sup>100</sup> At that time, a more unusual category of recipients of alms from the Misericordia was the religious missionaries who sent relief supplies to Japan for Japanese Christians who had been jailed due to official persecution and who would otherwise go hungry in prison.<sup>101</sup>

## THE HOSPITAL OF THE MISERICORDIA

Running a hospital was a common task of many *Casas da Misericórdia*.<sup>102</sup> Copying the statutes of Lisbon and Goa, the Misericordia of Manila also included the provision for a hospital in its statutes, but more than anything the Hospital de la Misericordia

of Manila was a continuation of the work of Fr. Fernández de León. If the brotherhood had taken up that work it was because there was a real need for it among the Spanish population of Manila. By 1596 the Misericordia had finished building its own hospital.<sup>103</sup> It is probable that this hospital was just an expansion and improvement of the ward that Fr. Fernández had built near the Hospital de los Naturales. The Hospital de la Misericordia was located very near the Hospital de los Naturales as well.

The *visitadores de pobres y enfermos* would bring to the hospital those persons who could not be looked after elsewhere. These were poor slaves (of whom there were many) and poor Spanish and mestizo women, who were not accepted in any other hospital.<sup>104</sup> The Spanish community felt morally obliged to look after them. The *visitadores* took care of the inpatients at the hospital, hiring the services of any medical doctor or capable individual they could find.

The services rendered in the Hospital of the Misericordia must have been fairly acceptable, for in 1597 Governor-General Luis Pérez Dasmariñas requested that the king transfer the administration of the Hospital Real de Españoles to the Misericordia.<sup>105</sup> Governor-General Francisco Tello de Guzmán went ahead with this transfer on January 3, 1598,<sup>106</sup> without waiting for the king’s authorization. The Hospital Real belonged to the royal patronage and had plenty of funds, but patients were neglected and there were many more deaths than there should have been.<sup>107</sup> The cause of this neglect seems to have been corruption among the officials in charge. The Misericordia initially refused Tello’s request, but conceded after he agreed to entrust the financial responsibility to a government administrator, while the brothers would simply take care of the sick. By 1601, the *Mesa* had returned the administration of the Hospital Real to the government, as it could not cope with it.<sup>108</sup> During its tenure, however, the Misericordia did a good job, financially speaking. The previous administrator had left the hospital with a debt of 300 pesos, while the *Mesa* ended its administration with a surplus of 3,000 pesos.<sup>109</sup> One of the reasons why the Misericordia relinquished the Hospital Real was the increase in charity work for the brothers during those years. A number of mishaps left many poor and sick people on the streets. It started with the 1599 earthquake, followed by a series of losses of galleons, and peaked in 1603 with a city fire and

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the Chinese insurrection. The Misericordia not only assisted those in need, but also took care of the burial of those who died in these calamities.<sup>110</sup>

Early notices reported that the Hospital de la Misericordia was well equipped with furniture, food and medicine. There were enough servants, and two Franciscans administered the sacraments and provided spiritual attention to the sick. The brotherhood's attention to hospital conditions continued; in 1621 the hospital was still looking after 80 to 100 slaves (both male and female, in separate quarters) and between twelve and twenty poor Spanish women.<sup>111</sup> In addition to patients confined in the hospital, the brotherhood treated many others on an outpatient basis, following a provision in the 1606 statutes. The hospital provided goods for those patients during their illness and, in some cases, for the duration of the recovery period. To prevent the sick from using the money for other purposes, the Misericordia of Manila adapted usual practice to local conditions: the *visitador* would go to the boats of Chinese traders (which in those days functioned as the city's shopping centre) to buy whatever the medical doctor had prescribed, and then hand those items directly to the sick person. Looking after the health of slaves was not something original to the Misericordia of Manila; Goa's already practiced that.<sup>112</sup> Following Goa's statutes, the hospital in Manila would only accept sick slaves whose owners were too poor to take care of them.

## BURYING THE DEAD

Funeral processions comprised of the brethren of the Misericordia wearing *balandranes*—cassock-like robes with a velvet blue cross on the chest—and their *capelos* or black hats became a common sight in Manila.<sup>113</sup> The Misericordia of Manila inherited from the Portuguese *Misericórdias* an excellent reputation for burial processions.<sup>114</sup> *Misericórdias* in the Portuguese empire had acquired this reputation especially after they were granted a monopoly over this activity in every city or town where they existed.<sup>115</sup> The statutes gave detailed instructions on how to perform these rituals,<sup>116</sup> revealing that they were important not only due to religious beliefs about death and the afterlife, but also because of the social component involved. Great importance was given to pomp and protocol. The procession accompanying the bier followed a very

specific protocol, with the *Provedor* occupying a position of precedence, and followed a specific route through the streets of Manila.

The most important kind of burial procession was one for brothers or their wives. All brothers were supposed to participate, and it was a very important moment in the social life of the brotherhood. One such procession took place in 1614 or 1615, when the Misericordia offered to handle the burial of Justo Ucondono, a Japanese Christian of noble ancestry who had come to Manila with his entire family after he was expelled from Japan due to his faith. He was a member of the Misericordia of Miyaco and Nagasaki, and was therefore honoured as any brother would be, with a procession of all the brethren. But on this occasion, there was a conflict between the Misericordia and the city *cabildo*, both of which wanted to bring the body from Ucondono's house to the church of the Jesuits. A compromise was reached whereby the Governor-General and his *oidores* brought the body to door of the church, where members of both the Misericordia and the *cabildo* received the body and carried it inside.<sup>117</sup>

The Misericordia also handled of the burial of other persons, for a fee. In 1606 a canon of the Cathedral of Manila wrote his last will and testament, in which he allocated fifteen pesos for the Misericordia to take care of his burial.<sup>118</sup> Given that the canon was a brother of several confraternities in Manila, but did not belong to the Misericordia, the fact that he chose the latter to handle his burial is a sign of the prestige acquired early on by the Misericordia in this area. The tradition continued. In 1616 *Maestrescuela* Diego de León requested the *mayordomo* of the *Mesa* to handle his burial, wake, funeral Mass, and nine more Masses for his soul.<sup>119</sup>

In 1602 the *Audiencia* of Manila recorded that the Misericordia took care of the burial of the poor, the drowned, abandoned corpses, and publicly executed prisoners whose bodies were left on display for public viewing to impart a moral lesson. The burial of dead prisoners took place once a year, on All Saints Day.<sup>120</sup> The corpses were brought to the Hospital Real, and then to the church of the Misericordia for a prayer and a sermon. The service ended with their burial in the garden of the convent of San Francisco. The native population of Manila was very edified by this work of mercy for people who had been executed, although



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they would have found it difficult to reconcile the brutality of the execution with the care taken in burial. The tradition continued at least through 1621, although by then Manila's civil authorities had substituted the less gruesome punishment of hanging for the usual quartering of criminals.<sup>121</sup> One of the Misericordia's first known charitable works regarding burials took place when some members of the *Mesa* recovered the corpses of the brothers and other soldiers who had died in the battles against the Dutch in Mariveles, Fortun Island, Playa Honda and other nearby areas,<sup>122</sup> and buried their remains in the Cathedral.<sup>123</sup> The Misericordia also handled the burial of Governor-General Alonso Fajardo's wife, Catalina Zambrano, and her lover, Juan de Mesa, after the governor killed them in May 1621.<sup>124</sup>

A related charitable service provided by the Misericordia was the procession accompanying those sentenced to death. Indeed, the charity of the Misericordia extended even to the enemy: in 1601 the brotherhood buried "with great solemnity" the twelve Dutch sailors who had been captured in the naval battle near Fortun Island in December of 1600. These prisoners of war had earlier been assigned to various religious orders to work on their conversion prior to their execution. They all did convert,<sup>125</sup> except for their captain; there is no mention whether he received the same burial rites as his men.

