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Shaping Social Space in the Centre and Periphery of the Portuguese Empire: The Example of the Misericórdias from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century

ISABEL DOS GUIMARÃES SÁ

When they drink they have certain pots made of black earth very fine and thin, much like those we use in Holland for flower pots, having in the neck thereof a partition full of holes [with a spout], (and these cruses are called gorgoleta), to this end, that when they drink, they may hold [the pot] on high, and touch it not with their mouths, never spilling a drop, which they do for cleanness, because no man should put it to [his] mouth, and then when any man comes newly out of Portugal, and then begins to drink after their manner, because he is not used to that kind of drinking, wherein they take great pleasure and laugh at him, calling him *reinol*, which is a name given in it to such as newly come from Portugal, and know not how to behave themselves in such grave manner, and with such ceremonies as the Portingales use there in India, so that at first they are much whooped and cried at in the streets, until by use [and practice] they have learned the Indian manner, which they quickly do.¹

The immigrant, if we take Georg Simmel's definition, is in essence an 'inside' foreigner: one who arrives in a country and remains.² If we apply this notion to the Portuguese Empire, a double process emerges. Communities had to be created out of foreigners in alien lands, in which the reverse criteria had to apply, transforming into 'inside' foreigners those who were not fully integrated into the Portuguese ruling elites. These could be either the newly arrived Portuguese, as in Linschoten's text, the indigenous population, or slaves. If the lack of similarity with the situation described by Linschoten applies to the non verbal language (improper use of the drinking pot) Linschoten also admitted that such 'misconduct' was merely temporary. A rapid process of adaptation took place and the Portuguese foreigner was able to transform himself into a member of the local elites. This process, as we shall see, was almost impossible to accomplish by either non whites or non-Christians.

This paper is an attempt to analyse the criteria used by the Portuguese in the creation of a colonial society, by defining its own 'inside' foreigners, taking as the point of departure that the process of creating 'inside'

¹ John Huyghen van Linschoten, *The Voyage of John Huyghen van Linschoten to the East Indies (1583-1592) — from the old English translation of 1598 . . .*, 2 vols (New York: Burt Franklin, [n.d.]), I, 208.

² Georg Simmel, 'Excursus sullo straniero', in Enrico Pozzi (a cura di), *Lo straniero interno* (Florence: Ponte alle Grazie, 1993), p. 25.

foreigners is essential to the formation of social identity.³ Only charity as it was practised by the Portuguese Misericórdias will be considered here, as it was one of several institutions along with the Câmaras concerned with establishing social frontiers. Charles Boxer was the first historian to call attention to the close co-operation between the municipalities and the Misericórdias, whom he viewed as the pillars of Portuguese colonial society. At the same time Boxer also put paid to the commonly held Portuguese belief in the absence of racial discrimination in the Portuguese Empire, and pointed out the importance of social status in Portuguese colonial society. Boxer maintained that access to the main institutions (municipal council, Misericórdia), was restricted to those who claimed Portuguese origin. On the other hand, although natives could be trained to perform tasks normally given to Europeans, including the priesthood, they never succeeded in obtaining leading posts in the church hierarchy.⁴

THE PORTUGUESE MISERICÓRDIAS: THE FORMATION OF A MONOPOLY OF CHARITY

Before the industrial revolution, the way to deal with the poor and alleviate inequality was through the provision of charity. Among the Catholics at least, charity was totally voluntary: the donor decided what, how much and when to give to the poor. Charity was a path to social well being as well as to the salvation of the soul of both donor and recipient. The Early Modern Age is characterized by the growing intervention of the state in charitable matters, without threatening the basically voluntary character of charity itself. In Portugal, this process is inseparable from the growing power of the confraternities under royal protection, the Misericórdias, through whom the Crown influenced the practice of charity both at home and overseas.

In one of the last sessions of the Council of Trent (16 September 1562), the representative of the Portuguese king succeeded in obtaining exemption for the confraternities under royal protection from the regulations that from then onwards all confraternities would have to abide by.⁵ Such rules were an attempt to control the number of confraternities as well as their activities: the bishops could accept or refuse the founding of new

³ Pozzi, p. 17.

