

Some notes about the *Misericordia* of Isla Hermosa

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The *Misericordia* of Isla Hermosa (Taiwan) cannot be compared with the institutions of the same name that existed all over the Portuguese Colonial Empire¹, neither with the *Misericordia* of Manila that lasted for some centuries, offering care to widows, orphans and poor people. First of all, the *Misericordia* of Isla Hermosa lasted only 10 years (1632-1642) and developed in the shadow of a presidio, in an embryonic city that never had a stable population of civilians. Nevertheless, its name reveals its intention to become one of these charitable institutions shaped under the Portuguese *miserickordias* pattern. The main information for this institution in Isla Hermosa relies on a single document, which, complemented with a few references, help us to expand its knowledge. What we know about the *Misericordia* of Isla Hermosa was that it was established as a local laymen initiative; and, that it was strongly related with the Dominicans who also established it as a way of financing their apostolic endeavors. Given that the promoters of the *Misericordia* of Isla Hermosa were the Dominican Fr. Jacinto Esquivel and the Governor Juan de Alcarazo, let us start by introducing these two Basque countrymen, who were both from Vitoria.

Jacinto Esquivel and the *Misericordia* (Spring, 1632)

Esquivel arrived at the Dominican mission in Manila with the purpose of going to Japan, at a time when it was dangerous to be a missionary in that kingdom. While in Manila, he studied Japanese and, in 1630, published a dictionary of the Japanese language based on the original Jesuit version published in Nagasaki in 1603.² Because the trip to Japan was becoming impossible, he moved to Isla Hermosa to wait for such an opportunity. He arrived in Quelang in the summer of 1631, at the age of 38. From there, he went to the nearby native town of Taparri where he remained until October of that year. Then he moved to Tamsui, where the Spaniards had a small fortress, and stayed there until February 1632. He had close dealings with the natives of the area, particularly those of Senar, whom he describes in great detail. At the end of that summer, he returned to Quelang, where he met Bishop Aduarte, who was at the time visiting the island, and talked to him about the missionary endeavors of the island. We think that this was the moment in which the idea of establishing the *miserickordia* took shape. In fact, it must have been at the instance of Governor Alcarazo and of Aduarte respectively (both returned to Manila soon after) that Esquivel wrote two reports, one on civil government and practical issues³ and another on ecclesiastical matters.⁴ Aduarte summarized the two reports in his *Memoria de las cosas de Isla Hermosa*, which he wrote in November

¹ For a general introduction to this topic see Ivo Carneiro de Sousa, "Da Fundação e da Originalidade das Misericórdias Portuguesas (1498-1500)", *Oceanos*, N. 35, 1998, pp. 24-39.

² *Vocabulario de Iapon, declarado primero en portugves por los padres de la Compañía de Iesvs...* Colegio de Santo Tomás de Manila, 1630. See W.E. Retana, *Orígenes de la Imprenta Filipina* (Madrid: Victoriano Suárez, 1910), pp. 114-115.

³ José Eugenio Borao Mateo, *Spaniards in Taiwan*, SMC, Taipei, 2001, pp. 162-178. Later it will be cited as *SIT*.

⁴ *SIT*, pp. 179-189

1632⁵ and in some parts of his work, the *Historia de la Provincia del Santo Rosario*⁶, published in 1640.

Esquivel was a prolific writer. Later, he must have finished compiling three manuscripts: a grammar, a dictionary and a catechism, dealing with the language of the natives of Tamchui. Esquivel was still in Taiwan in April 1633 when he completed his plans for apostolic expansion by formally proposing to the *santa mesa* of the *Misericordia* the establishment in Quelang of a children's school for the neighboring countries of Lequios, Korea, Japan and China, a matter that the *mesa* of the *Misericordia* fully agreed on.⁷ Thanks to this document we know, firstly, that the *santa mesa* was recently established, at least in her constituent process. Secondly, we know indirectly about its statutes and the purpose for which it was set up. These ideas had been set out a year before in Esquivel's plan of action and had been praised by Bishop Aduarte. Later on Esquivel made his long awaited trip to Japan, either to stay there permanently, or to at least have the chance to promote his "Quelang School" among the Japanese or the inhabitants of Lequios. But the trip proved to be fateful since he was deceived and assassinated. This short biography may help us to understand that he was a man with a global understanding of his mission and the knowledge of the means needed to accomplish it.