## THE CHURCH OF THE MISERICORDIA

The Misericordia of Manila complied with its statutes' requirement regarding the establishment of a church. An important part of the ceremony for the annual election of the *Mesa* took place in this church, as well as some yearly masses and requiem masses for deceased brothers. Early chroniclers agree that the *Mesa* met first in the church of the Jesuits. Other sources mention that later meetings of the *Mesa* were held alternately in the church of San Francisco, the Cathedral, and in the church of San Andres, located in the school of Santa Potenciana. Through donations, the Misericordia was able to raise enough funds to build its own church in 1610.<sup>126</sup> The church was given the title of the Presentation of Our Lady,<sup>127</sup> who was the patron saint of the brotherhood. The 1617 census of Manila locates the church of the Misericordia on the Calle Real de Palacio, and the headquarters of the *Mesa*

of the Misericordia on the ground floor of a house on the Calle del Cabildo, which ran from the Almacenes Reales to the Recollect Church of San Nicolas.<sup>128</sup> The *Mesa* transferred its offices to a building in the Calle Real, next to the church, in 1621.<sup>129</sup>

The 1606 statutes included provisions for hiring a chaplain, who was required to fulfil the requests of the *Mesa* and to accompany the burials and processions sponsored by the brotherhood. Soon after its foundation, some donors left endowments for masses to be said in the church of the Misericordia, which was a way of ensuring the services of a priest. The statutes also foresaw the possibility of founding *capellanías*. These were perpetual endowments that generated yearly revenue that would be given to a priest who in return was obliged to celebrate certain number of Masses every year in a specified church. The earliest surviving information about a *capellanía* entrusted to the Misericordia for its own church dates from 1629, when Juana de Esquivel, the wife of Francisco Carreño, a member of the *Mesa*, established one,<sup>130</sup> but there must have been earlier instances. In such cases the priest was oftentimes required to perform other activities assigned to him by the *Mesa*. This was a way to ensure that a priest would be available to meet the particular needs of the brotherhood, especially when there was scarcity of priests in the diocese and it was not possible to have a regular chaplain.

THE EXECUTION OF LAST WILLS:  
A GROWING SOURCE OF INCOME

One of the most important services offered by *Casas da Misericórdia* was the execution of last wills. People realised their expertise, their ability to coordinate with other Misericordias, and the institutional continuity that an individual executor could not guarantee. The Misericordia would sell the material assets left by the testator and use the money in the way he or she had determined. Often there would be a bequest allocating the money for Masses to be said on behalf of the deceased's soul or for charity; other times, the money was sent to an heir in a faraway place. Misericordias worked like modern-day law firms in this regard. The execution of last wills became an extension of the funerary services they offered, and its classification as a work of charity had to do with the belief in Purgatory: leaving money after one's death

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for charity or for Masses to be said in one's name was a way of shortening the time one would have to spend in Purgatory. Misericordias could expect to receive many such assignments because their brethren were of high social status and had the means for such bequests.

Pious legacies came relatively slowly during the first years of the Misericordia of Manila. In 1602, the *Mesa* handled the execution of only a few last wills, which they could take care of during their regular Wednesday meetings, together with the distribution of alms. The 1606 statutes stipulated that another day, Friday, should be set aside exclusively for dealing with the execution of last wills. The chapter on last wills in the statutes of Manila was the longest in the whole document, which is a sign of the great importance given to this task.<sup>131</sup> This chapter contains many practical details on how to go about the job, and how to penalize those who did not follow the statutes. In addition, the text includes several warnings about how the reputation of the brotherhood would be harmed if there were breaches of contract, not just because they offended God and the testator, but also because people would stop entrusting their last wills to the Misericordia.<sup>132</sup> The fear of losing this assignment was such that the chapter of the statutes outlining the position of the *mayordomo y cobrador de limosnas*, who dealt with financial matters of last wills, emphasizes that "the fulfillment of this chapter is more important than any other for the credibility, authority and growth of the brotherhood."<sup>133</sup>

Some testators left their inheritance to colonial Misericordias, like that of Manila, to be sent overseas. In 1607, for example, poor people entrusted the *Mesa* with the task of sending inheritances to their heirs in Spain, New Spain or India.<sup>134</sup> The

*Misericórdia* of Goa had drawn clear guidelines on how to go about this task, and Manila's statutes simply copied them.<sup>135</sup> The money was first kept secure, as the whereabouts of the heirs was determined through other Misericordias or brotherhoods near the destination, like those in Lisbon or Seville. Due to the state of communications then, it would often take a long time before the money was sent; oftentimes it simply ended up in the coffers of the Misericordia. A typical example of this was the case of the Portuguese Captain Vasco Ferreira, who died in Manila in 1624. He made the Misericordia the executor of his last will, requesting that his savings of 191,770 maravedies (705 pesos) be sent to the *Misericórdia* of Lisbon for charitable uses to be decided by that brotherhood.<sup>136</sup>

Some testators left all or part of their inheritance directly to the Misericordia of Manila for its own charitable activities.

In 1615, *Maestrescuela* Diego de León, who had entrusted his burial and last will to the Misericordia, left one third of his assets to be used for alms and for the charities run by the brotherhood.<sup>137</sup> There were certainly more of these outright donations to the Misericordia, although we have little information about them so far.<sup>138</sup> Of more permanent value to the Misericordia was the implementation of another option foreseen in the statutes: to use some charity money to found a trust fund by means of a *censo*. These trust funds were classified generically as *obras pías* or pious works, and when funded with a *censo*, they were called *obras [pías] de censos*. The *censo* was a credit instrument used in Spain and New Spain<sup>139</sup> to avoid the danger of usury, a practice condemned by the Church. In very simple terms, a *censo consignativo*, which was the kind of *censo* most often used by the



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Misericordia, was a loan contract between two parties, by which the borrower was obliged to give an annual fixed rent or interest to the creditor, while the creditor, aside from receiving this rent, had rights to property of the borrower. In a broad sense, a *censo consignativo* was similar to a mortgage loan.<sup>140</sup> The rate of rent or interest on the *censo consignativo* was fixed by royal order. Until 1608, the interest rate was 7.14%; from then on it was set at 5%.<sup>141</sup> *Obras pías de censo*, then, would specify to what charities the rent from the *censo* should be applied. Usually, it was used for Masses, for alms, or for church groups. When the Misericordia of Manila accepted a last will with an *obra pía de censo*, the Mesa would sell whatever goods were left for that purpose and loan the money to someone who then had the obligation to pay the annual rent, which the Mesa gave to the beneficiary indicated by the founder of the *obra*.