⁴ C. R. Boxer, *O Império colonial português (1415-1825)*, 2nd edn (Lisbon: Edições 70, 1981), p. 263; C. R. Boxer, *Portuguese Society in the Tropics. The Municipal Councils of Goa, Macao, Bahia and Luanda, 1510-1800* (Madison and Milwaukee: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965), pp. 35, 69, 77, 119 and 147; C. R. Boxer, *A Igreja e a Expansão Ibérica (1440-1770)* (Lisbon: Edições 70, [n.d.]), p. 14; see also C. R. Boxer, *Race Relations in the Portuguese Colonial Empire, 1415-1825* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963).

⁵ Gabriele Paleotti, 'Acta Concilii Tridentini, annis 1562 et 1563 originalia' in *Concilii Tridentini Diarorum. Partis tertiae, volumen primus*, ed. by Sebastian Merkle (Freiburg-Brisgau: Herder, 1931), p. 431.

brotherhoods; they approved their regulations and confraternities as well as hospitals would be subject to Episcopal visitations.⁶ This concession represents the success of a policy the Portuguese kings had been developing long before the Council of Trent: since 1498 with the foundation of the first Misericórdia of Lisbon, established under the protection of members of the royal family, a reorganization of charitable activities had been taking place. Not that the tendency was new: in the Late Middle Ages attempts were made to restructure assistance to the poor by reforming the hospitals.⁷ Nevertheless the reformation movement took its definition from the Misericórdias and was to mature under that framework. The model of the Misericórdia of Lisbon was to be disseminated throughout all the Portuguese territories and the evidence available confirms that D. Manuel I and his successors intended to establish the Misericórdias as the main confraternities in Portugal. The king sent emissaries to promote the creation of local Misericórdias and wrote letters of encouragement to the municipalities: within two years of the foundation of the Lisbon Misericórdias, in 1500, similar confraternities had been founded in Évora, Santarém and Porto.⁸

Why were such confraternities known as *Misericórdias*? It is worth looking into the meaning of this term because it defines the common ground for the practice of charity. In the first place, an act of mercy is the ability to have pity on the weak and proceed accordingly. It is useful to note that mercy always refers to situations of inequality, where the person who gives is superior to the one who needs help. Secondly, since the Late Middle Ages, for any individual who had learned the basic tenets of the Christian religion, the word *Misericórdia* recalled specific acts that are known as works of mercy. These fourteen works had been framing charitable services ever since the thirteenth century, and were taught as part of the Catechism: they were to give Christians a vocabulary of charity, enumerating the types of help that individuals might be in need of; as for instance ministering to the sick, clothing the naked, burying the dead, feeding the hungry, the prisoners, etc. The patron saint of the Portuguese Misericórdias was the Virgin Mary, whom sinners looked on as an intercessor to her son, who was too holy to be contacted directly. In

⁶ Josepho Alberigo, et al., *Concilium Oecumenicorum Decreta, Concilium Tridentinum — 1545-1563* (Bologna: Istituto per le scienze Religiose, 1962), Sessio xxii, 'De Reformatione', Canon viii, 716.

⁷ Paulo Drummond Braga, 'A crise dos estabelecimentos de assistência aos pobres nos finais da Idade Média', *Revista Portuguesa de História*, Coimbra, (1991), xxvi, 187.

