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This new monograph series seeks to explore the complexities of the relationships among empires, modernity and global history. In so doing, it wishes to challenge the orthodoxy that the experience of modernity was located exclusively in the west, and that the non-western world was brought into the modern age through conquest, mimicry and association. To the contrary, modernity had its origins in the interaction between the two worlds. In this sense the imperial experience was not an adjunct to western modernization, but was constitutive of it. Thus the origins of the defining features of modernity – the bureaucratic state, market economy, governance, and so on – have to be sought in the imperial encounter, as do the categories such as race, sexuality and citizenship which constitute the modern individual.

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Portuguese Colonial Cities in the Early Modern World

Edited by

LIAM MATTHEW BROCKEY
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ASHGATE



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CHAPTER 6

Charity, Ritual, and Business at the Edge of Empire: The Misericórdia of Macau

Isabel dos Guimarães Sá

The confraternities found in Portugal and its empire called *Misericórdias* are often considered to have emerged as part of the medieval European tradition of fraternal piety aimed at gathering devout laymen and women for communal worship and performing charity. While this claim largely rings true, several features made these groups unique. Firstly, the *Misericórdias* originated in Portugal at the end of the fifteenth century in a climate of Christian lay devotion that owed much to medieval antecedents. Their central devotion was to the figure of Our Lady of Mercy, and were dedicated to performing the 14 spiritual and corporal works of mercy. Yet despite their roots in Marian devotions, Franciscan piety, and the spiritual current known as the *devotio moderna*, the *Misericórdias* constituted a new manifestation of communal piety in the Portugal of the late fifteenth century.

The *Misericórdias* were founded at the instigation of members of the Portuguese royal family and enjoyed royal protection during the sixteenth century. This patronage was formally confirmed at the Council of Trent, where a special status was accorded to the *Misericórdias* which, unlike other lay confraternities, answered to the Portuguese crown rather than to ecclesiastical authorities. As such, they were different from other religious bodies: they maintained a devotional character outside of secular or regular ecclesiastical institutions. This feature helps to explain why they could be found wherever there was a Portuguese colonial presence, or even simply a Portuguese merchant community. The number of *Misericórdias* proliferated to such a point that even settlements that ceased to be part of the Portuguese Empire or were never under Portuguese administration could boast one.

There was more to the popularity of these confraternities than just official favor. Indeed, Portuguese communities both in Europe or overseas felt that the *Misericórdias* were a logical way of organizing charity for the poor. Moreover, these institutions created an arena of power for local elites, and sometimes

even performed financial services for them. In short, there was a convergence of interests between the Portuguese crown, seeking to appear as the benevolent patron of a unified set of confraternities, and secular elites, aiming to control important parts of civic life such as poor relief, local administration, public devotions, and urban politics. As a result of the history of their creation and development, the Portuguese *Misericórdias* can be considered different from the other confraternities that bear the same name and invocation. Neither the Italian nor the Spanish *Misericórdias* performed such a wide variety of charitable activities, nor were they diffused around the globe on such a vast scale.

Scholarly analyses of the *Misericórdias* first appeared at the end of the nineteenth century, but it was Charles Boxer who first examined them on a par with the other institutions of local power that he judged to be fundamental in the Portuguese Empire, the *Câmaras* (municipal councils). Boxer considered both institutions to be the keys for understanding the local dynamics of power and government. As mentioned in the introduction to the present volume, he drew primarily on printed sources to present a comparative overview of local institutions in four cities of the Portuguese empire: Macau, Goa, Bahia, and Luanda. Though his analysis centered on the role played by the *Câmaras* in imperial administration, Boxer considered the *Misericórdias* as their twin.¹ More recently, in the 1990s, scholars have analyzed the *Misericórdias* at the level of the Portuguese empire. These examinations stressed the differences among the confraternities found across the empire, while recognizing their common religious and administrative principles.² As should be expected, local conditions provide much of the explanation for this diversity. Important factors included the ethnic makeup of the population, the ways in which the Portuguese related to the indigenous or imported populations, and the organization of the local economy. Significantly, however, a given area's relationship with the metropolis affected the different procedures and social habits of its local *Misericórdia*. And as the essay by J.S.A. Elisonas in this volume reveals, this Portuguese model of charity was not limited by the bounds of empire and left its mark on forms of confraternal piety in cities such as Nagasaki and Kyoto.

¹ C.R. Boxer, *Portuguese Society in the Tropics: The Municipal Councils of Goa, Macao, Bahia and Luanda, 1510–1800* (Madison, 1965).

² The most comprehensive study of a *Misericórdia* in the Portuguese empire remains A.J.R. Russell-Wood, *Fidalgos and Philanthropists: The Santa Casa da Misericórdia of Bahia, 1550–1755* (London, 1968). I have analyzed the *Misericórdias* at the global level, see Isabel dos Guimarães Sá, *Quando o Rico se faz Pobre: Misericórdias, Caridade e Poder no Império Português* (Lisbon, 1997).

This chapter will examine the role played by the *Misericórdia* in the city of Macau. The primary focus will be on this group's relationship with other civic institutions and the city's Chinese population, with special attention paid to the way in which the confraternity represented a specific Catholic and European culture in a Chinese environment. In Portugal, charity played a number of roles. It affirmed the religious value of the practice of good works and promoted social cohesion, in as much as it permitted the dominant social groups to project a benign image of themselves as individuals willing to sacrifice and care for the poor. Charity also marked the divisions found among the population, defining who was clearly poor, who ruled, and those in between—it was never indiscriminate.

The *Misericórdias* exercised great restrictions upon membership, admitting only the local nobility and the master craftsmen as members in two separate types of membership, upper and lower. As such, the confraternity could be selective when costly charitable services were requested of it. Dowries for poor girls, stays in retirement houses, continuous secret help for shame-faced poor in their homes, that were the most expensive services, were given only to a chosen few. On the other hand, admittance to hospitals or care of foundlings were given to all, because they were less costly per capita.³ In Portugal's colonies, the *Misericórdias* tended to be sensitive to the needs of non-European local populations, especially when their services were crucial for maintaining the capacities of the labor force (such as of the African slaves in Brazil). Yet it should be noted that those who belonged to the colonial population had privileged access to the groups' charitable resources. Baptism and confession were required as a pre-requisite for admission, and charity was rarely available for those who lived outside Catholic doctrinal rules. In Europe, these sacramental requirements were also compulsory, and preference was given to persons belonging to the clientele of the powerful.

When dispensing charity, the *Misericórdia* sought to attend to those considered to be the respectable poor, that is, those men and women who abided to the moral rules of the elites who controlled the confraternity. This was especially true for women, whose sexual reputation was a major factor in determining if they would receive a dowry or be helped in their domestic needs. In keeping with a general trend in Catholic Europe, the *Misericórdias* also operated houses where carefully chosen women could find the means to

³ Isabel dos Guimarães Sá, 'Estatuto Social e Discriminação: Formas de Seleção de Agentes e Receptores de Caridade nas *Misericórdias* Portuguesas ao longo do Antigo Regime,' in Maria Engrácia Leandro, Maria Marta Lobo de Araújo, and Manuel da Silva e Costa (eds), *Saúde. As teias da Discriminação Social* (Braga, 2002), pp. 303–34.

escape loss of social standing as a result of sexual misbehavior.⁴ It was for these reasons that historians have considered charity as a device for social control and have stressed its repressive character. Yet gender issues are also important when considering the *Misericórdias* as institutions: women could contribute to the confraternity's coffers as donors of property, but not as members in equal standing with men except in some rare cases of widows who took the place of their husbands. Women were often the main recipients of charity, especially when they were orphaned or widowed, but they were not relevant actors as dispensers of charity within the institutional framework of the *Misericórdias*.