The first known bequest to the Misericordia using a *censo* took place just a few years after the foundation of the brotherhood. In 1598, Canon Benito Gutierrez left 500 pesos to be lent out as a *censo*, stipulating that the yearly interest of 7.14% be used to give alms to the Indians of Tabuco in Laguna de Bay Province. This type of legacy continued coming to the Mesa throughout the seventeenth century, in varying number and amounts. By 1607 there were four *obras [pías] de censo* administered by the Mesa, amounting to 11,700 pesos of capital, which at 7% interest generated around 819 pesos yearly. In 1613, there were six *obras pías*, with a combined capital of 19,500 pesos and a total annual rent of 1,350 pesos; by 1621, the number of *obras* had grown to 19, with a capital of 69,400 pesos, yielding 3,600 pesos yearly of rent. A damaging earthquake in 1645 slowed the trend of founding *obras pías*.<sup>142</sup> A good number of the charities earmarked by the founders of *obras de censo* had to do with the main activities of the Mesa, like dowries, alms for the poor or prisoners, or Masses; but other purposes to which these funds were put included alms for the different religious communities in town or their activities. In the end, these *obras de censo* became a way of ensuring the availability of funds for the preferred charities of the Misericordia; they were also a source of donations to other institutions.

The *obras de censo*, however, did not account for the largest proportion of funds distributed annually by the Misericordia. In 1613, the Mesa distributed

7,000 pesos, and only 1,350 pesos (or 19.28%) of this total came from the rent of *censos*. By 1621 the amount distributed had grown to a yearly average of 12,000 pesos,<sup>143</sup> only 30% of which came from *obras de censo*. The early reports of the Audiencia attributed the most of the income of the Misericordia to alms and donations given to the brotherhood. The amount of alms collected by two brothers going around town each Sunday could not have amounted to much; there must have been individuals who were especially generous to the brotherhood.

## SEEKING LISBON'S MISERICORDIA PRIVILEGES

Having to rely on the spontaneous generosity of the citizens of Manila did not provide the Mesa with enough assurance that it would be able to raise the necessary funds for all the charities that it carried out. Thus, aside from the *obras de censo*, the Mesa tried to petition the king for some fixed rent that would provide it with a more regular income. The first notice of this comes from the 1602 Audiencia report. The Mesa proposed at this point that a surcharge of four *reales* be levied on every license allowing a Sangley to live in Manila; that the Misericordia receive 6,000 ducats of rent from any unspecified government income; and that the same amount be collected from the 10% *almojarifazgo* trade tax charged in Acapulco on all the merchandise from the Manila galleon. A few years later, the king asked the Audiencia of Manila to give him detailed information on the foundation and brotherhood of the Misericordia, and to evaluate whether or not there was the need to grant it any royal rent or income.<sup>144</sup> The Audiencia replied in 1607, providing the king with some general information about the brotherhood and requesting an unspecified royal grant because there was little wealth in town and the brotherhood had great difficulty in collecting the money needed for distribution. Surprisingly, the Audiencia did not send the requested copy of the statutes, and the Mesa did not ask for any financial assistance, which may imply that they were doing well financially. Another possible reason why the Misericordia did not request any royal income at this point could be the Mesa's unwillingness to come under royal patronage. Fundraising had become burdensome again by 1613, however, when



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Juan Ezquerro surfaced anew as the *Provedor* and took up the old royal inquiry as to need for a financial grant: he requested once again the same grants suggested in 1602. The *Audiencia* recommended allocating the *Mesa* an *encomienda* worth two thousand pesos.<sup>145</sup> No grant was provided.

By 1618, the *Mesa* added new requests in its correspondence with the king. Aside from asking for 6,000 pesos in financial assistance, the *Mesa* asked to be granted the same privileges, rights, and exemptions as those enjoyed by the *Misericórdia* of Lisbon.<sup>146</sup> The most important exemption enjoyed by Portuguese *Misericórdias*, obtained in the Council of Trent, was the exclusion of *Misericórdias* from episcopal visitation.<sup>147</sup> The *Audiencia* supported these petitions. This request that Lisbon's privileges be extended to Manila was certainly related to the attempt, made either by the Archbishop himself or by a member of the ecclesiastical *cabildo*, to inspect the accounts of the *Misericórdia*, which occurred either during the term of Archbishop Diego Vázquez de Mercado (1610-1616) or in the subsequent period of a vacant see in the diocese (1616-1619). The Council of Trent had given bishops the authority to monitor the implementation of last wills, but the *Mesa* did not allow this inspection; it proposed instead to invite an ecclesiastical representative of the Archbishop to be present at the elections of the *Mesa*, where a financial statement was passed from the outgoing *Mesa* to the newly elected one. As might be expected, this suggestion was rejected as setting an undesirable precedent.<sup>148</sup> Both the ecclesiastical authorities' desire to scrutinize the *Misericórdia's* use of funds, and the *Mesa's* refusal to allow this inspection, indicate that the amounts of money handled by the *Mesa* in relation to last wills were substantial, and that there were signs of irregularity in the way these funds were handled.

The proof of both facts came in 1619, when Governor-General Alonso Fajardo de Tenza requested a loan from the *Misericórdia* as he prepared seven boats to face several Dutch ships that were blockading Manila Bay.<sup>149</sup> There were funds available from the will of Captain Gaspar Álvarez,<sup>150</sup> who had made the *Misericórdia* his executor and wanted his money to be sent to New Spain. The requested loan was in the amount of 39,599 pesos. At the time, Alonso Fajardo was the *Provedor*, and used his influence in a general gathering of brothers on March 8 to ensure that his

request was granted.<sup>151</sup> The statutes of the Manila *Misericórdia*, like those of Goa, expressly prohibited lending money from last wills to the viceroy or the governor-general. Doing so was clearly a violation of the statutes, but a general assembly of the brethren approved it. Defeating the Dutch was of concern to everybody in the islands, and here the *Misericórdia* would play an important role in ensuring the continuity of the Spanish regime in the Philippines. After this incident, there can be little wonder that the ecclesiastical authorities did not trust the *Misericórdia's* administration of funds from last wills. These funds—especially while they were being held in Manila awaiting the trip to their destination—were essentially the *Misericórdia's* largest source of liquid assets.