⁸ BN, *Reservados*, MSS. 238, n. 2, 'Notificação da Vila de Montemor-o-Novo participando a fundação de uma confraria em Lisboa para cumprimento das obras de Misericórdia . . .', 13 November 1500; José Justino de Andrade e Silva, *Coleção Chronologica da Legislação Portuguesa compilada e anotada*, 10 vols (Lisbon: 1854), II, 318: 'Carta d'el rei D. Manuel à Câmara da Cidade do Porto em 14 de Março de 1499'; Fernando da Silva Correia, *Origens e formação das Misericórdias Portuguesas* (Lisbon: Torres, 1944), p. 581.

painting, the Lady of the Misericórdia was depicted sheltering everyone beneath her cloak since all would need to be protected at some time in their lives: at first glance inequality on earth seemed to be contradicted by equality before the eyes of God. On closer examination these representations differentiated individuals according to wealth and status: kings and nobles on one side, churchmen on the other and the poor below, often occupying less space in the composition of the picture.⁹

By the time the Council of Trent ended, the Misericórdias were already a worldwide institution, giving assistance to the needy according to a common language of charity from the major cities of continental Portugal to towns. They were omnipresent in the Atlantic Archipelagos, in Brazil, and in the East.

The original character of the Misericórdias did not go unobserved by the Italian traveller Pietro della Valle when he visited India in 1623. Describing Cananor, he wrote:

It hath four Churches, to wit La Sede, or the Cathedral; the Misericórdia, which is a confraternity and pious institution. There are some of them in all the settlements of the Portugals. They correspond with one another, and do many good works, much like our Monte di Pietà, Santo Spirito, and other such; for almost all the pious works, which among us are done by divers Houses and Societies, this Institution of La Misericórdia does amongst the Portugals [. . .]. A pious thing, indeed, and of infinite benefit to the Publick; the rather because they are in all the Territories of the Portugals, and hold correspondence together, even those of India with those of Portugal; so that they all seem but one body, extending itself to several Countries and becoming incredibly useful to all.¹⁰

Pietro della Valle mentions three important features of the Misericórdias: they could be found in most of the Portuguese territories; they carried out all the pious works which in other countries were generally performed by several different institutions; good communication gave the impression that they acted as one. Valle was aware that, although independent and autonomous, the Misericórdias could correspond with one other and maintain a cohesiveness that other institutions could not.

What Valle did not say, though, was that the Misericórdias were the only confraternities to perform the fourteen works of mercy on a large scale, thus in practice they held the monopoly on charitable works. The importance of charity according to the Council of Trent is indisputable: salvation of the soul was to be obtained through faith and good works and it is therefore understandable how control of charity would become a

⁹ *Mater Misericordiae — Simbolismo e representação da Virgem da Misericórdia* (Lisbon: Museu de S. Roque — Livros Horizonte, 1995), pp. 10, 94, 100, 106; also *Tesouros artísticos da Misericórdia do Porto. Catálogo* (Porto: CNCDP — Santa Casa da Misericórdia do Porto, 1995), p. 115.

¹⁰ G. Havers, *The Travels of Pietro della Valle in India from the old English translation of 1664*, 2 vols (New York: Franklin, [n.d.]), II, 382.

crucial political issue. In Portugal, poor relief provided by the Misericórdias acquired a coherence only matched by Anglo-Saxon Poor Laws. It is important, also, not to forget the link that existed between the crown and charity. Portuguese kings, who appear to have been eager to conform to the precepts of the Roman Catholic church, managed to take control of charitable services on a broad scale.

The appropriation of the main charitable services by the Lisbon Misericórdia was ensured by a sequence of privileges granted by various kings which were gradually taken over by peripheral Misericórdias. These privileges resulted in two consequences: in the first place they favoured the individual who was part of the ruling body of the Misericórdia, the *mesa*; secondly, they created highly advantageous conditions for the exercise of charity. I shall quote only some of those prerogatives as enumerated in the first published *compromisso* of the Misericórdia of 1516, because such charters help to explain both the expansion of the Misericórdias and their competence in poor relief. The brothers of the Mesa were neither required to take up compulsory posts in the municipality, nor liable to extraordinary taxes. These privileges had an impact on the life of the ruling members; other privileges as we shall see, were related to the charitable activities of the confraternity.