In the colonies, the Portuguese created institutional scenarios that mirrored those existing in Portugal. The *Misericórdias* were extremely convenient for colonial elites not only because of their familiar procedures, but also because the confraternities could adapt to local economies when they required large funds in deposit. The *Misericórdias* could amass large sums of capital through bequests and donations, or through the deposit of unclaimed inheritances, that could be invested in the local economic activities by lending them on interest or be used by local elites for their own purposes. For example, where sugar planters in the Recôncavo of Bahia could finance a sugar crop while awaiting the revenues from the previous year, merchants in Macau could prepare expeditions to trade opium in Maritime Asia. It was this capacity to accumulate liquid capital that was the unique advantage of the *Misericórdias*, one that was unmatched by any other local institutions, *Câmaras* included.

In the case of the *Misericórdia* of Macau, recent scholarship has described it as a proto-banking institution controlled by the city's merchants who were engaged in maritime trade.⁵ Its members counted the newly-arrived Portuguese settlers who established themselves primarily through marriage to the daughters of Portuguese men who married Chinese women. Charles Boxer's work remains a key reference for the historiography of Macau. His analyses, covering a span of more than 300 years, retain most of their validity since he examined most of the available documental sources.⁶ Those

⁴ See Luciana Mendes Gandelman, 'Mulheres para um Império: Órfãs e Caridade nos Recolhimentos Femininos da Santa Casa da Misericórdia (Salvador, Rio de Janeiro e Porto—Século XVIII),' (Ph.D. diss., Universidade Estadual de Campinas (São Paulo), 2005).

⁵ Isabel dos Guimarães Sá, 'Ganhos da Terra e Ganhos do Mar: Caridade e Comércio na Misericórdia de Macau (Séculos XVII–XVIII),' *Ler História*, vol. 44 (2003): pp. 45–57.

⁶ See C.R. Boxer, *Fidalgos in the Far-East 1550–1770: Fact and Fancy in the History of Macao* (The Hague, 1948); C.R. Boxer, *The Great Ship from Amacon: Annals of Macao and the Old Japan Trade, 1555–1640* (Lisbon, 1963); C.R. Boxer,

documents that he did not examine were mainly serial records that would be open for electronic analysis only after the 1980s, including the records of the *Misericórdia* analyzed here. The primary focus of this chapter will be on the strata of Macau's population who benefited from the help of its *Misericórdia*, and on the image that the confraternity projected at a local level. As shall be shown, the practice of charity in this port city was mainly episodic, festive, and spectacular, designed to proclaim the social and religious values of its Catholic minority. The following analysis begins with an overview of the social makeup of Macau, aimed at situating the Eurasian Portuguese among the city's overwhelmingly Chinese population. An example of the typical conflicts between the local elites follows, employing an analysis of a judicial conflict to reveal some of the key issues related to the self-image and procedures of the Portuguese colonial male population. The final section presents an examination of the *Misericórdia's* specific charitable activities with a focus on women, since they seem to have been considered one of the most deserving segments of Macau's poor.

A Catholic Island in a Chinese Sea

By the second half of the eighteenth century, Macau was a small city of 20,000 inhabitants, 15,000 of whom were Chinese immigrants who remained separate from the Christian population except for matters of commerce. The remaining 5,000 formed the Christian population of the city, comprised of those of Portuguese birth or ancestry, their slaves (from a wide variety of African and Asian ethnicities), and Chinese converts. One of the main characteristics of Macau's Christian population was that it was overwhelmingly female. As shall be shown, that situation had an enormous impact in the *Misericórdia's* charitable activities.⁷ The number of *reinóis* (native-born Portuguese) was surprisingly low: a list drawn up in 1775 mentioned only 107 names of Portuguese-born residents in the three parishes of the city, São Lourenço,

Estudos para a História de Macau. Séculos XVI a XVIII, 2 vols. (Lisbon, 1991); and C.R. Boxer, *Macao na Época da Restauração (Macao Three Hundred Years Ago)*, 2 vols. (Lisbon, 1993).

⁷ Susana Munch Miranda and Cristina Seuanes Serafim, 'População e Sociedade' in A.H. de Oliveira Marques (ed.), *História dos Portugueses no Extremo Oriente*, 6 vols. (Lisbon, 1998–2003), vol. 2, pp. 229–57. For the population of Macau during the seventeenth century, see George Bryan Souza, *The Survival of Empire: Portuguese Trade and Society in China and the South China Sea, 1630–1754* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 30–33.

Sé, and Santo António.⁸ This pool supplied the local institutions, namely the *Senado da Câmara* (municipal council) and the *Misericórdia*. By contrast, a list of *vizinhos* elaborated in 1625 listed 437 Portuguese and Spanish men and 403 *jurubaças*, or converted Chinese, making a total of 840 men. Some years later, in 1635, António Bocarro mentioned 850 *casados* (married *reinóis*), but stated that there were many other Christian married men who were converted Chinese.⁹ Nevertheless, it is possible that the number of Portuguese-born men had decreased by 1775. The men of the Eurasian population were the merchant elite, soldiers, and sailors. The clergy was also a significant portion of the population, whether from the four male religious orders of the city or from the secular clergy, found in the three parishes and cathedral. Ever since its origins in the middle of the sixteenth century, Macau was always a transit point for missionaries heading for Japan, China, and Southeast Asia.

Although the fundamental unit of social organization in Macau was the Portuguese household under the control of a married man (*Casado*), these were multiethnic units. It should first be noted that there were no Portuguese women in the city. Rather, the male Portuguese settlers would marry Asian or Eurasian women. This factor remained largely unchanged from the 1630s, when the traveler Peter Mundy remarked that there was only one Portuguese-born woman living in Macau, and that the wives and women servants of the Portuguese were all Chinese.¹⁰ Contemporary sources testify to the coexistence of several ethnicities within the same household, either as blood kin or as servants and slaves. One of the best windows into the relationship between these different household elements appears in the bequests where the *Misericórdia* was to inherit property only in the event that the designated

⁸ A.M. Martins do Vale, *Os Portugueses em Macau (1750–1800). Degredados, Ignorantes ou Fiéis Vassallos d'El-Rei?* (Macau, 1997), Annex 4.1.

⁹ 'Lista de la gente efectiva que ay em esta Ciudad (de Macau) assy vesinos, como extravagantes, forasteros e gente de lla tierra. Año de 1625,' Biblioteca Pública de Évora, Évora [= BPE], Cod. CXVI/2–5: fols. 225–34; and António Bocarro, *O Livro das Plantas de todas as Fortalezas, Cidades e Povoações do Estado da Índia Oriental*, ed. Isabel Cid, 2 vols., (Lisbon, 1992), vol. 2, p. 261. See also C.R. Boxer, *Macau na Época da Restauração*, p. 28.

¹⁰ *The Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia, 1608–1667*, ed. Richard Carnac Temple, 5 vols. in 6 books (Cambridge, 1907–36), vol. 3, p. 262. In fact, sources document two women referred to as Portuguese, Beatriz de Sousa and Francisca Luísa Pereira, who left legacies to the *Misericórdia* during the 1630s. See Historical Archives of Macau [= HAM], *Santa Casa da Misericórdia*, cod. 302, *Testamentos 1592–1849*, fols. 34v–5v and 55. It must be noted that this source documents a total of 110 testators for the period between 1592–1692, 39 women and 71 men.

heirs did not survive in order to take possession of it.¹¹ It is worth noting that some of these bequests were made by converted Chinese or Japanese exiles and many were from women who were not Portuguese-born. There were boys and girls (always a majority) from China, from Japan, Korea, Siam, Timor, Java, Bengal, Makassar, among other places. In spite of the fact that they were considered property to be disposed of, provisions were made for their futures. Many were freed from slavery and others were given a sum that would enable them to marry. Here again, women received preferential attention—most of the freed slaves were girls, and it is often indicated that they had been born in the house of the testator, or that they had been raised there since childhood.