Governor Alcarazo of Quelang and the Foundation of the Misericordia (summer 1632)

Alcarazo was one of the best generals in the Philippine colony and he was sent to Isla Hermosa to substitute governor Antonio Carreño, a tough captain, who, after three years on the job, had created among the soldiers certain animadversion against him. Life was not easy at the beginning, and many people died at the mercy of weather conditions, or because of the lack of access to clean water and basic sanitation. The need for a good hospital was obvious, although the garrison from the very beginning had access to basic medical treatment. In 1632, weeks before the departure of Alcarazo to Manila, we can extrapolate from Aduarte's report that medical capabilities were barely able to treat the soldiers. He mentioned that a doctor had been present from the beginning of the conquest, but had just left the island, and his substitute, a Dominican friar, was about to leave. He also surveyed the items the hospital needed at the time, since everything had to come from Manila. These were Aduarte's words:

"There was one surgeon, but being a married man, and having stayed there for a long time, he left this year for Spain. He must be replaced soon because [the men] cannot manage in their positions without one. The only person there who is knowledgeable in this field is a friar who may be forced to come to Manila because he is suffering from poor health himself. His superior had already granted him permission for this. For want of volunteers, the Franciscans may be requested to send two brothers there, veterans of their infirmaries and who are experienced in curing [illnesses]. They may be assigned to man the hospitals there, rendering great service to God. Moreover, if the said order desires to send ministers to attend to the natives of that island, just like the Dominicans who are already working there, pray that they may do so. A doctor to prescribe and a pharmacist to dispense the prescription are indispensable in any place where people live. It is useless to have one without the other. There is also a need for preserves and gifts for the sick, and more than just chicken with some income for their sustenance. Since there is no hospital there, up till now, everything has had to come from here, but in scarcer quantities than what is needed. Thus it is necessary to send them everything, in kind, or in the designated amount of money until God wills that the land yield [for their needs], since it is capable of doing so. The land

⁵ *SIT*, pp. 190-198

⁶ *SIT*, pp. 204-210 & 219-226

⁷ *SIT*, pp. 199-203

clamors—without pretext—for 'fracadas' from Castile and woolen mattresses for the sick, as it can get very cold in winter."⁸

Alcarazo, before leaving his post, thought about how to solve this problem, discussed the idea with Esquivel, and both agreed that a *misericordia* should be founded with an attached hospital as its first goal. On the other hand, Esquivel had witnessed the beginning of a *parian* in the embryonic city of San Salvador and also a *pariancillo* in Tamsui. He also observed and probably officiated over several marriages of soldiers with native women. He even proposed in his reports that some young ladies from Santa Potenciana College might be sent—with their dowries—to Isla Hermosa for prospective marriage. Because of his optimism and understanding of the mission, he was not thinking of only one hospital to service the needs of the incipient and unstable population, but rather four. In his reports, Esquivel detailed his rationale for establishing four hospitals:

- a) Hospital in Quelang for Spaniards and their wives, under the care of the crown and financed by *estanco* on some products such as *bejuco o corambre*.⁹
- b) Hospital in Quelang for servants and slaves, also under the care of the crown and financed by means of *estanco*.
- c) Hospital in Quelang for Chinese, Japanese (if any) and natives financed by the Misericordia of Isla Hermosa.¹⁰
- d) Hospital in Tamsui for Sangleys, Japanese and natives, financed by the sister hospital of the Dominicans in Manila.¹¹

Esquivel also had the idea that the school had to be co-financed by the similar one that the Dominicans had in Manila and by the Misericordia of Isla Hermosa¹², but this should be done in a second stage, after the hospital. In other words, Alcarazo was preoccupied about his soldiers and about his imminent departure, while Esquivel was worried about the stability of the missions.