The Misericórdias were the first to be served in the royal and council meat markets so that hospitals and prisoners could be supplied; they had authorization to enter prisons, visit inmates and clean gaols; those prisoners who were helped by the Misericórdia took precedence over other prisoners when they were on trial, or were sent into exile more speedily, which represented a financial saving because of the shorter periods of imprisonment. The Misericórdia had a special attorney who dealt with prisoners' cases in court; his view took precedence over that of other magistrates. On All Saints Day the brotherhood would collect the bodies of those who had been executed and take them for burial. The Misericórdias were also able to place the poor for treatment in local hospitals, where they had no hospitals themselves. Only members of the Misericórdia could beg alms for prisoners, the poor and the crippled; otherwise the penalty was one month's imprisonment.¹¹

There were further privileges the *compromisso* did not specify. The Misericórdias were able to correspond directly with the king, a privilege they shared with the Câmaras, their main partner in local administration. The royal protection was a prerogative closely guarded by the Misericórdias, who wrote to the sovereign whenever their privileges were threatened by others, such as magistrates or bishops. Neither were the

¹¹ *Do compromisso da confraria da Sancta Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa fundada pela rainha D. Leonor de Lancastre*, ed. by Fernando Correia (Caldas da Rainha: Caldense, 1929), pp. 42-46.

kings reluctant to admit the Misericórdias' supremacy over other confraternities: Cardinal D. Henrique even acknowledged that only the Misericórdias could perform the fourteen works of mercy. The Misericórdias were to have exclusive ownership of biers, which allowed them further to restrict the functions of other confraternities who had to rent them from the local Misericórdia in the event of a funeral.¹² Funds previously allocated to other institutions were diverted to the Misericórdia: although members had the exclusive right to collect alms for poor relief, the main source of contributions came from funerals and bequests, which were often extremely generous up to the eighteenth century. For their part, in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries the Misericórdias had a prominent role in welfare, surpassing all the other confraternities in poor relief, and covering a wide range of services. They clearly overshadowed all other brotherhoods, who were limited to carrying out devotional activities within a smaller geographical area: furthermore, whilst other confraternities tended to concentrate on self-help (assistance to members' families), Misericórdias devoted themselves to non members as well.

The activities performed by the Misericórdias speak for themselves: these included the administration of most of the hospitals for the poor, as during the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries the running of most municipal hospitals was passed to the Misericórdias;¹³ in the seventeenth century when the emphasis on feminine virtue gave rise to numerous *recolhimentos* to protect the virtuous, or reform the fallen, the Misericórdias often had a new one established; they buried both members and those too poor to afford a funeral; they gave assistance to poor prisoners, feeding, clothing and often obtaining an early hearing for them in court; they helped the municipalities to care for foundlings in most of the main cities; they gave dowries to poor girls; they helped to pay the ransom of prisoners of war; in the colonies they acted as financial depositaries, negotiated bills of exchange and served as *procuradoras de defuntos*, that is, safeguarded the bequests of those who had died in the Empire and had left their inheritance to their heirs in Portugal.

In the colonies, the king had a vested interest in providing charity: aside from providing an opportunity for his subjects abroad to be aware of his influence, the military requirements of the Empire necessitated numerous hospitals, which were financed through the royal budget, even before the foundation of local Misericórdias.¹⁴ Such hospitals provided treatment for

¹² Biblioteca Pública e Arquivo Distrital de Évora, *Fundo da Misericórdia, Livro dos Privilégios do Hospital, 1500-1816*, fols 18-18^v.

¹³ Vitor Ribeiro, *História da beneficência pública em Portugal* (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade, 1907), pp. 84-96.

¹⁴ Numerous documents on this issue can be found for Cananor, Goa, Cochim, Ormuz and Chaul in António da Silva Rêgo, *Documentação para a História das Missões do Padroado Português do Oriente. Índia (1499-1522)*, 12 vols (Lisbon: Fundação Oriente, 1991), 1.