It is likely that, from the perspective of social integration, the worst conditions in Macau were reserved for those converted Chinese without Eurasian kin. Expelled from the Chinese community, they would often complain about their situation. In this respect, they were similar to the members of the *Confraria de Jesus*, who explained, in a letter probably written by the Jesuits, that their status was by far inferior to that of the city's non-Christian Chinese. The brothers of this confraternity described themselves as being drawn from 'the best among the Chinese', and as people who had renounced Chinese law and professed loyalty to the king of Portugal. Curiously, they claimed to have founded the Macau *Misericórdia* but were afterwards chased from it by the Portuguese. Their list of complaints ran long; they were not free to travel to Canton to trade; they were forced to participate in defense duties; they were not allowed to wear cloaks that might conceal their poverty; the Portuguese were not obliged to repay debts to them and often placed the money that they inherited by default (against the will of the dead) on the financial market; and they were verbally abused and ill-treated. These Chinese converts emphasized that their status was inferior to that of some of their relatives who were not Christian, and, as a result, they saw no advantage in conversion.¹² It is also significant that there was a divide between the converted Chinese and the *nhons*, or *gente da terra*. Other confraternities included the one dedicated to Nossa Senhora dos Remédios, located in the parish of S. Lourenço and whose membership included the *gente da terra*, that is, the men and women who were not considered Portuguese despite having Eurasian blood.¹³

The population of Macau attributed to a special status to the city until well into the nineteenth century. Martinho de Melo e Castro (1770–96), a former

¹¹ HAM, *Santa Casa da Misericórdia*, cod. 302, *Testamentos 1592–1849*.

¹² Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino [= AHU], Lisbon, Macau, Caixa 1, doc. 38, dated before 24 February 1644.

¹³ AHU, Macau, Caixa 12, doc. 8, 21 November 1778.

Secretary of State to the Marquis of Pombal and later the Minister of the Colonies to Queen Maria I, wrote in horror in a 1783 report that in Macau, the Portuguese were completely dominated by the Chinese. The Portuguese did not own the land (they paid rent to the Qing dynasty mandarins), their boats paid custom duties, and they could not enslave the Chinese except by purchase. When a Portuguese individual killed a Chinese man, the Chinese authorities forced their Portuguese counterparts to surrender the criminal, who, if found guilty, was executed or charged a fine. The primary Qing authorities entrusted with supervising the behavior of the Portuguese at Macau were in Canton, but there were mandarins located a short distance from the city walls that were built in 1622, the year the Dutch attacked the city.¹⁴ These mandarins resided just off Macau peninsula at the *Casa Branca* (White House). Not only were the Portuguese controlled by the Chinese, but they had to cope with the outbursts of xenophobia from segments of the Chinese population who tended to consider Europeans barbarians.

Travelers who described Macau were unanimous in referring to the city's extreme dependency on the Chinese, a fact which served to underscore the precariousness of the Portuguese presence there. Similar refrains can be found in accounts of Macau produced over the course of the early modern era. One such example from the seventeenth century comes from the pen of Matteo Ricci, the founder of the Jesuit mission to China. When informing his Chinese hosts about his origins, he wrote to colleagues in Europe, he preferred not to mention Macau and the Portuguese there because of the difficulties it might create for his missionary work.¹⁵ Another example can be found in the writings of Friar Domingo Fernández Navarrete, a Spanish Dominican who lived in China between 1658 and 1670 and who criticized the Portuguese for paying a rent to the mandarins for the soil they occupied. He also denounced the fact the Qing authorities exacted customs duties at Macau.¹⁶

The only economic activity of the Portuguese in the city was maritime trade. Investment in land was not possible, simply because there was no available space on Macau peninsula for farming or breeding livestock (the total land area was only three square kilometers). The only real property that could be owned was houses, frequently mentioned in the bequests to the *Misericórdia*. The presence of the Portuguese was completely dependent, economically

¹⁴ On the building of the city walls, see Manuel Teixeira, *Macau no Séc. XVII* (Macau: Direcção dos Serviços de Educação e Cultura, 1982), p. 35.

¹⁵ Matteo Ricci, *Lettere (1580–1609)*, ed. Piero Corradini (Macerata, 2001), esp. pp. 409 and 515–16.

¹⁶ Domingo Fernández Navarrete, *Tratados Históricos, Políticos, Éticos, y Religiosos de la Monarquía de China* (Madrid, 1676), pp. 362–5.

as well as politically, on the good will of the Chinese. Moreover, the city's status vis-à-vis Lisbon or the *Estado da Índia* was ambiguous. In theory, the municipal council, the city's main authority, obeyed the viceroy in Goa. But in practice this body was accorded a great deal of autonomy. Distance was the primary factor responsible for this state of affairs—it took almost a year to travel between Macau and Lisbon and the trip was very dangerous, sometimes killing more than a half of the travelers. Another factor was that Macau had originated from the initiative of a few merchants and missionaries who had learned how to deal with the Chinese, and that the crown had largely failed to understand the relationship between them. Some royal representatives never appear to have realized that it would be impossible to resist the Chinese, who could make the city starve by cutting the food supply or destroy it outright. The Portuguese community in Macau, however, was well aware that they were the weaker member in a negotiating relationship, and knew that every problem could be solved as long as there was enough money to satisfy the Chinese demands. The Chinese, in turn, regarded the city as a useful opening to commerce, and, obviously, as a source of profit.

Conflicts often occurred between crown appointees and the members of the local elite who presided at the *Senado da Câmara* and the *Misericórdia*. Bishops and governors sent from Lisbon repeatedly misunderstood the status of the Portuguese in Macau, thinking it equivalent to that found in other lands of the king's *conquistas*. Still other conflicts arose from ill-tempered individuals shortly after their arrival from Portugal who aimed at exercising forms of authority that clashed with the autonomy of these two very powerful local institutions. Nevertheless, the institutional picture of the city has to include the influential presence of the city's ecclesiastical bodies. Macau was the seat of a bishop, and there were several religious orders and brotherhoods that counted different segments of the population as members. Of these ecclesiastical institutions, the religious orders were the most important groups. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, the map of Macau's male religious orders of the city had been laid out. Of the four which were established in the city, the Jesuits were the first to arrive, in 1565, from Portugal via Goa. Later in the sixteenth century, the Franciscans, Augustinians, and Dominicans would arrive from Manila. And in 1633, a convent of Poor Clares was founded by Franciscan nuns from the Philippines (see Figure 6.1).¹⁷

That the Jesuits were important figures among the city's ecclesiastical elite goes without saying.¹⁸ Recent historiography has confirmed the Society of

¹⁷ Vale, *Portugueses em Macau*, pp. 145–50; and Boxer, *Portuguese Society*, p. 64.