The foundation was the fruit of regular conversations between Alcarazo and Esquivel. Esquivel looked after the legal and financial side, while Alcarazo worked as a convener of possible members taken from the most representative officers. They agreed that the best formula to push both goals (hospital and school) would be to model this *misericordia* along the lines of the one in Manila¹³ but adapted to local needs. The following steps were necessary: (1) to determine the details of membership, site, custody and handling of money; (2) to establish and endow a hospital, which was the nerve-center of a typical *misericordia*; and (3) to raise money. Aduarte summarized these three steps in the History of the Dominicans saying that:

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *SIT*, p. 175

¹⁰ *SIT*, p. 185

¹¹ *SIT*, p. 185

¹² *SIT*, pp. 185-186

¹³ See J. O. Mesquida, "Origin of the *Misericordia* of Manila", *Ad Veritatem*, March, 2003, pp. 423-462; Nicholas P. Cushner, *Spain in the Philippines*, Ateneo de Manila University, 1971, pp. 139-152.

“They talked and decided that a *Misericordia* be established on that same Island. To this, Don Juan later donated 4,000 pesos, and Fr. Jacinto, 2,000 pesos worth of alms that some people in Manila gave him to distribute among the pious works that were to be established in that new conversion. The 6,000 pesos gave rise to the *Misericordia*.”¹⁴

The approval of the statutes (autumn 1632)

As we do not have the statutes, we can attempt to glean the content of some of the chapters based on existing documents.¹⁵ What follows is our provisional and limited interpretation, with some commentaries in the footnotes, suggested by John Mezquida, which will help us understand the particulars of the case in Isla Hermosa:

<Chapter 1>

<§ 1. General commitments> The members of the brotherhood are bounded by “a grave and solemn oath of justice and charity”, because the “brotherhood's primary goal” is to cooperate in “the responsibility of spreading the faith by providing these people [natives] ministers and the necessary means for the Lord and His holy Church to continually grow among them.”¹⁶

<Chapter 2>

<§ 1. Membership of the Santa Mesa> “Deputies should be appointed among the more honorable men of the Island, and they had the authority to name their successors once their term of one year ends.” Nevertheless the present Officer and Captain General, Juan de Alcarazo, “is appointed as perpetual Elder.”¹⁷

If we look at the composition of the Santa Mesa in April 1633—one year later, when Alcarazo was back in Manila—we see that the new governor of Quelang was the new elder. This is the complete list:

1. Bartolomé Díaz Barrera, elder brother and *proveedor* (i.e., president) of the Santa Mesa and the Brotherhood of Mercy of the city of San Salvador in Isla Hermosa. He was the “governor of the city and commander of the forces”.
2. Father *provisor* Francisco Bravo, Dominican, and Superior and Vicar of the convent of Todos los Santos.
3. Captain and Sergeant Major Luis de Guzmán
4. Captain Juan Baquedano
5. Captain Matías de Olaso
6. Captain Miguel Sáez de Alcaraz, officer of the regiment of Santo Domingo in Tamsui
7. Second Lieutenant Francisco de Vivero, royal accountant and inspector
8. Second Lieutenant Juan Pérez de Rueda, paymaster of the Royal Treasury

<Chapter 3>

<§ 1. Responsibilities of the deputies of the *santa mesa* and its location> It must have been written like this: The seat of the Brotherhood is the convent of Todos los Santos, and whoever is the Prelate of the convent intervenes in everything. There, three keys were

¹⁴ *SIT*, p. 209

¹⁵ We only have traced eight chapters, but we can say that those of Lisbon, Goa or Manila have 33 chapters.

¹⁶ This kind of missionary endeavor is not typical of the *misericordias*.