soldiers newly arrived by sea. The role of the king in matters of religion was reinforced by the *padroado real*: ecclesiastical privileges granted by the papacy to the Order of Christ had been incorporated into the crown by a bull of 1551. As grand masters of the Order of Christ the kings received rents destined for the church and, in exchange, took responsibility for maintenance of church structures.¹⁵ Not only the Misericórdia but all confraternities in the overseas territories were created with the approval of the monarch, who confirmed their regulation through consultation with the Board of Conscience and Orders. In the East, two devices existed to give visibility to the royal patronage: the alms-giving to the (preferably Christian) poor every Friday,¹⁶ and the custom of offering a retablo to new churches and confraternity chapels which was sent from Lisbon on request.¹⁷

THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE MISERICÓRDIAS: CREATING SOCIAL FRONTIERS

The royal protection gave the Misericórdias a secular character: matters of devotion were secondary to social status or race. I do not mean that religious observance was not fundamental: the confraternities took pride in their processions and a contingent of chaplains was occupied in performing religious services as laid down in wills. Obviously, there was frequent participation by clergy as members of the ruling board: depending on the local importance of clergy, bishops or members of the Episcopal chapter were often elected as *provedores*, the Misericórdias' highest authority.¹⁸ Nevertheless, it was assumed that the confraternity included only those who were wealthy enough not to engage in manual labour, and a division was established between noble and other members. The former were of two kinds: either the local gentry or those ennobled by education and social position (lawmen, priests) who were known as *irmãos nobres* or *primeira qualidade*. The non-noble members were master craftsmen or merchants and were known as *irmãos menores* or *de segunda qualidade*. Rather than being concerned with mixed blood or the devotional qualities of its members, the Misericórdias stressed the difference between the ruling elites. The *mesa*, a board of thirteen members, included seven noble brothers as opposed to six 'second class' members. The latter performed more lowly tasks, such as running hospitals: they were often the *mordomos*, that is to say, overseers. Governing, keeping records or accounts, these were the tasks

¹⁵ Boxer, *Império colonial português*, pp. 224–26.

¹⁶ Evidence was found for Chauí, Goa and Malaca (Rêgo, II, 9, 47 and 226).

¹⁷ Some examples can be quoted: the Misericórdias of Baçaim, Cochim and Cananor (Rêgo, IV, 105 and 486; V 375). Other confraternities, such as Nossa Senhora do Rosário, created by the Dominicans, also asked for them (Rêgo, IV, 129).

¹⁸ Mons. Cônego José Augusto Ferreira, *Catálogo dos provedores da irmandade da Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Braga instituída pelo grandioso arcebispo D. Diogo de Sousa [1513?], séc. XVI–séc. XX* (Braga: Livraria Cruz, 1940).

of the noble brothers, respectively the *provedor*, the scribe, and the treasurer. All those who worked with their hands — the labourers — were excluded from membership. The poor, regardless of their devotion or ability to perform the fourteen works of mercy, could only be recipients of relief. The Misericórdias therefore established a barrier between those who could accede to power and those who could not.

Initially, new members were only required to be 'Christians of good reputation': it was not until the statutes of 1577 that being an *Old Christian* was included as one of the requirements of membership, but in the *compromisso* of 1618 this exclusion was made more specific: individuals with Jewish or Moorish blood should not be admitted, and even Old Christians could be rejected if they had married someone of mixed blood.¹⁹ These rules eventually became part of the admission requirements of new members of the Misericórdias. Although not all of them adopted the 1618 statutes, they were the model for local *compromissos*. In 1774 those Misericórdias who had conformed to the Lisbon *compromisso* received an unexpected order from the Marquis of Pombal: that they should remove that clause from their copy of the *compromisso*.²⁰

If the total exclusion of individuals of mixed blood had never been accomplished in practice in public institutions, there was another form of discrimination concerning colour. Membership of Misericórdias was restricted to white men only from all over the Portuguese Empire, or if local populations were too mixed to allow for such a distinction, to those of real or socially constructed Portuguese origin. In India, the process of forming a so-called 'white' population is well known: the local elites were the result of Portuguese-born males marrying Asian women, the initial families having been created by mixed marriages promoted by Albuquerque. Thereafter, the reference point for status was a white male married to a local woman with Portuguese ancestors. In the nineteenth century these *descendentes* — local nobility of Portuguese origin — still formed the ruling elite in Goa.²¹ Full-blooded Asians — *canarins* — were not admitted to the Misericórdia of Goa until 1720.²² For reasons of social status and wealth, brotherhoods seem to have operated the same racial criteria concerning admittance: the Third Orders in Brazil also required their members to be white.²³ As a consequence, at least in Brazil, other