¹⁸ See AHU, Macau, Caixa 1, doc. 8, 16 October 1621. In this report, the *ouvidor* informed the king about the religious houses in Macau, their number of residents, and

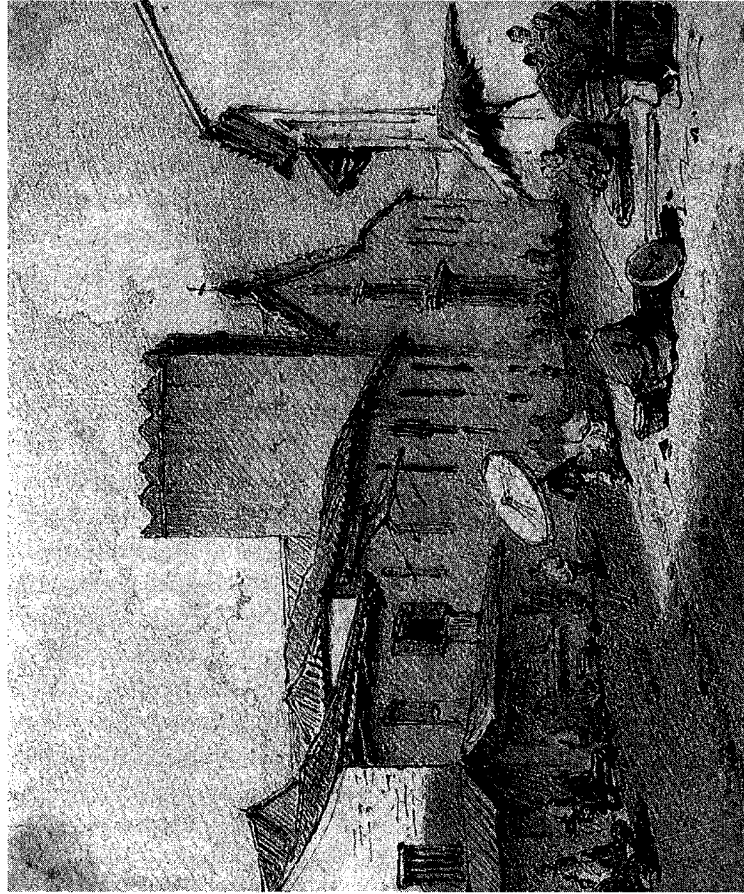


Figure 6.1 George Chinnery, Watercolor painting of the *Misericórdia* Church of Macau, 1836. Image courtesy of the Toyo Bunko (Oriental Library), Tokyo

Jesus as the main driving force behind the missions in China, in spite of the other religious orders that competed with it.¹⁹ Travelers unanimously referred to the Jesuit church of São Paulo, atop a large stone staircase, as the most impressive building of Macau. Such an important group also had impact on the internal life of the Macau *Misericórdia*. The Jesuits were accorded a role in the group's electoral proceedings, a privilege that never appears to have occurred in Portugal.²⁰ By contrast, in Lisbon, the *Misericórdia's* chaplains performed that role in the group's voting procedures.²¹ In Macau, the Jesuits were not only in charge of the spiritual preparation of the voters before the electoral act, delivering a sermon in one of the two days of the election procedure, but they also helped to vet the lists of electors. The Jesuits were also the guardians of the funds of the *Misericórdia*, which was obliged to request money by sending Chinese errand boys to fetch funds when needed. And in 1735, Cosme Damião Pereira Pinto, the city's governor, was overwhelmed by the evidence of financial fraud in the confraternity. He went so far as to suggest to King João V that the *Misericórdia* be administered directly by the Jesuits of the Society's Province of Japan.²²

Insiders and Outsiders: A Typical Conflict among the Portuguese-born Community

Conflict was the order of the day between Macau's urban institutions. Tensions always ran high when representatives of the metropolitan authority attempted to impose their will upon the city's other bodies. One extended example from

the rents and property that they possessed. Although the number of people living in the Jesuit headquarters were exceptionally high at the time on account of the refugees from Japan, the document is fundamental for understanding the differences in scale between the Jesuits and every other male religious house in the city.

¹⁹ Liam M. Brockey, 'A Garganta. The China Jesuits and the College of Macau, 1579–1623,' *Revista de Cultura-Macau*, vol. 5 (2003): pp. 45–55; and Liam Matthew Brockey, *Journey to the East: The Jesuit Mission to China, 1579–1724* (Cambridge, Mass., 2007). For a study that also includes the Mendicant Orders involved in the missions in China, see Pascale Girard, *Les Religieux Occidentaux en Chine à L'Époque Moderne. Essai d'Analyse Textuelle Comparée* (Paris, 2000).

²⁰ Biblioteca Nacional, Lisbon [= BNL], cod. 723: fols. 189v–90v.

²¹ *Compromisso da Misericórdia de Lisboa*, (Lisbon, 1619), chapters 4 and 5. This subject was dealt with in chapters 6 and 7 of the 1627 *Compromisso* of the *Misericórdia* of Macau but the interference of the Jesuits was not stated. See Biblioteca da Ajuda, Lisbon [=BA], *Jesuitas na Ásia*, Série China (24), 49–V–6, *Compromisso da Misericórdia de Macau*, 1627.

²² AHU, *Macau*, caixa 4, doc. 16, 25 December 1735.

the middle of the eighteenth century, more specifically between October 1746 and the end of 1747, shall suffice to illustrate the recurrent conflicts involved in these relationships of status and power involving the *Misericórdia*, other local institutions, and crown representatives.²³ The first of these, as will be shown, had a chronic bias against outsiders who did not conform to the behavioral norms of the Macanese community. In the end, this conflict would become a struggle between the bishop and the *Misericórdia*, while the city's governor looked on from the sidelines with an ambiguous attitude towards the parties involved. The main protagonists in the story were the bishop, Frei Hilário de Santa Rosa (bishop from 1739–50), and the chaplain of the *Misericórdia*, João da Costa, a member of the secular clergy. Two governors, two *provedores* (chief deputies of the confraternity), a few clergymen attached to the cathedral, as well as the Jesuits played roles as mediators. The narrator of the story, based on a contemporary account, was a Jesuit, who was clearly not a neutral observer and who did not refrain from making negative comments about the bishop's behavior. In addition to this narrative, notarial documents that were produced during the conflict have also survived which shed light on the political situation in Macau.

The bone of contention emerged when the bishop showed his displeasure that the chaplain of the *Misericórdia* refused to participate in processions when he was summoned by the prelate, and thus threatened publicly to arrest him. Hearing about this situation, Governor Cosme Damião Pereira Pinto advised the priest not to wander about the city without an errand boy who could immediately report his detention at the *Aljube* (ecclesiastical prison), and therefore permit the governor to secure his release. In the meantime, the bishop notified João da Costa that he was suspended from hearing confessions. Santa Rosa first attempted to seize Costa by sending his agents to arrest the priest while he was at the house of a widow, a woman who cooked for him. In reporting this episode, the Jesuit narrator declares himself in favor of the chaplain by shedding positive light on how Costa had protected the woman's sexual honor—the widow, Catarina de Araújo, had made a vow of chastity and had refused a wedding proposal by an important local merchant, Manuel Vicente Rosa. Araújo reacted strongly against the arrival of the bishop's officers at her house, denying them entry and thereby protecting the priest.

A second incident pitted the *Misericórdia* against the bishop in clearer fashion. The bishop's secretary and usher (*meirinho*), both members of the *Misericórdia*, notified João da Costa of the bishop's decision against him inside the premises of the confraternity. For Luís Coelho, that year's *provedor*,

²³ BA, *Jesuitas na Ásia*, Série China (47), *Bulhas do Bispo de Macau*, Fr. Hilário de Santa Rosa, *Santa Casa da Misericórdia*, 1746–1747: fols. 259–80.

this incident was reason enough for the expulsion of the churchman's two representatives from the confraternity. He cast them out after a meeting of the *Misericórdia's* governing board and refused to admit them after repeated entreaties by the bishop.²⁴ The governor then interceded on behalf of the bishop, but Luís Coelho threatened to abandon the office of *provedor*, making it revert to its former holder (Cosme Damião had been *provedor* the year before). The Jesuits intervened at this point, sending their Provincial, Estêvão Lopes, who spoke with the bishop and afterwards asked Luís Coelho to reconsider. Coelho's reply came in the form of a threat that the *provedor* and the other members of the *Misericórdia* would abandon the brotherhood, destroying it. The bishop, after the Jesuit Provincial briefed him on the situation, saw no other solution than to ask the governor and previous *provedor*, Cosme Damião, to replace Coelho as *provedor*, and, with the necessary powers, expel Costa from his chaplaincy. The *Misericórdia's* reaction was swift: A text was written by the *juiz ordinário* (a magistrate who belonged to the *Câmara*) and posted at 12 places around the city. The governor refused the bishop's request that he serve as *provedor*, in response to the threat of self-extinction of the *Misericórdia* and by the fact that the confraternity's pamphlet had been placed in front of his house. By that time, Luís Coelho had declared his willingness to travel to Goa to inform the viceroy of the situation. Of course, letters requesting that the viceroy confirm the *Misericórdia's* rights were already on their way to India.