¹⁷ This case of appointing a successor is quite original, because usually the *misericordias* elect the mesa in an indirect manner: the whole brotherhood chooses ten electors, and these electors vote the members of the mesa.

deposited in a box. One was given to the Officer, and Elder, another to the Prelate of the convent, and the third to one of the deputies¹⁸.

We can see how this was observed in the case of Fr. Francisco Bravo, whose title of *provisor* makes him equal to the one of *proveedor*, governor Díaz Barrera. On the other hand we are not sure to which extent the positions were renewed every year, if only because of the scarcity of officers. In the case of Juan Pérez de Rueda, we know he was one of the three key keepers in 1633 and also in 1642.

<Chapter 4>

<§1. Validity of the statutes> They have to be “sworn upon, and later they have to be sent for confirmation for the Archbishop of Manila because the spiritual jurisdiction of the Island falls under him. Once the confirmation was granted, the Brotherhood acquired a full and final status.” The same holds true for every relevant change.¹⁹

Chapter 7

<§ 1. The increasing of estate properties> Related to increasing estate properties “the money should be treated in the way the rest of the goods of the Foundation are treated”, that is, “it will be added to the capital and real estate properties of the Santa Mesa”. The consequences of this statement (probably not specified so clearly in this chapter) were that “Even if the capital will be lost or exhausted with the passage of time, or if the portion that belongs to the said college is reduced, the obligations assumed by the Pious Foundation will remain. On the other hand, the Dominican Order will not have the right to ask more that what has been agreed upon to fulfill its goals, regardless of the returns that could come from” the amount that had been requested by the Santa Mesa. “Our only obligation is to provide the usufruct of the” requested money “and, if these be diminished or used up, the usufruct of any other portion of the capital or the real estate [belonging to the Pious Foundation]. Everything will be done in the manner and amount indicated above and left to the prudence and good judgment of the fathers.”

Chapter 8

§ 1. “The *santa mesa* should not spend anything until the estate has been duly developed. And once the property has been acquired, that a hospital, before anything else, must be set up, etc”. The implications of this for the seminary school for foreign children were that “We assume the task of construction and the maintenance, by virtue of the special title or obligation we have to develop this property at its inception, and out of our special gratitude for this blessed order's constant support of the conquest of this island from the very start. The granting of this school to the said Order does not mean that we are trying to take away or make them surrender their right to build more seminaries, schools or hospitals within

¹⁸ This three keys system of Isla Hermosa follows the general rule of the *misericordias*. The main different is the relevance given to the convent, that it makes sense for the embryonic status of the city.

¹⁹ This was the case for all confraternities and brotherhoods.

and outside this island. Such projects shall always be given priority, as indicated in Chapter Eight of the code of the *santa mesa* and the brotherhood.”²⁰

We have clues suggesting that in the same *socorro* that brought back Aduarte and Alcarazo, these statutes were sent to Manila by one of the members of the mesa, Captain Juan Baquedano.²¹ In that case the statutes might have reached the bishop office before November 1632. We know this because when the mesa gathered in April 1633 (Juan Baquedano was back on Isla Hermosa) the archbishop included the new resolutions “in the first chapter of our ordinances after [that point] accepting an additional 2,000 pesos that Fr. Jacinto gave us to build the hospital.”

Regarding the goal of building a hospital, we can only say that there was one up and running until before the Dutch battle of 1642. For example, the official certificates of Simon de Toro, His Majesty's fiscal officer, stated that yearly from 1634 to 1642, a "box of medicine" came in every shipment of aid that reached Quelang. The certificates give additional information; for example, in March of 1642 the vessel San Nicolás Tolentino brought Francisco Casta Vengala, surgeon and slave of His Majesty, who reported to Captain Andrés de Aguiar, caretaker of the Royal Hospital of the city of Manila. He brought surgical instruments, such as a pair of scissors, three razors and one lancet. We cannot be sure whether this hospital was the one intended by the Misericordia, or was just the continuation and development of the existing one inside the fortress. In any case, Baquedano, the person in charge of administrative procedures, once he got the approval of the statutes from the bishop, returned in the *socorro* of the Spring of 1633.²² No wonder that upon his arrival, the Santa Mesa of the Fraternity of Misericordia held the important meeting of April 10th.