¹⁹ *Compromisso da Irmandade da Casa da Sancta Misericórdia da cidade de Lisboa* (Lisbon: Alvarez, 1600), fol. 2; *Compromisso da Misericórdia de Lisboa* (Lisbon: Craesbeeck, 1619), fol. 2.

²⁰ Alvará, 11 March 1774, quoted by Manuel Borges Carneiro, *Direito Civil de Portugal*, 4 vols (Lisbon: António José da Rocha, 1844) III, 244.

²¹ Luís Filipe F.R. Thomaz, *De Ceuta a Timor* (Lisbon: Difel, 1994), pp. 263–66.

²² Boxer, *Portuguese Society*, p. 34.

²³ 'Prestige, Power, and Piety in Colonial Brazil: The Third Orders of Brazil', in A. J. R. Russell-Wood, *Society and Government in Colonial Brazil, 1500–1822* (London: Variorum, 1992), p. 67.

confraternities segregated blacks and mulattos: often these confraternities discriminated according to colour or even ethnicity. There were brotherhoods who separated black from mulatto or grouped individuals according to their African origin: either blacks from Dahomey, known as *gege*, or Angolans. Nevertheless, white supremacy was the rule in the black brotherhoods: according to the regulations, the ruling bodies of such non-white confraternities were required to be white, a clause that black brotherhoods had often tried to overrule.²⁴

Membership of the Misericórdia was not for life: under some circumstances brothers could be 'riscados' (the term referring to names excised from the confraternity's records), because they did not abide by the rules. Fear of expulsion therefore reinforced the strength of the rules. Another criterion for membership of the Misericórdia was maintaining social status: it was possible for a member to be excluded because he had married below his status: for example with a *taberneira* (inn-keeper).²⁵ Marriage of a white man to a woman suspected of having Jewish blood was not acceptable: in Bahia, the two successive husbands of one woman were both denied membership. Only after an inquiry to establish her forebears in Portugal did her second husband succeed in being admitted.²⁶

CHARITY AS A DISCRIMINATING GIFT

The criteria for the giving of charity varied: the requirements of legitimate birth, good morals, place of birth, etc., were more or less universal in Southern Europe and in the colonies; colour also became a deciding factor. Let us take the example of Goa in the seventeenth century. At the top, there was a hospital for white males, especially designed to cater for soldiers newly arrived in the fleets, as is evident by its location near the docks. It is the most famous hospital in the Portuguese empire, since travellers such as Linschoten and Pyrard praised it in their writings.²⁷ In its heyday the hospital could even have been considered as a residential alternative for the Portuguese male population. Two criteria were thus enforced: gender (no women admitted) and origin (Portuguese): in fact, the hospital was seen as the king's tribute to his people fighting for his empire in the East. It is also a good example of a hospital which escaped the Misericórdia's control, being administered by the Jesuits after a brief period under Misericórdia

²⁴ A. J. R. Russell-Wood, 'Black and Mulatto Brotherhoods in Colonial Brazil: A Study in Collective Behaviour', *The Hispanic American History Review*, 54 (1974), n. 4, 579, 596-97.

²⁵ Historical Archives of Goa (hereafter HAG), *Livro dos Assentos e Acórdãos 1736-1762*, 'Assento de 17 de Março de 1756', fol. 145.

²⁶ *Irmãos da Santa Casa de Misericórdia da Bahia — século XVII*, ed. by Neusa Rodrigues Esteves (Salvador: Santa Casa de Misericórdia da Bahia, 1977), pp. 225-27.