By 1621, the lack of news from the king moved the *Mesa* to repeat its request of 1618, asking for the same privileges and exemptions as Lisbon's *Misericórdia* and for permission to send a copy of the 1606 statutes for royal approval, as other *Misericórdias* in Portuguese territory did.<sup>152</sup> This time the petition was sent together with long descriptions of all the works of mercy the brotherhood was engaged in. Essentially, the drafters of the petition changed little from the previous request, but there was a repeated emphasis on how the *Misericórdia* was helping the poor who were close to the king's heart, such as destitute conquistadors, soldiers of the early years, and former rulers and their relatives, especially the wives and daughters of soldiers and early settlers. Before presenting the request again, the *Mesa* also discussed the role it played in sending money from last wills to heirs living abroad, adding that "since the foundation [of the brotherhood] there has been no wrongdoing or complaint, on the contrary there has been promptness and good example, which is a well known fact." The inclusion of such a statement shows that there must have been some detractors of their work. The *Audiencia* and Governor-General Alonso Fajardo de Tenza sent their own letters backing the *Mesa* and requesting a financial grant (of an unspecified amount) to help them attend to their charitable deeds. The *Audiencia* even asked that the *Misericórdia* be placed under royal patronage, although the *Mesa* did not include this suggestion in its report. Both entities also emphasized that granting these requests would encourage the brothers to continue their charitable work. There seems to have

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been a concerted effort to hide how the brotherhood handled the funds from last wills, and to assert the Misericordia's independence from outside interference.<sup>153</sup>

When the papers arrived in Madrid, the royal Fiscal was in favour of granting the privileges, but he mentioned the standing prohibition against granting *encomiendas* to that type of institution.<sup>154</sup> In an instruction dated June 1623, the King refused to commit to any important concession and, in a vague and unconvincing manner, told the governor-general to follow his own good judgement in granting the brotherhood their request.<sup>155</sup> There was clearly some apprehension about granting privileges that could diminish the king's all-powerful royal patronage. This 1623 royal order came on the heels of another one, given just a few months earlier in response to another petition from the *Mesa* requesting exemption from episcopal visitation. The king instructed the archbishop to follow the established practice and to refrain from attempting to visit the brotherhood to inspect its accounts.<sup>156</sup> This last edict was a victory for the Misericordia, and it reflected the king's interest in the funds of the brotherhood. Following the royal directives, Governor-General Fernando de Silva approved the statutes of the Misericordia on September 4, 1625, and allowed their publication. The approval was an important step, because from then on, the statutes enjoyed royal legitimacy, and the Misericordia could find certain immunity when civil or ecclesiastical authorities in Manila tried to force them to do something that would violate the statutes.

## READY TO FACE THE FUTURE

The first decades of the Misericordia of Manila proved that Manila was an appropriate venue for the founding of a brotherhood of this type. The foundation of the Misericordia stemmed from some incidental circumstances like the work of Fr. Fernández de León and his followers, but it also owed a great deal to the proximity of Manila to the Portuguese colonial territories in Asia, and to the fact that Spain and Portugal shared the same monarch during those years.<sup>157</sup> The social conditions of Manila also warranted the establishment of the brotherhood. Manila had a prominent local oligarchy that favoured the founding of the Misericordia. Simultaneously,

there was real poverty among some members of the Spanish community and the slaves that served them, which made the work of the brotherhood necessary. The local oligarchy felt the call of their Christian duty to help the less fortunate, while the colonial mentality and circumstances impelled them not to allow those of their own nation to go unaided; in a more self-interested manner, caring for orphaned Spanish girls was a way to ensure future brides for their sons.

Adopting and adapting the statutes of the *Misericórdias* of Lisbon and Goa would have an essential bearing on the future of the Misericordia of Manila. The Misericordia of Manila was one of the few Misericordias in Spanish territory that had the same organizational framework as Portuguese *Misericórdias*. The internal organization of the brotherhood and its preferred charities fitted well with the collective interests of the local oligarchy of Manila. Initially, the brothers followed the standard practices of Misericordias in colonial settings by visiting the poor, the sick and prisoners. Also during those years, the brotherhood handled the execution of an increasingly large number of last wills, and the related work of managing *censos* and distributing earnings from them. As the years went by, the activities of the brotherhood tended more towards administrative tasks rather than hands-on charity work.<sup>158</sup> Thus the bureaucratization of charity began. A few years later, the brotherhood established the Colegio de Santa Isabel, a residence for orphaned Spanish girls, which increased the administrative work of the Mesa and became the brotherhood's charity of choice. The last step in this process took place some years after the middle of the century, when the brotherhood decided to pass the administration of its hospital to the Order of San Juan de Dios. More and more, the Misericordia would become essentially a dispenser of charitable funds coming from the *obras pías de censos* and the execution of last wills.

The accumulation of money in the coffers of the brotherhood resulting from its role in the execution of last wills attracted the interest of many groups. The brothers themselves would take advantage of that capital to borrow money for their own benefit. The local authorities also set their eyes on the liquid assets of the brotherhood: Fajardo's loan from the funds of the Misericordia would be the first of many like it in the future. Lastly, the ecclesiastical

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authorities also expressed their concern over the use of the money, since most of it came from bequests for religious or charitable purposes. Not everything would go smoothly in the finances of the Misericordia. A series of earthquakes in Manila toward the middle of the century would raise questions about the wisdom of creating *obras de censo*. However, a new type of *obras pías* emerged that enabled the Misericordia to eventually become the largest lending agency in the galleon trade. Thus, the future held further incentives for the local oligarchy to be involved with the affairs of the Misericordia.

An important chapter of the early history of the Misericordia of Manila was the way the local oligarchy

managed to preserve its own interests in dealing with the civil and ecclesiastical authorities. In the first place, by managing not to come under royal patronage, the Misericordia ensured its relative independence from the king and his representative in Manila, the governor-general. Then, by receiving a sort of royal approval, the brothers of the *Mesa* could avail themselves of a formal privilege that allowed them to avoid becoming easy prey for the ecclesiastical authorities in town. In this manner, the brotherhood paved the way to act with a great deal of freedom, especially in the one task that eventually became the most important: the handling of financial assets entrusted to them for charity work. **RC**