This turn of events brought chaplain Costa to a delicate juncture. He was willing to accede to the bishop's demand that he retract his statements, but the *Misericórdia* refused to readmit the prelate's emissaries. The contemporary account makes it clear that the bishop has been effectively cornered, no one in Macau would back him up. Yet there was also a second important issue. In a curious declaration, Coelho told Estêvão Lopes, the Jesuit Provincial, that while Jesuit priests could enter his home as far as the kitchen, the *Misericórdia* was the king's house and therefore off limits. For the narrator of the account of the events, the bishop then made the worst strategic error: he declared he would excommunicate chaplain Costa if his two men were not readmitted to the confraternity. In the meantime, a letter from the viceroy in Goa supported the *Misericórdia's* claims and the bishop attempted, unsuccessfully, to be elected *provedor*.

Violence marked the climax of this conflict in Macau. The bishop sent a representative with two officers from the garrison to arrest Costa (this fact demonstrates the ambiguous position of the governor, who placed the

²⁴ The *Misericórdias* were ruled by a council of 13, headed by a *provedor*, who was the primary authority within each confraternity.

soldiers at the bishop's disposal). Costa resisted arrest and the soldiers stabbed him in the arm, after which the priest brandished a large knife that he was wearing, and used it to help him to escape and take refuge in the church of São Francisco (from where he was to move to the Jesuit college). Wounded, Costa managed to escape to sanctuary in the Franciscan convent, but later moved to the Jesuit College on 29 September. By this time the bishop's threat of excommunication was not vain, since Costa, as a priest, should not have been carrying a weapon. Two days later, Santa Rosa made good on his threat at Sunday mass in the cathedral; he excommunicated Costa. At this point of the contemporary narrative of the events one encounters a suggestion that the bishop had received some bad advice from the Jesuit vice-provincial of China (the head of the China mission). Were there internal conflicts within the Society of Jesus?

After this point, the chaplain spent months seeking passage to Goa by ship. His situation in Macau was hopeless since neither the bishop nor the new governor, António José Teles de Menezes (r. 1747–49), were willing to give him the necessary authorization. Costa petitioned formally the bishop countless times. The matter would finally be resolved only in January 1748, when the chaplain was summoned by the bishop's officials to pay the judicial expenses accrued during the conflict. The last act of this drama came with João da Costa's departure, along with that of the former governor, on a ship bound for India. In the final scene, the poor chaplain hid himself in the corner of the boat while the bishop and the incoming governor came aboard for a farewell dinner with the outgoing royal official.

The story of this conflict between bishop and confraternity is a good example of the type of social frictions that marked civic life in Macau. Without dwelling on the legal intricacies of the court cases sparked by the affair, it is worth noting that the law sided with Luís Coelho, the *provedor*.²⁵ All of the main protagonists in the case were Portuguese-born, but neither the governor, Cosme Damião, nor the bishop, Frei Hilário de Santa Rosa, were considered part of the local community. The governor was replaced when his term of office expired, and bishops, as the history of Macau confirms over and over, had trouble adjusting to the city's norms. While it is clear that during this

²⁵ The chaplains of the *Misericórdia* could not be compelled to participate in processions. The confraternity was a lay institution under royal protection and thus the bishop could not insist on his authority inside its premises. Moreover, the *Misericórdia* could expel any member without consulting other institutions and the *compromisso* did not allow the confraternity to readmit any member before a year had passed after the expulsion. In fact, the bishop was only acting within his rights when he excommunicated the chaplain after the knife incident.

conflict the governor was careful not to be openly hostile to the *Misericórdia*, he took sides with the bishop. During the affair, *provedor* Luís Coelho boasted that he had been able to successfully resist the Chinese as a member of the *Camãra* a few decades earlier.²⁶ Not only was he a typical element of the city's Portuguese-born merchant community, but he was committed to the rights and privileges of the confraternity.

The Jesuits also played an interesting role as mediators of the conflict. Despite their attempts to remain aloof from the conflict, the account's Jesuit narrator shows a clear preference for the *Misericórdia* and an open dislike of the bishop. It should be noted that Frei Hilário de Santa Rosa was a Franciscan friar, a fact which served the narrator, whose order was in the midst of the Chinese Rites Controversy with the Mendicant orders, as a pretext for the following comment: 'The bishop, as a friar, wants to have conflicts; and as I see it, they will not lack'; 'the bishops in this city think that they are God'.²⁷

Frei Hilário left for Portugal in 1750 and resigned his post as bishop instead of remaining, as was customary, until his death. Curiously, his three successors in the office until 1803 would also resign. While not all of these men had conflicts with the local residents, they all found it difficult to make themselves obeyed.²⁸ For instance, later in the eighteenth century these bishops would be the most dedicated agents of metropolitan colonial policies. Dom Alexandre da Silva Pedrosa Guimarães, who served as bishop between 1772 and 1789, worked in close connection with the *Conselho Ultramarino* in Lisbon and was the primary informant of minister Martinho de Melo e Castro.²⁹ Significantly, the members of the bishop's chapter repeatedly petitioned the Queen to be admitted as members in the *Misericórdia* at that time.³⁰

One should not think that the *Senado da Câmara* was absent from this controversy. Despite the fact that there are few explicit references to the city council, the body's members were among the main protagonists. Not only were the members of the *Câmara* and the *Misericórdia* recruited from the same pool of local merchants, but the *juiz ordinário*, who wrote a broadsheet against the bishop which was affixed in 12 places across the city including the vicinity of the governor's residence and the bishop's headquarters, was also a

²⁶ For biographical data on Coelho, see Benjamim Videira Pires, S.J., *A Vida Marítima de Macau no Século XVIII* (Macau, 1993), pp. 144 and 147.

²⁷ BA, *Jesuitas na Ásia*, Série China (47), *Bulhas do Bispo de Macau*, fol. 220.

²⁸ Vale, *Portugueses em Macau*, p. 139.

²⁹ See the reports and informations sent by the bishop to the *Conselho Ultramarino*, AHU, Macau, Caixa 7 to Caixa 12.

³⁰ AHU, Macau, Caixa 12, doc. 30, 23 January 1779; Caixa 14, doc. 2, 4 January 1782.

city official. Who else but the *Senado da Câmara* could have given such strong support to the *Misericórdia*? After all, both institutions were the loci of the residents' power over the king's representatives.

The Eurasian Merchant Community and the Misericórdia

The merchants of Macau, the city's economic and government elite, were always few in number. At certain junctures, such as in 1699, the Portuguese population was so small that there were not enough eligible men to fill the slots of the *Senado da Câmara* or the *Misericórdia*.³¹ Nevertheless, the *Misericórdia* of Macau, like its counterpart in Manila, did not impose a strict divide between noble and non-noble members.³² Plebeian brothers were generally master craftsmen, and the group's founding charter acknowledged that there were no Portuguese who performed themselves such activities. Membership in the Macau confraternity was to be restricted to 300 brothers, but that number doubled to 600 when Dom João IV, perhaps as a reward for the city's loyalty to his cause in the revolt against Spain, granted it an equal number of members as the *Misericórdia* of Lisbon.³³ As such, virtually any Portuguese man permanently resident in the city could be admitted in the confraternity, provided that he was not a Chinese convert.