The meeting of the Santa Mesa to discuss the creation of a school (April 10th 1633)

At that moment the objective of the former governor Juan de Alcarazo regarding the hospital was to have it finished or well on its way to completion. Now was the moment for Esquivel to push forward his project, a kind of seminary school for Chinese and Japanese, something similar to the Jesuit School of Sao Paulo in Macao, or to the one in Manila, founded by the priest Juan Fernández León in 1594 to attend to the needs of orphans and the poor of the city, for whom he tried later to establish a seminary school.²³

The missionary point of view—as we have said before—was supported by the bishop of Nueva Segovia, Diego de Aduarte, who in 1632 went to Isla Hermosa on a pastoral visit that lasted a few months, from the Spring *socorro* to the Autumn *socorro*. Once back in Manila, the bishop wrote a report on Isla Hermosa quoting the same ideas of Esquivel. These are his words:

“Assuming that the conquest of Isla Hermosa is justified...this new conquest will yield a twofold benefit, the first and principal one of which is the preaching of the Gospel and the conversion of these barbarians....[but] this does not limit itself to the natives of this land but can extend to the great Kingdom of China, a neighbor so close

²⁰ The documents preserved emphasizes the creation of the seminary-school, but we don't have clear references on the creation or management of a hospital, something clearly stated in one of the chapters of the Statutes of the *Misericordia* of Manila, which was copied from those of the *Misericordia* of Lisbon.

²¹ *SIT*, p. 195

²² *SIT*, p. 211

²³ Antonio M. Molina, *Historia de Filipinas*, vol. 1, Madrid, 1984, p. 93.

that one can reach her shores in 24 hours by sea in fair weather... Besides, excellent contacts have already been established with the Chinese who visit the Isla Hermosa everyday; some have already converted to Christianity, and so have the majority of those who die there—and they are not few. The Gospel ministers based in Isla Hermosa may not yet be in China, but they are at her gates. They are likewise close to the doors of Japan, which, even if it may be farther off, is easy to reach; and many Japanese travel along these routes. In this way, even if the voice of the Gospel may not yet reach China and Japan as quickly, the life and example of its ministers will surely make an impression on the souls of these infidels.²⁴

At the meeting of April 10th 1633, Esquivel formally petitioned the Brotherhood of *Misericordia*, by asking the brothers for their contribution for the foundation of a school for natives. Following a similar formula to that of the hospital, Esquivel proposed that the *Misericordia* raise 2,000 pesos, which together with the capital and property of the Holy Table, would cover the expenses of setting up and maintaining the school. We can abridge the Esquivel petition in this way:

“It will be to the greatest glory of the Lord ... that the Chinese and Japanese children, as well as the Koreans and those from the Islands of Lequios (as both islands form part of the said empires), have a school of their own to educate them in the holy way and to instruct them about the mysteries of our holy faith through reading, writing, singing, and the teaching of moral theology. In this way, the more gifted among them may be later ordained as priests and the less keen serve as catechists or preachers in their kingdoms, most specially in times of persecution, since they are able to hide and mingle their own, which our own priests cannot do.

Considering the benefits of starting this blessed task ... we see that the doors to conversion are almost open; the natives freely offer us their children for the school will be so near their homes and it will be easy for their parents to visit them whenever they come to do business on this island. Moreover, the natives will sincerely seek out the ministers who live among them and those who will return in the future.

Moreover, this project has many other advantages. The ministers from Europe can learn the language directly from the natives, making it easier for them to come and live in these lands. They will enjoy the favor of the parents and relatives of the students and thus open doors to the preaching of the Gospel. Likewise, they will partake of incomparable wealth, security, friendship, and trade with the two powerful kingdoms because their children are under our custody.