## NOTES

- 1 Fray Francisco de Santa Inés, O. F. M., wrote the most extensive narrative of the history of Fr. Fernández de León in Manila, *Crónica de la Provincia de San Gregorio Magno de Religiosos Descalzos de N. S.P. San Francisco en la Islas Filipinas, China, Japón, etc.* 1676 (Manila: Tifo Litografía de Chofre y Comp. 1892), 2:200-216. Francisco Colín, S.J., wrote a shorter version in his *Labor evangélica, ministerios apostólicos de los obreros de la Compañía de Jesus, fundación, y progresos de su Provincia en las Islas Filipinas*. (Madrid: Joseph Fernández Buendía, 1663), 349-350. Fr. Fernández de León tried to join the Franciscans in Manila but his health did not allow it.
- 2 Santa Inés, 1:379-387.
- 3 Isabel dos Guimarães Sá, *Quando o Rico se Faz Pobre: Misericórdias, Caridade e Poder no Império Português 1500-1800* (Lisboa: CNCDP, 1997), 34-52.
- 4 Isabel dos Guimarães Sá, *As Misericórdias Portuguesas de D. Manuel I a Pombal* (Lisboa: Temas de História de Portugal, 2001), 27-29.
- 5 Manuel Cámara del Río, *Beneficencia y asistencia social: La Santa y Real Hermandad, Hospital y Casa de la Misericordia de Ceuta* (Ceuta: Instituto de Estudios Ceutíes, 1996), 41-47.
- 6 Maureen Flynn, *Sacred Charity: Confraternities and Social Welfare in Spain, 1400-1700* (London: Macmillan, 1989), 65.
- 7 Sá, *De D. Manuel I*, 39-42; *Quando o Rico*, 59-74, 82-83; and Isabel dos Guimarães Sá, "As Misericórdias nas sociedades portuguesas do Período Moderno"; *Cadernos do Noroeste* 15 (1-2) (2001) : 340.
- 8 C. R. Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire, 1415-1825* (London: Penguin Books, 1965), 275, 288-289, 294.
- 9 William J. Callahan, "Las cofradías y hermandades de España y su papel social y religioso dentro de una sociedad de estamentos," in Pilar Martínez López-Cano, Gisela Von Wobeser, and Juan Guillermo Muñoz, eds., *Cofradías, Capellanías y Obras Pías en la América colonial*. (México: UNAM, 1998), 40.
- 10 Neither were the Portuguese *Casas da Misericórdia* similar to their name-sake in Italy, where they tended to specialization in their charities, due to their large number in a given town; See Sá, *De D. Manuel I*, 29-31.
- 11 The ones of Ceuta and Olivenza were founded when the cities belonged to Portugal; see Cámara, 47-51.
- 12 The Spanish population of Manila was at its lowest between the 1650s and the 1670s, with estimates as low as 200 people within Intramuros. So far the most detailed studies on the Spanish population of Manila until the end of the seventeenth century are the ones of Inmaculada Alva Rodríguez. *Vida municipal en Manila (siglos XVI-XVII)* (Córdoba: Universidad de Córdoba, 1997), 26-36; and Luis Merino, O. S. A. *El cabildo secular: Aspectos fundacionales y administrativos* (Manila: The Intramuros Administration, 1983), 24-36. I have summarized their findings in "Origin of the 'Misericordia' of Manila," *Ad Veritatem* 2 (March 2003) : 423-462.
- 13 See Antonio García-Abásolo, "El poblamiento de Filipinas (1571-1599)," *Cuadernos de Historia* 1, Instituto Cervantes de Manila, (1998).
- 14 Alva, 52, 332-336.
- 15 Caserio y población de Manila, October 25, 1617, Archivo General de Indias, Seville, (AGI), Escribanía de Cámara, 409A. In Luis Merino, O.S.A. *Arquitectura y urbanismo en el siglo XIX* (Manila: The Intramuros Administration, 1987), 77-93.
- 16 Merino, *Arquitectura y urbanismo*, 6, 77-100.
- 17 Merino, *El cabildo secular*, 61.
- 18 Governor-general Francisco de Sande built the first facilities before 1576 as communicated by him to the king on June 7, 1576; in Emma Helen Blair & James Alexander Robertson, eds., *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898* (Cleveland, Ohio: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1903-1909; reprint, Mandaluyong: Cacho Hermanos) 4:78-79 & 117.
- 19 Alva, 27-29, 129-140
- 20 Account of the *encomiendas* in the Philippine Islands, attached to a letter of Governor-general Gómez Pérez Dasmariñas to the king, June 20, 1591, Manila; in Blair & Robertson, 8:98.
- 21 Yearly report of the Jesuits to their superior in Rome, Fr. Diego Sanchez, S.J., June 27, 1597, Manila; Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, Rome, (ARSI), Philipp. 5, Litterae annuae I. 1595-1612, f. 9r-9v.
- 22 Yearly report of the Jesuits to their superior in Rome, Fr. Juan de Bueras, S.J., July 20, 1628, Manila, ARSI, Philipp., 6 I-II, Litterae annuae 1627, f. 439v.