Did the number of members in the Macau *Misericórdia* ever reach that limit of 600? Thankfully for the historian, the Macau confraternity observed a custom that had fallen into disuse among its counterparts in Portugal starting in the last decades of the sixteenth century. Whenever an important decision was to be registered, most brothers were summoned to sign the official acts. They never counted more than 150 men. Even if we take into account that many Portuguese could be absent from the city at sea, the figure remains strikingly low. Significantly, this custom was also employed by the *Senado da*

³¹ José de Jesus Maria, O.F.M., *Ásia Sínica e Japónica*, ed. C.R. Boxer, 2 vols. (Macau, 1988), vol. 2, p. 128.

³² Manila is one of several examples of cities outside the Portuguese empire that possessed a *Misericórdia* of the Portuguese type, founded by Portuguese merchants and also serving as a proto-banking institution. On the *Misericórdia* of Manila, see Juan O. Mesquida, 'Origin of the Misericórdia of Manila,' *Ad Veritatem* (Manila), vol. 2/2 (2003): pp. 423–62. For Macau, see BA, *Jesuítas na Ásia*, Série China (24), 49–V–6, *Compromisso da Misericórdia de Macau*, chapter 2.

³³ Arquivos Nacionais da Torre do Tombo, Lisbon [= AN/TT], *Chancelaria de D. João IV*, 1644, liv. 16: fol. 156. See also *Compromisso da Misericórdia de Lisboa*, 1619, chapter 1 and BPE, *Compromisso da Misericórdia de Goa*, 1634, Cod. CXVI/2–3, fols. 1–48.

Câmara when it summoned the city's primary residents of the city, although it is unclear what criteria were used for determining which individuals could achieve that status.³⁴ While it is clear that men who were not *reinóis* (Portuguese-born) were present at such gatherings (some Luso-Chinese names appear in the lists), it is impossible to uncover what made them eligible. Could it be the mere fact that they were wealthy and respected? Or that they supplied richly endowed brides for the Portuguese?

Until the final years of the eighteenth century the pattern of formation of this Portuguese merchant elite began with single men born in Portugal who settled in Macau. They married the daughters of the Portuguese merchants, who were Eurasian. It appears that the Macanese merchant elite joined the upper ranks of this society through the door of the city's local garrison. One contemporary document states that soldiers should be preferred over ignorant and illiterate sailors as prospective husbands of orphans with dowries. These men should nevertheless show signs of their willingness to become useful to the city by dedicating themselves to trade and participating in civic government.³⁵ Family ties also accounted for some of the Portuguese immigration to Macau, especially when nephews traveled to join their resident uncles.³⁶ In any case, the possibilities for prosperity in business relied heavily on a marriage to a Luso-Chinese woman.

This pattern seems to reflect the same trends involved in the creation of colonial elites throughout the Portuguese empire. But there was a crucial difference. For instance, whereas in Bahia merchants transformed themselves into merchant-planters through marriage into the sugar-planting families or by the acquisition of land, the Macanese elite could not invest in land since the city had no backcountry. The only available way to cultivate capital was through the money market and maritime trade. Significantly, some testaments left by Macanese individuals stated that the money bequeathed was to be 'kept alive' through money lending, or what they termed *dinheiro vivo*.³⁷ In fact, most of the funds that circulated in credit conceded by the *Misericórdia* had

³⁴ For examples demonstrating that the *Câmara* used the same procedure, see AHU, Caixa 2, doc. 6, 10 January 1686; AHU, Caixa 13, doc. 12, 22 January 1691; and AHU, Caixa 12, doc. 46, 1 December 1779. Cf. Boxer, *Estudos... História de Macau*, vol. II, pp. 203–7; and Vale, *Portugueses em Macau*, p. 32.

³⁵ 'Carta do Conde D. Luís de Menezes to para o Padre Miguel do Amaral da Companhia de Jesus, 21 April 1720,' *Arquivos de Macau*, 3 ser., vol. 13 (Jan–Jun 1970): pp. 68–9.

³⁶ A very useful genealogic tool available for the study of Macanese families is Jorge Forjaz, *Famílias Macaenses*, 3 vols. (Macau, 1996).

³⁷ HAM, *Santa Casa da Misericórdia*, cod. 302, *Testamentos 1592–1849*.

their origin in legacies and bequests: one bishop went so far as to declare that in Macau everyone engaged in trade, even the dead.³⁸

Macau's merchant community was engaged in regional commerce with other areas of South and South East Asia. In the eighteenth century, opium from Bengal took center stage as one of the most profitable products.³⁹ Commercial links with Portugal were few; there were no significant transfers of merchandise or wealth from Macau to Portugal. Merchants established themselves for life in Macau. A return trip to Portugal took, under good circumstances, five years to complete and the few who survived more than one trip from Europe to Macau in the course of their lifetimes were either missionaries or diplomats. Such men, however, could not leave the city at their pleasure, but had to request permission from the king to return to Portugal.⁴⁰ In such a context, it is not difficult to understand why the activities of the *Misericórdia* were overwhelmingly concerned with issuing credit. The brotherhood was the city's primary moneylender, followed by the *Câmara* and the convent of the Poor Clares.⁴¹ Needless to say, the merchant elite controlled these three institutions. Moreover, it is important to note that, in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, credit represented more than 80 percent of the money flow through the coffers of the *Misericórdia*. Only 20 percent of its budget was related to charitable concerns, and this percentage also included liturgical and administrative expenses.⁴²

Numerous sources document the longstanding tradition of money lending in Macau, although the volume of capital involved as well as loan contracts are known only for the second half of the eighteenth century. The interconnectedness of the city's different communities through money loans is also known. Charles Boxer's work mentions the *respondências*, that is, money lent to the Portuguese by the Japanese during the period when the city's economy was dominated by the silk trade.⁴³ Testators that left legacies to the *Misericórdia* from 1592 to 1692 often stated that capital was to be placed on

³⁸ Manuel Teixeira, 'Macau e a sua Diocese. IV. Obras Sociais,' *Boletim Eclesiástico da Diocese de Macau*, vol. LXXIV (1976), pp. 317–438, especially p. 323.

³⁹ In 1795, the *Misericórdia* asked Prince Regent Dom João to allow the exacting of two taels by each opium box for the purpose of helping widows, orphans and other poor women. See AHU, Caixa 20, doc. 9, 1795.

⁴⁰ See, for example, AHU, Caixa 3, doc. 1; Caixa 5, doc. 22; and Caixa 6, doc. 4.

⁴¹ On the *Misericórdias* involvement in trade, see Souza, *Survival of Empire*, pp. 28–9; Pires, *A Vida Marítima*, pp. 55–84; Vale, *Portugueses em Macau*, pp. 250–59; Pierre-Yves Manguin, *Os Nguyen, Macau e Portugal—Aspectos políticos e comerciais de uma relação privilegiada, 1773–1802* (Macau, 1999), pp. 189–90.

⁴² Sá, 'Ganhos da Terra,' pp. 50–51.