[I will] do whatever might be needed to find and collect 2,000 pesos that will be added to the capital and real estate properties of this Santa Mesa. The money should be treated in the way the rest of the goods of the Foundation are treated, observing what is indicated in Chapter 7 of our by-laws regarding the possible increase of capital. Even if the capital will be lost or exhausted with the passage of time, or if the portion that belongs to the said college is reduced, the obligations assumed by the Pious Foundation will remain. On the other hand, the Dominican Order will not have the right to ask more than what has been agreed upon to fulfill its goals regardless of the returns that could come from that amount of 2,000 pesos in the long run. Our only obligation is to provide the usufruct of these 2,000 pesos, and, if these be diminished or used up, the usufruct of any other portion of the capital or the real estate [belonging to the Pious Foundation.] Everything will be done in the manner and amount indicated above and left to the prudence and good judgment of the fathers.

In the end, the *santa mesa* of the *Misericordia* approved Esquivel’s proposal with some caveats. This was the conclusion of the members of the *santa mesa*:

With this, we will render great service to God our Lord, to his Most Blessed Mother, our Lady of the Rosary, our patroness and advocate, and to his Royal Highness King Philip IV. We know that the purpose of maintaining these lands is none other than the disinterested dissemination of the faith, the greatest task that can ever be carried out in this world. Innumerable souls will be saved through this means because of the labor and loving vigilance of everyone involved in it.

Above all, by a grave and solemn oath of justice and charity, we have the responsibility of spreading the faith by providing these people ministers and the necessary means for the Lord and His holy Church to continually grow among them. This is the brotherhood’s primary goal.

²⁴ *SIT*, p. 192

The Dominican fathers will take care of determining the school's location, name, patron saint, the building materials to be used, if it is to be made of stone or dines (*sic*), the capacity of the chapel and house, the chambers rooms and offices, the repairs, the necessary expansion and maintenance, as well as the uniforms, stipends, medical attention and supplies, number of admissions, and recruitment of religious for the teaching staff. As for instructing the children in their own tongues, it is also up to them to decide on its aptness through time. Likewise, they shall determine the number of additional persons, servants or ministers, whom the school can and will be able to accommodate as residents, who will assist in the growth and development of the school.

To construct this building in a short time, the entire amount of 2,000 pesos, or its first installment, --or even the second (which ever they prefer) must be granted soon. It shall be used in the manner indicated until it is spent, as they wish it, on the said construction and, later, on its maintenance. As mentioned, the members of the said Order are not to be troubled or concerned or asked to give an accounting of what they had spent. They must not be deprived of whatever they say they need for this project, leaving it all to their conscience and prudence which ought to be completely trustworthy.

And since the above-mentioned Father Jacinto del Rosario, according to the rule and the Order to which he belongs, cannot go around seeking or giving that amount of 2,000 pesos and neither does he have the power to accept the administration and management of that house in behalf of his order without the express permission of his superiors and prelates who shall not grant it until they receive a juridical testimony in the city of Manila that certifies our conditional acceptance,

WE CONCLUDE THAT for the above mentioned fathers [Dominicans] to study the matter themselves in order to see if they are able to carry out such an undertaking, we hereby give legal testimony certifying that we accept [the proposal] in the name of the above mentioned brotherhood and *santa mesa*.

Nevertheless, the document continued with the procedure to follow, that we can reconstruct in this way: firstly, the petition must be sent for supervision to the prior of the Convent of Santo Domingo in Manila, Fray Domingo González; and later to the Archbishop of Manila to be sanctioned, thus becoming a formal statute; and, finally, to be publicly notarized, so as to allow the Dominicans to begin their school project.