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- 23 An area of nine blocks of *tiendas* in the old Botanic Garden with access to Intramuros by the East Gate which served as a sort of Chinese ghetto starting in 1581 (Tomas D. Andres, *Dictionary of Filipino Culture & Values*. Quezon City: Giraffe Books, 2001), 136.
- 24 Milagros Guerrero, "The Chinese in the Philippines, 1570-1770", in Alfonso Felix, Jr., ed., *The Chinese in the Philippines, 1570-1770* (Manila: Historical Conservation Society, 1966), 1:33-35.
- 25 William Henry Scott, *Slavery in the Spanish Philippines* (Manila: De La Salle University Press, 1991), 27-35.
- 26 Letter of Archbishop Fray Miguel Garcia Serrano to the king, July 25, 1621, Manila. AGI, Filipinas, 74, F. 596v. (There is a good translation of this document in Blair & Robertson, 20:226-248)
- 27 For the natives the new lifestyle brought about by the urbanization of Manila had changed some cultural patterns. Poverty, except for times of natural disasters, in the pre-Spanish period took the form of laboring for others as a debt payment, and there was no problem in obtaining farming land then. It was only after the urbanization process that some sectors of the native population resorted to begging as a way of living. See William Henry Scott, *Barangay* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1994), 127-146.
- 28 In 1638 there were 400 or 500 blacks in the city without any fixed occupation. Alva, 35-36.
- 29 Sá, *Quando o Rico*, 90-91.
- 30 Santa Inés, 2: 200-216; Colín, 349-350.
- 31 Victor Gomes Teixeira, "Missions from the Philippines to Portuguese territories in Southeast Asia during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries," *Revista de Cultura* 7 (July 2003): 69-79.
- 32 Fr. Eusebio Gómez Platero, *Catálogo Biográfico de los Religiosos Franciscanos de la Provincia de San Gregorio Magno de Filipina* (Manila: Imprenta del Real Colegio de Santo Tomas, 1880), 53.
- 33 Rui D'Ávila Lourido, "Portugueses e espanhóis em Macau e Manila com os olhos na China," *Revista de Cultura* 7 (July 2003): 26-31.
- 34 Juan Baptista Uriarte, *Manifiesto y Resumen Histórico de la Fundación de la Venerable Hermandad de la Santa Misericordia de la Ciudad de Manila, Hospital, Casa y Collegio de Niñas, y Iglesia de Santa Ysabel...* (Manila: Collegio y Universidad de Santo Thomas, 1728) ff. 1v-2r.
- 35 Merino, *El cabildo secular*, 77-78; Alva, 343-344.
- 36 Francisco Tello de Guzmán to the king, n.d., Manila, in Merino, *El cabildo secular*, 70-104.
- 37 Letter of Governor-general Luis Pérez Dasmariñas to the king, June 15, 1595, Manila. AGI, Filipinas, 18B, R.4, N.27.
- 38 Santa Inés, 2: 200-216.
- 39 Uriarte, ff. 4r-5v, 7r-7v.
- 40 Pope Gregory XIII to King Philip II, February 6, 1578, Rome; in Blair & Robertson, 4:123.
- 41 The exact words used were "hospitals and pious places," which was vague enough to include anything religious; Pope Gregory XIII to King Philip II, February 6, 1578, Rome; in Blair & Robertson, 4:121.
- 42 Ivo Carneiro de Sousa, "Philip II King of Spain and Portugal and the relations between the Philippines and Timor," *Revista de Cultura* 7 (July 2003): 62-66.
- 43 Sá, *De D. Manuel I*, 42-43.
- 44 Uriarte, f. 2r.
- 45 Santa Inés mentions three Portuguese in town that helped in that task. However, it is not clear if one of them, Cristóbal Guiral was Portuguese, and another one, the Jesuit Fr. António de Pereira only arrived to Manila in 1602. The third one was Fr. Marcos de Lisboa. Santa Inés, 2:200-216.
- 46 The main *Compromisso* or statutes of the *Misericórdia* of Lisbon during its early years were those of 1516, 1577 (printed in 1600) and 1618 (printed in 1619); see Sá, *Quando o Rico*, 89.
- 47 This influence had been pointed out before; see Sá, *Quando o Rico*, 205, 271. According to the findings of Prof. Sá, only the *Misericórdias* of Porto and Goa had their revised statutes approved by a royal privilege before 1606. A report of the *Mesa* of the Misericordia of Manila to the King in 1639 acknowledged that the Misericordia of Manila followed the models of the *Misericórdias* of Lisbon and Goa; AGI, Filipinas, 74, f. 942v.
- 48 Royal order, May 15, 1600, in *Recopilación de Leyes de Indias*, Ley 25, Tit. 4<sup>o</sup>, Lib. 1<sup>o</sup>.
- 49 The ending of *aunados a ella* (united to [Lisbon's *Misericórdia*]) may entail some attempt to seek legitimacy as an institution, because *Misericórdias* in Portuguese territories did not form a network of confraternities, as each one was independent from the others; see Sá, "Nas sociedades portuguesas," 340.
- 50 The oldest copy of the statutes is a handwritten one in Memorial del Procurador General Fernando de los Rios Coronel, AGI, Filipinas, 39, N.6. The statutes were printed first in 1675; see Lourdes Díaz-Trechuelo, "Religiosidad popular en Filipinas: Hermandades y cofradías (Siglos XVI-XVIII)," *Hispania Sacra* 5 (2001) : 351. There were two more reprints in 1701 and 1724, see Regalado T. Jose, *Impreso. Philippine Imprints, 1593-1811* (Manila: Fundación Santiago and Ayala Foundation Inc., 1993) nos., 209, 271, 363. All references to the *Ordenanzas* will hereafter refer to the 1724 reprint unless otherwise indicated.
- 51 The author wants to thank Prof. Isabel dos Guimarães Sá of the Universidade do Minho for providing him with the copy of the 1577 version of the *Compromisso* of the *Misericórdia* of Lisbon printed in the year 1600, as well as with some of her valuable publications on the *Misericórdias*. The 1577 statutes of Lisbon will be cited hereafter as *Compromisso 1577*.
- 52 The author wants to express his gratitude to Prof. Leonor Diaz de Seabra of the University of Macao for providing him with the 1595 version of the statutes of the *Misericórdia* of Goa. The document will be cited hereafter as *Compromisso 1595*.
- 53 Flynn, 8.
- 54 Sá, *De D. Manuel I*, 43.
- 55 The ones of Ceuta and Olivenza were also of Portuguese inspiration but they were founded when the cities belonged to Portugal. Most of the Spanish *Misericórdias* only took the name from their counterpart in Portugal but in reality they were more like hospices or places for social regeneration of the poor. See Cámara, 47-51; and Sá, *De D. Manuel I*, 31.
- 56 Statutes of Portuguese *Misericórdias* used the terms "confraternity and brotherhood," but the Manila statutes of 1606 only used the word "brotherhood" and never the term "confraternity." Both terms were interchangeable in the ecclesiastical and common language of the time, but "brotherhood" sounded less ecclesiastical, especially considering that at that time there were a number of confraternities in Manila to foster the devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and the Holy Rosary, which were attached to parishes or churches. By avoiding that word the Misericordia may have been emphasizing its lay nature.
- 57 *Misericórdias* were brotherhoods exclusive for men, at least after the 1580s, Sá, "Nas sociedades portuguesas," 342.
- 58 Isabel dos Guimarães Sá, "Estatuto social e discriminação: formas de selecção de agentes e receptores de caridade nas Misericórdias Portuguesas ao longo do Antigo Regime", in *Saúde, as teias da discriminação social*; (Braga: Actas do Colóquio Internacional Saúde e Discriminação Social, 2002), 314. *Misericórdias* in Portugal experienced at the end of the sixteenth century and especially during the seventeenth century a process of consolidating of local oligarchies at the helm of the brotherhood, see Sá, *De D. Manuel I*, 61-71; however, Manila's Misericordia was born already with that character.
- 59 This condition started to appear in the 1577 statutes of Lisbon, and it was more strictly enforced during the Portuguese Philippine period. This was one of the means of the old local elites to deter the new wealthy converts from joining the Misericordia. See Sá, *De D. Manuel I*, 43.

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- 60 Sá, *Quando o Rico*, 95-96.  
 61 A. J. R. Russell-Wood, *Fidalgos and Philanthropists. The Santa Casa da Misericórdia of Bahia, 1550-1755* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968), 20.  
 62 C. R. Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborn Empire, 1415-1825*. (London: Penguin Books, 1969), 289, 296.  
 63 Letter to the king, June 15, 1594, Manila. AGI, Filipinas, 18B, R. 4, N.27.  
 64 Letter to the king, July 12, 1599, Manila. AGI, Filipinas, 6, R. 9, N.167.  
 65 A list made by Uriarte of personalities that joined the brotherhood since the beginning to 1728 is not very extensive; see Uriarte, ff. 2r-3r.  
 66 These are the findings so far in this area for the early part of the history of the Misericordia of Manila.

Year	1594	1608	1613	1618	1621	1629	1635	1639
Total of known Mesa Brothers	13	12	5	8	10	11	11	12
Total of Mesa Brothers in the Cabildo	9	6	1	3	2	6	3	4

Sources: Uriarte; *Ordenanzas*, Archives of the Arzobispado of Manila, (AAM); Capellanías (1653-1913); AGI, Filipinas, 34, 37, 39, 341, Escribanía de Camara 404-A.