⁴³ Boxer, *Great Ship*, p. 147.

the market.⁴⁴ And, writing in 1635, António Bocarro mentioned the risks of lending money to the Chinese since the Portuguese would find it impossible to track them down inside the Ming Empire if they chose to flee their debts by leaving the city.⁴⁵

By contrast, recent scholarship suggests that, in the second half of the eighteenth century, the money flow of the *Misericórdia* went as far as Canton and that Portuguese merchants engaged in credit activities with the money that they had borrowed from the funds of the confraternity. Lending to the Chinese, for instance, was highly profitable, although it was interpersonal, that is, the *Misericórdia* did not do business with them directly or on an institutional basis. Merchants borrowed from the brotherhood's funds and subsequently lent privately to the Chinese. The *Misericórdia* distinguished between land credit and sea loans (*ganhos da terra* and *ganhos do mar*). Interest on the former was less than 10 percent and the latter was between 20 and 25 percent, depending on the risks involved in the voyage. For the Chinese, though, these rates were double. They paid 16 and 20 percent interest for land credit and 40 percent for sea credit.⁴⁶ Needless to say, the *Misericórdia* of Macau often came under suspicion, just like its metropolitan and imperial counterparts, of financial fraud. These concerns were demonstrated not only in the constant flow of legislation, local and royal, aimed at imposing a degree of order on the money-lending business and creditors, but also in the accusation of rigged elections in the *Misericórdias*, whenever there were reasons to believe that debtors manipulated electoral procedures. Accusation of mismanagement of funds by the *Misericórdia*, as well as of fraudulent use of its credit facilities were common occurrences for the confraternity, and complaints against it were often dealt with by the *Conselho Ultramarino* in the seventeenth or in the eighteenth centuries.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ HAM, *Santa Casa da Misericórdia*, cod. 302, *Testamentos 1592–1849*.

⁴⁵ Bocarro, *Livro das Plantas*, vol. 2, p. 267.

⁴⁶ Paul Arthur Van Dyke, *Port Canton and the Pearl River Delta 1690–1845* (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 2002), pp. 378–9. Houckgeest also documents financial speculation over the loans of the *Misericórdia* although he mentions slightly different rates of interest. See André Everard Van Braam Houckgeest, *Voyage de l'Ambassade de la Compagnie des Indes Orientales Hollandaises, vers l'Empereur de la Chine, dans les années 1794 & 1795*, 2 vols (Philadelphia, 1798), vol. 2, pp. 273–4.

⁴⁷ At least in theory, the Macau *Misericórdia* was part of a wider network of *Misericórdias* whose 'head' was the Goa *Misericórdia*, that is, the *Misericórdias* of the cities, towns, and fortresses that belonged to the *Estado da Índia*. Nevertheless, the Macau *Misericórdia* corresponded little with the 'mother house' in Goa. Correspondence was limited to expediting the legacies and wills of the persons who died in Macau, since correspondence with heirs in Portugal or other parts of the empire was centralized by the *Misericórdia*

In Macau, the *Misericórdia* ran three institutions: a hospital for the Portuguese, a leper house and a foundling home, complete with a foundling wheel. The numbers of the individuals admitted to these facilities were nevertheless small and not very visible in city life. Just as was the case elsewhere in the Portuguese empire, the *Misericórdia* cared for the destitute members of the Portuguese community and to the Christianized populations (in this order). Contemporary reports note that the Portuguese were careful not to admit the Chinese into the main hospital since, if they died in Portuguese care, the Chinese authorities could exact a fine. The only hospital that accepted the Chinese was the leper house and sources make clear that its services were exclusively for the converted ones. The ruling board of the *Misericórdia* claimed (falsely) that there was no tradition of charity among the Chinese, but it was known that, once they chose to convert, Chinese Christians were expelled from their former communities and thus entirely dependent on help from the Christians.⁴⁸ The same discriminative practices were used with regard to the dowering of women. In 1710, the *Câmara* wrote to every parish priest in the city to ask for a list of the most needy orphans and widows who were daughters of Portuguese men, with specification of their social status.⁴⁹

of Goa. Also, the Macau *Misericórdia* imported legislation from Goa, because it did not correspond directly with the *Misericórdia* of Lisbon. Its charter combined regulations of Lisbon and Goa, adapting them to local specificities as it is stated in the introduction. See BA, *Jesuitas na Ásia*, Série China (24), 49-V-6, *Compromisso da Misericórdia de Macau*, 1627, fols. 346v-8. Specific legislation issued either by the king or the viceroy for the *Misericórdias* of Lisbon, Goa, Malacca or even Macau was compiled by the Macau *Misericórdia*. See HAM, *Misericórdia de Macau*, cod. 300, 1532-1766. Other matters were dealt with directly with the *Conselho Ultramarino* in Lisbon. Yet such regulations proved to be useful only if specific situations required them for strategic purposes. Otherwise, the everyday administration of the confraternity was almost completely independent of outside oversight and the group was its privileges (in the rare instances when other authorities attempted to impose upon it). The autonomy of the Macau *Misericórdia* is also demonstrated by the fact that its charter was adopted in Nagasaki. See José Justino de Andrade e Silva, *Collecção Chronologica de Legislação Portuguesa Compilada e Anotada*, 10 vols. (Lisbon, 1854-59), vol. 2, p. 191.

⁴⁸ João de Pina-Cabral, *Between China and Europe. Person, Culture and Emotion in Macao* (London, 2002), p. 23.

⁴⁹ 'Carta que a cidade escreveu ao Pe Vigario de S. Lourenço'; 'Resposta do Vigario de S. Lourenço a carta acima'; 'Carta que a cidade fez ao Vigario de St.º António'; 'Resposta do Pe Vigario de St.º António a carta acima'; 'Carta que a cidade fez ao Pe Cura da Sé desta Cidade'; 'Resposta do Pe Cura da Sé desta cidade a carta acima' in *Arquivos de Macau*, 3 ser., vol. 13 (Jan-Jun 1970): pp. 253-4.

On the whole, the two adult hospitals boarded a total of between 40 and 50 people and the number of foundlings cared for by the *Misericórdia* never surpassed 100. Yet the overwhelming majority of the poor of Macau does not appear to have been institutionalized, as the continual presence of reference to beggars in contemporary sources indicates. The last three decades of the eighteenth century were marked by successive legislative measures against begging and female prostitution, but such efforts should be understood as part of the Portuguese crown's increasing concern with vagrancy during those years.⁵⁰ Beggars were perhaps the primary constant in the city's history during the early modern period. The fact that Macau's population was dominated by an overwhelming proportion of women who were born locally accounted for one of the causes of the presence of female beggars, but obviously there were also male mendicants, although in fewer numbers, including Portuguese 'shamefaced' poor, as well as Chinese vagrants.

Women were one of the main concerns of the *Misericórdia*, but most of them never boarded in an institution since charity directed at them consisted mainly in the provision of dowries to poor orphaned girls. Many of the brotherhood's testators gave generously, endowing a given number of dowries to be distributed each year. It was common practice for a *Misericórdia* to create a *recolhimento* (house of seclusion) to provide women with a safe place to reside while they awaited a dowry.⁵¹ The *recolhimento* opened by the Macau brotherhood was a late creation, founded only in 1726 and confirmed by the viceroy the following year. It is not known how long the institution lasted, since one of the few sources making explicit reference to it is the group's charter. This document stipulates the *recolhimento's* capacity of 30 women lodged at the *Misericórdia's* expense, with others being lodged at their own expense. The proportion of residents was to be two orphans to one widow and the regulations made it clear that only the daughters of the Portuguese should be admitted. Preference for admission followed this sequence: first, the daughters and widows of the members of the *Misericórdia* (and among these those whose fathers were *provedores* or members of the ruling board); then the daughters of Macau's citizens (and among these, those women whose fathers and husbands had served in the *Câmara* for longer terms); finally, the daughters of the Portuguese who were presumably not members of either institution. It would have been impossible, in any case, for the *recolhimento* to help a large number of prospective brides from a broad cross-section of

⁵⁰ AHU, *Macau*, Caixas 7 to 21.