The approval of the school project by the Bishop of Manila (2 June 1633)

The *Misericordia* project was sent to Manila. There, the Bishop of Cebú, Pedro de Arce—at that time acting Bishop of Manila—approved the proposal on 2 June 1633. If everything was done fast, it was because communication was swift. The explanation must be found in the fact that a big contingent of Spanish merchants returned to Manila in April or May because of the scarcity of business. In June the project was approved:

“I have studied the said proposal in consultation with a group of learned and serious scholars. The Lord Bishop Pedro de Arce, presently Governor of this Archdiocese, deems this school to be for the greater glory of God our Lord and the good of Christianity, as well as for the greater glory of our father St Dominic, a great beginning and a very effective means to conserve these nations. Thus he confirms the plan, in the name of Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Manila, June 2nd 1633. Pedro de Arce, Bishop of the Most Holy Name of Jesus. In the presence of the scholar Raimundo de Quiñones, Chamber Secretary.”

Contrary to the previous communication, the notification of approval arrived in Isla Hermosa quite late. Most probably it had left Manila aboard the *socorro* of August 1633 (the one bringing the new governor Alonso García), and it might well have arrived in April 1634 because that ship was diverted towards Macao and impounded for a few months. This also implies that Esquivel's trip to Japan, most probably in the Spring of 1633, was made without knowledge of the approval, which he probably took for granted. But as we have seen, Esquivel, the main promoter of the idea, had already been dead for a year. In this sense, the *Misericordia* stopped its expansion plans, started managing its funds and became the financial

arm of the more promising China missionary project and a lender of last resort to the governor of Quelang.

The *Misericordia* as financial intermediary of missionary activity

Although it was a laymen endeavor with pious ends, it is clear that the initiative was always on the side of the Dominicans. This can be understood by the changing position of the *proveedor*, the governor itself, whose tenure usually lasted an average of two years. As a result, it seems safe to conclude that his Dominican funded charitable institution became a genuine Dominican institution, as we can confirm through the several posterior notices found in the documents.

The first reference of February 17th 1637, when the soldier Duarte Rendon, acting as public notary issued a copy of the original permission for the school, stating that "the original is kept in the house of the *Misericordia*." This reference helps us know that the institution was still operating, and possessed an office, which was probably housed at the Convent of Todos los Santos, the only available building besides the fortress and the house of the governor.

The *Misericordia* also experienced some changes. Firstly, the Dominicans had to support their increasing trips to China. Secondly, the governor was in increasing need of borrowing money, and the *Misericordia*—as happened in other places—was the only available financial institution. So, the figure of the governor as elder brother, or *proveedor*, was little by little blurred by the fact that the *Misericordia* was the one granting him loans. The clearest reference, which points to this situation, comes from the arrival of last governor, Gonzalo Portillo. In his first report to Governor General Corcuera, Portillo wrote that as soon as he arrived in Taiwan, "the priests of the order of St Dominic asked me to pay them the 2,000 pesos that Your Majesty owes the cash box of the Santa Mesa, since they have lent it."²⁵ Likewise, he states in another report, "Of the 4,000 pesos that came, I paid 2,000 to the Santa Mesa. It will be necessary to ask again, even when I know that I will have a big argument with the priests about it."²⁶

The financial situation of the *Misericordia*, before the Spaniards left Taiwan, after being defeated by the Dutch, seems to have been one of solvency, at least according to the testimony of the scribe and key keeper in 1642, Juan Pérez de Rueda, who in 1644 declared that the Dutch seized all its belongings, namely "8,000 pesos in reals, 10 plates of ordinary silver, two large plats and merchandise worth 1,000 pesos."²⁷ Certainly this data is consistent with the Spanish Fortress's inventory that the Dutch made after its conquest.²⁸

²⁵ Letter of Portillo to Corcuera, AGI, *Filipinas, Escribanía de Cámara, 409-B (SIT, p. 316)*

²⁶ AGI, *Filipinas, Indiferente General 1874 (SIT, p. 335)*

²⁷ AGI, *Filipinas, Escribanía de Cámara, 409-B (SIT, p. 518)*

²⁸ VOC 1146, ff. 742-743 (*SIT, 394-397*)