- 67 Alva, 365. In Portuguese *Misericórdias* local oligarchies alternated their posts in the *câmara* or civil *cabildo* and the *Mesa* of the *Misericórdia*, see Boxer, 288. In Manila, it was possible to be in both simultaneously.  
 68 The best description of the local oligarchy of Manila in the seventeenth century can be found in Alva, 332-362, 391-403.  
 69 Sá, "Estatuto social e discriminação," 314.  
 70 Considering the constant influx of Spanish immigrants at the early stages of colonization, the Misericordia in Manila would also play a role of eliminating differences and strengthening cultural ties in Manila among the well-to-do Spaniards of diverse origin. In many ways it resembles confraternities of frontier towns in the Spanish Reconquest, see Flynn, 15, 22-23.  
 71 This especially happened during the Philippine period, see Sá, *De D. Manuel I*, 69-71.  
 72 *Misericórdias* in Portuguese territory had a membership quota of 600 brethren for large cities, between 200 and 300 for medium size cities, and between 80 and 200 in towns; see Sá, *Quando o Rico*, 99.  
 73 The *Audiencia* mentioned the same number in 1607. Letter from the *Audiencia* to Felipe III, July 11, 1607, Manila; AGI, Filipinas, 20, R. 1, N.8.  
 74 Alva, 30.  
 75 Letter of Archbishop Fray Miguel García Serrano to the king, July 25, 1621, Manila; AGI, Filipinas, 74, ff. 596v, 603r.  
 76 Archbishop Hernando Guerrero to the king, July 28, 1639, Manila; AGI, Filipinas, 74, f.938r.  
 77 Alva, 31.  
 78 Sá, *De D. Manuel I*, 73.  
 79 *Ordenanzas*, Capítulo I.  
 80 His job corresponded to the *Mayordomo de Bolsa* in the *Misericórdias* of Lisbon and Goa. The *Tesorero y Recaudador de limosnas* of the Misericordia of Goa corresponded to the *Mayordomo y cobrador de limosnas* of Manila's Mesa; *Ordenanzas*, ff. 19-20.  
 81 The only novelty in Manila's election process was that the Electors chose the *Proveedor* and only eleven members of the *Mesa*, not twelve as was the normal case. The thirteenth officer was the *Escribano* of the outgoing *Mesa*, who automatically filled the position of *Tesorero y Limosnero* of the new *Mesa*.  
 82 This is a frequent happening in the history of many *Casas da Misericórdia*; see Russell-Wood, 86.  
 83 Sá, "Estatuto social e discriminação," 315-334.  
 84 Unless otherwise indicated, the information in this section was extracted from those two reports. *Audiencia* report to a petition from the Mesa, 1602, Manila; in *Mesa* to the king, March 3, 1618. AGI, Filipinas, 37, N. 54; and *Audiencia* to the king, July 11, 1607, Manila. AGI, Filipinas, 20, R.1, N.8.  
 85 The first area was from the Fort [of Santiago] in the tip between the river and the sea up to the Cathedral, and from la Puerta del Perdón in the seashore to Santo Domingo by the river. The second team's area took on the next set of streets ending in the street connecting San Agustín in the seashore and the hospital of the Misericordia by the river. This team also visited the sick in the hospital. The next team visited the rest of Intramuros. The last team was assigned to go to the neighborhoods outside Intramuros, in its main area of concentration from the area of Laguio up to our Lady of Guía and to those scattered in other areas outside the walled city. *Ordenanzas*, ff. 16 & 38.  
 86 *Ordenanzas*, Capítulo XX, nos. 3, 5.  
 87 Flynn, 87-99.  
 88 The number of women in the city – wives and daughters of migrants – had grown with the expedition of Gonzalo Ronquillo de Peñalosa in 1578, and it grew some more to a smaller extent in the 1590s. See García-Abásolo, "El poblamiento de Filipinas," 12.  
 89 In 1634 out of 283 vecinos, there were 45 widows. Censo Municipal de Manila, 1634, AGI, Filipinas, 27, in Merino, *El cabildo secular*, 104-115.  
 90 Uriarte, f. 8v.  
 91 It specifically mentions that women needed the *manto* (shawl) to be able to attend Mass.  
 92 *Ordenanzas*, ff. 43-47.  
 93 The Colegio de Santa Potenciana was a residence for orphan girls set up by the royal government, and it belonged to the royal patronage. The school had been founded in 1601 with 13 children. A nephew of Governor Tello de Guzman and a son of Oidor Antonio de Morga were among the first students; in the yearly report of the Jesuits to their superior in Rome, Fr. Pedro de Segura, June 3, 1602, Manila, ARSI, Philipp., 5, Litterae annuae 1602, f. 96v.  
 95 This thermal water hospital was located near Manila on the shores of the Laguna de Bay, see Archbishop Fray Miguel García Serrano to the king, July 25, 1621, Manila. AGI, Filipinas, 74, f. 602r.  
 96 Uriarte, ff. 8v, 10r.  
 97 Pedro de Chirino, *Relación de las Islas Filipinas y de lo que en ellas han trabajado los Padres de la Compañía de Jesús* (1604; Manila: Imprenta de D. Esteban Balbás, 1890), 130.  
 98 Royal decree re-founding the *Audiencia* of Manila, October 30, 1604; AAM, Cedulaario.  
 99 *Ordenanzas*, ff. 41-42.  
 100 Archbishop Miguel García Serrano to the king, July 25, 1621, Manila; AGI, Filipinas, 74, ff.596v-604r.  
 101 *Mesa* to the king, August 30, 1621, Manila; in Memorial del Procurador Fernando de los Rios Coronel. AGI, Filipinas, 39, N. 6.  
 102 Sá, *Quando o Rico*, 107-108.  
 103 Uriarte, ff. 4r-4v.  
 104 In those times people of means preferred being treated at home. See Sá, *Quando o Rico*, 107.  
 105 Luis Pérez Dasmariñas to the king, July 20, 1597, Manila; in Blair & Robertson, 10:28-40.  
 106 Uriarte, f. 5r.  
 107 King to the *Audiencia* (answer to a report of Procurador General Agustín Arceo), May 1, 1596, AAM, Cedulaario.  
 108 Report of the *Mesa* to the king (answering the query of the royal order of May 12, 1788, Aranjuez), Manila, January 18, 1790; AGI, Filipinas, 909, f.13r. (The author wishes to thank Dr. Lourdes Díaz-Trechuelo for providing him with a copy of this document).