⁵¹ See Russell-Wood, *Fidalgos*, 1968; and Sá, *Quando o Rico*, pp. 197-204; Isabel dos Guimarães Sá, *As Misericórdias Portuguesas de D. Manuel I a Pombal* (Lisbon, 2001), pp. 120-23.

the population. The institution was, of course, restricted to the Luso-Chinese community (despite the claim found at the beginning of the statutes stating that it was intended for all of the city's orphans and widows). Moreover, no Chinese doctor was permitted to enter its infirmary.⁵²

An analysis of the daily accounts of the *Misericórdia* between the years from 1757 to 1774 reveals the centrality of public ritual almsgiving in the activities of the confraternity. On a single religious event, the *Misericórdia* could offer a few coins as alms to almost 5,000 individuals (a figure that broadly coincides with the city's Christian population). Such alms were likely given to the non-Christian Chinese who presented themselves as well. Curiously, the Dutch also used similar charitable practices. In spite of the Calvinist rejection of begging and almsgiving, by the 1770s the Dutch East India Company's representatives in Macau distributed alms to over 1,000 women and children every Saturday.⁵³ The *Misericórdia* held its general distributions of money twice a year, once during the Holy Week and again on 2 July. As such, they were part of a larger cycle of Catholic rituals that took place in the city in the *Misericórdia*, as well as the other civil and ecclesiastical institutions, participated.

All year round, the Catholic culture of the Macanese Christian community offered opportunities for highly visible displays of the group's charitable activities. As was the case in other Portuguese cities, the Corpus Christi procession was one of Macau's main events. This event glorified the city's main authorities, in particular the bishop and *Senado da Câmara*.⁵⁴ The city also possessed a high number of patron saints who were celebrated on their annual feasts: Nossa Senhora da Conceição (Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception), St. John the Baptist, St. Francis Xavier, and St. Catherine of Siena.⁵⁵ According to the Dutch traveler Houckgeest, who delighted describing the feasts as he observed them in the 1770s, most of these events included puppet shows. He was especially fond, as a good Protestant, of recounting the practices of Macau's idolatrous Catholics. At the feast of St. John the Baptist, figures representing Herod, Salome, and her maid were burnt during the evening. St. Anthony of Lisbon was the patron saint of the garrison, and his feast lasted from the 31 May to 13 June. During this period, the saint was proclaimed

⁵² 'Compromisso das Recolhidas que estão no Mosteiro da Santa Casa da *Misericórdia* da Cidade de Macau, fundado no ano de 1726. Sendo Provedor António Carneiro de Alcáçova para maior honra, e glória de Deus, e da Virgem Nossa Senhora dos desamparados,' in Leonor Diaz de Seabra (ed.), *O Compromisso da Misericórdia de Macau de 1627* (Macau, 2003), pp. 146–50.

⁵³ Houckgeest, *Voyage*, vol. 2, p. 260.

⁵⁴ AHU, Caixa 5, doc. 20, 1745; and AHU, Caixa 6, doc. 6 § 21, 1747.

⁵⁵ Boxer, *Portuguese Society*, p. 48.

governor of the city through a solemn act whereby the governor handled the staff (*vara*), a symbol of authority, to the saint's likeness. St. Anthony was also taken in procession to the Franciscan convent, so he might pay homage to his spiritual father, St. Francis of Assisi. During the Holy Week, a crucifixion and descent from the cross were performed inside the Dominican church through the medium of a puppet show that was the object of a detailed (and cynical) description by this author.⁵⁶

It is unclear if older ritual traditions recounted in other sources continued to be performed in the eighteenth century. It is known that the Jesuits trained over 100 local children to participate in theatrical performances. Peter Mundy describes one such event that took place on 25 November 1637, during which children performed episodes in the life of St. Francis Xavier, mimicked a battle between the Portuguese and the Dutch in a dance, and other numbers in which children sang, danced, and played musical instruments.⁵⁷ Other non-religious rituals, such as public games, were held in Macau in the 1630s. Mundy describes chivalric ones, with a distinct medieval character, at which one half of the participants dressed as Moors and the other as Christians.⁵⁸

The *Misericórdia* was one among several institutions that used ritual to affirm the Catholic culture and political presence of the Portuguese population amidst a multitude of Chinese men and women.⁵⁹ The confraternity organized the Maundy Thursday procession, with its group of flagellants, where there would be a ceremonial washing of the feet prior to the marching of the processional cortège. In Macau, there was a crucial difference in the way that these rituals were performed. While in Portugal this was an inversion ritual during which the feet of 12 poor individuals were washed, in Macau it was the *provedor's* duty to wash the feet of the *mesários*, the other members of the ruling board.⁶⁰ The confraternity also held a huge feast on 2 July (the feast of the Visitation of St. Elizabeth by the Virgin), and a 'Procession of the Bones' on 1 November. This was a ceremony traditionally performed by the *Misericórdias*

⁵⁶ Houckgeest, *Voyage*, vol. 2, pp. 285–90.

⁵⁷ *Travels of Peter Mundy*, vol. 3, p. 274.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 265.

⁵⁹ Some of these celebrations and processions are documented in the daily expense book of the Macau *Misericórdia*. See HAM, *Santa Casa da Misericórdia*, cod. 277, *Livro da Conta do Risco do Mar e Risco da Terra, 1755–1775*. The Maundy Thursday and All Saints' Day processions were regulated by the confraternity charter. See *Jesuitas na Ásia*, Série China (24), 49–V–6, *Compromisso da Misericórdia de Macau, 1627*, chapters 28, 30 and 31.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 'Ordem que há-de haver para o lavatório dos pés na *Misericórdia* em quinta feira das endoenças,' at fols. 407–8. This is legislation copied at the end of the statutes, not included in chapters.

during which the brotherhood would process solemnly to the site of public executions to recover the bodily remains of the executed and bring them to its church for a Christian burial ceremony. So important was this ritual that the Macau group's charter recommended that some bones should be saved for the next procession in the following year, in case no criminals were executed in the previous year.⁶¹

Conclusions

When analyzing city life in Macau, the historian's primary concern is not with measuring the extent to which the Portuguese influenced the Chinese (since this was negligible). Rather, the most puzzling question deals with how the Portuguese population never lost its particular identity in the face of the strong potential for sinification. Evidence of the strong pull of Chinese culture can be found in many areas; in dress (despite of the habit of wearing wigs and using umbrellas), in material culture such as food and furniture; and also in language (the Macanese spoke a Creole dialect called *patuá* which was a mixture of Portuguese, Spanish, Cantonese, and Canarin from the Karnatic coast of India).⁶² Perhaps one can claim that the Macanese managed a very successful ambivalent use of two different cultures. Whatever the case may have been, the city's culture had a strong gender divide: men spoke and wrote Portuguese and dressed as Europeans while women represented the Chinese or Eurasian side of the colony's culture. One of the reasons why Macau's culture kept its Portuguese character was the permanent influx of immigrants from Portugal.

Historians and anthropologists have remarked upon Macau's resilience, and very rightly so. After all, it lasted as a colony from the 1550s until its handover to the People's Republic of China in 1999. The city offers a good example of the limits of acculturation. Despite its weak ties to Portugal, Macau managed to preserve significant elements of its Portuguese identity. And it did this as a fragile settlement confronted by a culture that, if not overtly and permanently

⁶¹ Ibid., chapter 31.

⁶² These issues have recently been analysed by João de Pina-Cabral, who deals mostly with nineteenth- and twentieth-century Macau. See Pina-Cabral, *Between China and Europe*, p. 40. Archival material permits the extrapolation of his claims onto more distant eras. Numerous documents attest to the Chinese women's manners, and especially that they could not speak Portuguese. See AHU, Macau, Caixa 7, doc. 37, 22 December 1774. The attempt by the bishop to reform their customs such as through the obligation to learn Portuguese, to dress in Western manner, and to have only one female servant, was vigorously contested by the *Senado da Câmara*.

hostile to the Europeans, was nevertheless the dominant force in the area. The city's *Misericórdia* played an important role in the maintenance of a Portuguese identity among the colonial mercantile elite. Besides contributing to the survival of the maritime trade through money lending to Portuguese merchants, it gave occasion for the performing of Catholic rituals of charity, where the most fragile members of the population, women, took center stage as recipients of charity.