²⁷ Linschoten, I: 237-38; Francisco Pyrard de Laval, *Viagem de Francisco Pyrard de Laval contendo a notícia de sua navegação às Índias Orientais, ilhas de Maldiva, Maluco e ao Brasil* [...], 2 vols (Porto: Livraria Civilização, [n.d.]), II, 9-20.

control.²⁸ Nevertheless, it was still the responsibility of the Misericórdia to bury the dead from the hospital. In 1617 the Mesa decided that only soldiers of quality could be buried inside the Church of the Santíssima Trindade, the rest being interred in the churchyard. This decision was motivated by the high number of mortalities.²⁹ In 1643, a minute of the Mesa's meeting expressed the same concern for the Portuguese dead, by trying to solve the problem of inefficient burials in the churchyard: the corpses, buried in shallow graves, were being eaten by dogs and birds. The solution was to bury them inside the Church of the Santíssima Trindade and not use the churchyard as a cemetery.³⁰

For non-white, non-Portuguese Christians three hospitals existed: the Hospital of S. Roque, run by the Jesuits as part of their strategy of evangelization; the Hospital of the Poor or for the *gente da terra*, owned by the Misericórdia; and the hospital of the Piedade, belonging to the Câmara.³¹

The regulations for the first Hospital dos Pobres of the Misericórdia have survived: the poor sick had to take confession and were given extreme unction if dying. Efforts were made to keep out the slaves belonging to the Portuguese: the ruling Portuguese seem to have been reluctant to provide treatment for their slaves. This indicates an intention of caring for the local population, even if not for everyone. The hospital excluded white Portuguese, except if the Mesa stated otherwise.³² The fact that the Portuguese were entitled to go to the Royal Hospital indicates a lack of cooperation between the various institutions: not only could individuals not be accepted in a higher-status hospital than one they were entitled to, but they could not apply to a lower one.

There are no records for the other hospital, the Hospital da Piedade: to date, we do not know who was entitled to be cared for there, but it would not be unreasonable to assume it cared for the poor — foundlings for instance (a duty ascribed to the municipality), or for women, who were excluded from the Royal Hospital. In the eighteenth century, the Royal was supposed to care for those with incurable diseases. The Câmara then handed over the hospital to the Misericórdia, in an attempt to alleviate the latter's difficult financial situation in 1680. The rents for the Hospital da Piedade could therefore be applied to the Hospital of the Poor, which had

²⁸ It was administered by the Misericórdia from 1542 (Rego, II, 312-20) until 1591 (J. F. Ferreira Martins, *História da Misericórdia de Goa (1520-1910)*, 3 vols (Nova Goa: Imprensa Nacional, 1910), 353-55).

²⁹ HAG, *Livro dos Adjuntos, 1614-1641*, 'Assento de 27 de Fevereiro de 1617', fol. 42.

³⁰ HAG, *Livro dos Assentos e Acórdãos, 1641-1686*, 'Assento de 18 de Março de 1643', fol. 17.

³¹ The Jesuits' hospital was founded in 1552: Rego, V, 265-66; Martins, II, 334-41.

³² HAG, *Regimento do ospital da Casa da Santa Misericórdia para a gente da terra e outros que pela Mesa se recebem — 2 de Dezembro de 1612*, fol. 3^v.

acquired by then the designation of Hospital de Todos-os-Santos.³³ The two hospitals, however, were not amalgamated until 1706, when it was acknowledged that the former Hospital of the Câmara did not take care of incurables as it was supposed to, but admitted vagrants who took advantage of the free food and lodging.³⁴ Nevertheless, even in latter days, this hospital which was intended for locals provided only a small proportion of accommodation for patients compared to the Royal Hospital, having a capacity of not more than twenty beds.