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- 109 Administrator of the Hospital Real of Manila to Fernando Carrillo, President of the Council of Indies, 1618, Manila; AGI, Filipinas, 7, R.5, N.55.
- 110 Uriarte, ff. 5v-7v.
- 111 Archbishop Miguel García Serrano to the king, July 25, 1621, Manila. AGI, Filipinas, 74, F.596v-604r.
- 112 *Compromiso 1595*, annexed *Capítulo II*.
- 113 Horacio de la Costa, S. J., *The Jesuits in the Philippines. (1581-1768)* (Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 1967), 349.
- 114 Flynn, 64.
- 115 Sá, *De D. Manuel I*, 41.
- 116 *Ordenanzas*, ff. 34-37. Most of the procedures follow *Capítulo XXII* of Lisbon's 1577 statutes, and there are just a few adaptations from the *Compromiso 1595* of Goa.
- 117 Yearly report of the Jesuits to their superiors in Rome. Fr. Valerio Ledesma, S. J., July 16, 1615, Manila, ARSI, Philipp., 6 I-II, Litterae annuae 1612-1613, ff. 65v-66r.
- 118 Last will of Canon Juan Galindo de Messa, April 17, 1606, Manila; AAM, Capellanías (1653-1913), f. 7v.
- 119 Capellanía of Maestrescuela Diego de León, September 1, 1615, Manila; AAM, Capellanías (1653-1913), ff. 85-90.
- 120 *Ordenanzas*, ff. 39, 41-42. The contents are essentially those in the 1577 statutes of Lisbon, in *Capítulo XXVII*.
- 121 Archbishop Miguel García Serrano to the king, July 25, 1621, Manila; AGI, Filipinas, 74, ff. 596v-604r.
- 122 There were two naval encounters with the Dutch at the beginning of the century in 1600 somewhere close to Fortun Island and in 1610 in Mariveles.
- 123 Uriarte, ff. 9v-10r.
- 124 De la Costa, 349.
- 125 Yearly report of the Jesuits to their superior in Rome, Fr. Juan de Ribera, S. J., June 1, 1601, Manila; ARSI, Philipp., 5, Litterae annuae I. 1595-1612, ff. 79r-79v; and see Chirino, 208.
- 126 Report of the *Mesa* to the king (answering the query of the royal order of May 12, 1788, Aranjuez), January 18, 1790, Manila; AGI, Filipinas, 909. A nineteenth century almanac of the Philippines supplied the information that the building of the Misericordia was used for the first time on August 18, 1610, although it does not mention the source of the datum, *Almanaque Filipino i Guía de Forasteros para el año 1834*. (Manila: Imprenta de F. José María Dayot por Tomás Oliva, 1834), 137-140.
- 127 Archbishop Hernando Guerrero to the king, July 28, 1639, Manila; AGI, Filipinas, 74, f. 938r.
- 128 Relación de las casas de Manila con las personas que viven en Ellas, October 25, 1617, Manila; AGI, Escribanía 409-A, in Alva, 377, 381.
- 129 Report of the *Mesa* to the king (answering the query of the royal order of May 12, 1788, Aranjuez), January 18, 1790, Manila; AGI, Filipinas, 909.
- 130 Capellanía of Juana de Esquivel, October 3, 1629, Manila; AAM, Capellanías (1653-1913) ff. 177-179.
- 131 *Ordenanzas*, *Capítulo XIX*, (ff. 26-30). It was already long in Lisbon, *Compromiso 1577*, *Capítulo XV*; and Goa added a good number of points on the matter, *Compromiso 1595*, *Capítulo 15* and annexed *Capítulos 5 & 7*.
- 132 *Ordenanzas*, f. 27. These ideas came from Goa, *Compromiso 1595*, annexed *Capítulo 5*.
- 133 *Ordenanzas*, f. 22.
- 134 Those sending their inheritance to India were most probably Portuguese living in the Philippines with relatives in India.
- 135 *Compromiso 1595*, annexed *Capítulo 7*. See Sá, *Quando o Rico*, 204.
- 136 AGI, Contratación, 953, N.2, R.16.
- 137 Capellanía of Canon Diego de León; AAM, Capellanías (1653-1913) ff. 85-90.
- 138 In 1629 Juana de Esquivel left one fifth of her properties to the Misericordia, to be distributed among the poor; Capellanía of Juana de Esquivel, AAM, Capellanías (1653-1913), ff. 177-179.
- 139 The 1627 statutes of the *Misericórdia* of Macao also foresaw the option of founding *censos*, called *foro* in Portuguese; *Capítulo XXII*; *O Compromisso da Misericórdia de Macau de 1627*, Leonor Diaz de Seabra, ed., (Macao: Universidade de Macau, 2003).
- 140 For a detailed study of the *censo consignativo* in its different applications see María del Pilar Martínez López-Cano, *Crédito a largo plazo en el siglo XVI. Ciudad de México (1550-1620)* (México: UNAM, 1995).
- 141 *Ibid.*, 37.
- 142 Demostración de las fundaciones que administra la Real Casa de la Santa Misericordia de Manila, cuyos capitales se hallan colocados a censo en fincas a usura, del capital con que se fundo cada obra del estado a que ha quedado reducido por la injuria de los tiempos y los destinos a que se aplican sus réditos; 16 de enero de 1790, AGI, Filipinas, 856, (The author wishes to thank Dr. Lourdes Díaz-Trechuelo for providing him with a copy of this document); *Audiencia* to the king, August 31, 1613, Manila; in the Memorial del Procurador Fernando de los Ríos Coronel, AGI, Filipinas, 39, N. 6; Archbishop Miguel García Serrano to the king, July 25, 1621, Manila. AGI, Filipinas, 74, ff. 596v-604r.
- 143 *Ibid.*
- 144 Royal Order, April 17, 1606, in *Audiencia* to the king, July 11, 1607, Manila. AGI, Filipinas, 20, R.1, N.8.
- 145 *Audiencia* to the king, August 31, 1613, Manila; in the Memorial del Procurador Fernando de los Ríos Coronel, AGI, Filipinas, 39, N.6.
- 146 *Audiencia* to the king, June 21, 1618; and *Mesa* to the king, 1618 (n.d), Manila; AGI, Filipinas, 37, N.54.
- 147 Flynn, 175 and note 12.
- 148 King to the *Mesa*, March 22, 1623, Madrid. AGI, Filipinas, 39, N.10.
- 149 De la Costa, 339.
- 150 Gaspar Álvarez was the Castellano de Cavite, or Commander of the Cavite Fort; Bienes de difuntos: Gaspar Álvarez, AGI, Contratación, 368, N.7, R.1.
- 151 Uriarte, ff. 11v-12r, 32r.
- 152 Sá, *De D. Manuel I*, 41-43.
- 153 *Mesa* to the king, n.d., Manila; *Audiencia* to the king, September 3, 1621, Manila; Governor-general Alonso Fajardo de Tenza to the king, September 5, 1621; in Memorial of Procurador General de Filipinas Fernando de los Ríos Coronel; AGI, Filipinas 39, N.6.
- 154 Fiscal to the king, May 11, 1622, Madrid; in Memorial of Procurador General de Filipinas Fernando de los Ríos Coronel; AGI, Filipinas 39, N.6.
- 155 Royal order, June 20, 1623. Governor General, Fernando de Silva approved the statutes for printing on September 4, 1625, introduction to *Ordenanzas*.
- 156 King to the *Mesa*, March 22, 1623, Madrid; AGI, Filipinas, 39, N.10.
- 157 Even if there was no formal exchange of institutions between the two kingdoms, there were many types of informal relations between peoples of what is known as the dual monarchy, especially between Manila and Macao, see Leonor Diaz de Seabra, "Power, society and trade. The historic relationship between Macao and the Philippines from the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries," *Revista de Cultura* 7 (July 2003) : 47-58.
- 158 The last news of visitation work is from 1627. Some Jesuits, accompanied by some Christian black slaves of a religious congregation, met two brothers of the Misericordia in a hospital looking after the sick. Yearly report of the Jesuits to their superior in Rome, Fr. Juan de Buera, S. J., July 20, 1628, Manila, ARSI, Philipp., 6 I-II, Litterae annuae 1627, ff. 446r-446v.