The two establishments for women were intended for white females: the first, the Recolhimento da Senhora da Serra, was designated for orphans and the evidence points to the fact that the daughters of the ruling elites superseded all others in admissions; the second, the Recolhimento de Santa Maria Madalena, also accepted white women in need of moral rehabilitation. A girl who had lied about her parentage, being illegitimate, was thrown out of the Serra and transferred to the Madalena and the Mesa decided that no bastards should be admitted to the Recolhimento da Serra unless their fathers acknowledged them.³⁵

The Misericórdia also had the task of exchanging prisoners with the enemy. A scale of priorities was established for bargaining for captives: *meninos e meninas*, boys probably came first; women; and only then adult males.³⁶ Those included in the lists issued by the Misericórdia (the ones claimed by local families) were given preference. When money was demanded white captives commanded a higher price than non-whites.³⁷

In times of decline, mainly in the eighteenth century, the Misericórdia restricted care to abandoned white children only.³⁸

The Misericórdia of Goa operated as a support system to the Portuguese community: it even provided burial for all their members, regardless of whether they could afford it or not.

Another example of race as a criterion for receiving relief comes from Bahia. Here the main general hospital was significantly different from those in Goa: the Hospital da Caridade or Hospital de S. Cristóvão admitted both whites and non-whites. This institution had separate infirmaries for men and women and also catered for the mentally ill. Although Russell-Wood affirms that the hospital did not discriminate according to class,

creed and religion,³⁹ it is unthinkable that a hospital at that period did not provide Catholic religious services for all its patients: confession and extreme unction were probably given to all the pensioners. Concerning race, a close view of the hospital records gives a slightly different picture of its multi-racial character. Slaves were not to be admitted except when their owners paid for their treatment; thus, most of the non-whites would have been freed slaves, and certainly a minority among the black population. The hospital admitted a small number of women as did general hospitals in the eighteenth century; the majority of patients, though, were white males with a high proportion of Portuguese-born men.⁴⁰

The overall picture that can be drawn from the selection criteria established by the Misericórdias is one of a society where each individual was defined by his status within the community. More than that, by formalizing divisions between the different groups that made up the colonial population the Misericórdia framed social relations within the colonial context. The Misericórdia appears to have been an institution primarily concerned with the preservation of the Portuguese population, initially immigrants recently arrived from Portugal who were to be transformed into full 'insiders', and only secondly with the care of the non-Portuguese. In the process through which individuals were, or were not, fully integrated into colonial society, religion was not the main criterion for the shaping of social groups in the Portuguese colonies. Taking the example of the Misericórdias as one of the worldwide institutions created by the Portuguese, belonging to the Catholic Church was of course essential, but colour established the main frontier between the population.

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³³ HAG, *Livro dos Assentos e Acórdãos*, 1641-1686, 'Assento de 3 de Dezembro de 1680', fol. not numbered.

³⁴ HAG, *Livro 6 dos Assentos e Acórdãos*, 1686-1736, fol. 59.

³⁵ HAG, *Livro 6 dos Assentos e Acórdãos*, 1686-1736, 'Assento de 1 de Julho de 1719', fol. 116.

³⁶ Biblioteca Pública e Arquivo Distrital de Évora, *Compromisso da Misericórdia de Goa*, MS, fol. 38: Cap. 28, 'Do modo como se hão-se receber e despachar as petições dos captivos'.

³⁷ HAG, *Livro dos Assentos e Acórdãos*, 1641-1686, 'Assento de 4 de Novembro de 1650', fol. 58^v and 'Assento de 16 de Agosto de 1679', fol. 168^v.

³⁸ Martins, II, 355.

³⁹ A. J. R. Russell-Wood, *Fidalgos e Filantropos. A Santa Casa da Misericórdia da Bahia, 1550-1755* (Brasília: Editora Universidade de Brasília, 1968), p. 221.

⁴⁰ Arquivo da Misericórdia da Bahia, *Livro 2º do Hospital da Caridade da Santa Casa da Misericórdia da Bahia*. Results are still being assessed, but the picture that emerges from a sample of two thousand patients admitted between 1778 and 1784 can be summarized thus: whites represented about 61 per cent of all patients; of these 86 per cent were men; the number of Portuguese-born males is equivalent to 46 per cent of all white men admitted; blacks and mulattos of both sexes amount to only 39 per cent of the patients who recovered during this period. Of these, 43 per cent were reported to be *forros* (freed slaves).