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In the Name of Charity: Analysis of the Role of the Santa Casa Da Misericórdia De Macau in the 16th to 18th Centuries

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Abstract: *Santa Casa da Misericórdia is a secular charitable organization of Portugal. With Portuguese expansion, misericórdias spread all over its overseas colonies and trading posts, including Macau. Based on the sociological theory and the Portuguese and English documents, this paper analysised the role that the Misericórdia played in Macau during the 16th to 18th Centuries . In the period when the Portuguese Crown had not yet established colonial government in Macau, Misericórdia de Macau undertook some of the social functions, made up for the absence of the government, and made certain contributions to the public administration of Macau. This study contributes to understanding the Portuguese management of Macau during the Ming and Qing Dynasties, and provides a reference for the governance of Macau.*

Keywords: *Macao Holy House of Mercy; Charitable organizations; Financial institutions; Social control; 16th -18th century*

Introduction

The Portuguese Churches of Mercy are charitable organizations independent of government and religion, with the purpose of providing relief to the sick, disabled, and abandoned children, and have been in existence for more than 400 years. The first Church of Mercy was founded by the Kingdom of Portugal. It was founded in Lisbon in 1498 by Queen Regent Dona Leonor, and subsequently, under the impetus of then Kingdom Manuel I, various cities within Portugal established their own churches of mercy. Following the expansion of the Portuguese overseas in the 16th century, the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau, modeled on the General Church in Lisbon, began to take root in the Portuguese colonies and trading posts, arriving in Macau in 1569 and surviving to this day. In 1569, it came to Macau and has survived ever since. The institution of the House of Mercy gradually became an important part of the social administration system in the Portuguese colonies.

Scholarly research on the institution of the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macaur began in the late 19th century (Sá, 2008), and in the 1960s, historian Charles Ralph Boxer first suggested that the Benevolent Order was one of the two pillars of the Portuguese Empire, alongside the town hall (Boxer & Hartwell, 1973). Scholars such as Isabel dos Guimarães Sá, Leonor Seabra, and Ivo Carneiro de Sousa also pointed out that, in addition to charitable activities, the benevolent churches in the Portuguese colonies were also engaged in activities such as trusteeship and credit, revealing the role of the benevolent churches in the Portuguese

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social management system. In the last thirty years, the Portuguese and Chinese charitable churches have been playing an important role in the management of Portuguese society. In the last thirty years, scholars in Portugal and Macau, China, have focused their research on the differences in the implementation of the benevolent church system in different cities of the Portuguese Empire, paying particular attention to the differences in the religious and administrative statutes of the benevolent churches in different regions, and pointing out that the social situation, the composition of the ethnic groups, the way the suzerainty was administered, and the particularities of the local economic organization were the main reasons for the differences in the benevolent church system in different regions. In contrast, the literature on the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau is very rare in Chinese research sources, and if it exists, it focuses mainly on social welfare and other aspects, with little mention of its other roles in Macau society. However, as an important institution established by Portugal in Macau, it has survived longer than the Portuguese colonial government and the Governor General, and has played a lasting role in the governance of Macau, and deserves to be discussed in more detail. In view of this, this paper, based on the study of relevant English and Portuguese documents and theories of social control, focuses on the real role played by the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau in the 16th-18th centuries in Macau society, and attempts to explore the way in which the Portuguese governed Macau before the establishment of the colonial government of Macau and Portugal, in an attempt to provide some humble insights into the relevant studies.

The Establishment of the Santa Casa Da Misericórdia De Macau

The second half of the 15th century was the heyday of Portuguese maritime expansion. During this period, although the wealth brought by maritime expansion continued to pour in. However, the gap between the rich and the poor in Portugal was increasing, and the epidemic of cholera and other infectious diseases, combined with the impact of agricultural failure, led to the starvation of Portuguese people. At the same time, the high risk of seafaring led to a decline in the male population of Portugal, leaving orphans and widows unattended. The aforementioned social problems left Portuguese society in turmoil, but the relief agencies could not cope with such a huge social demand. Against this backdrop, in 1498 the Regent of Portugal, Donna Leonore, consolidated the resources of social charity and established the Brotherhood of Mercy in the Cathedral of Lisbon (the "Church of Mercy") (Sá, 1997). With only a hundred members at the beginning, the Church of Mercy in Lisbon helped the poor, prisoners, the sick and the fallen classes by providing food, clothing, accommodation and medicine to those in need. In the same year, the Compromisso was established, setting out the fourteen tasks to be undertaken by the Congregation of Mercy, seven of which are spiritual and seven of which are physical. These fourteen works were created on the basis of Catholic doctrine and were approved by Pope Alexander VI. The leadership of the Congregation of Mercy is known as the "Council" and is composed of 13 people, the highest leadership position being that of the President.

With the expansion of Portugal abroad, the Congregation of Mercy came from Portugal itself to the Portuguese-speaking communities abroad. By the time of Manuel I's death in 1521, the organization and constitution were inherited from the General Congregation of Lisbon, and the Congregation of Mercy was established in Portugal and in Portuguese communities abroad. At the later Council of Trent, the Portuguese monarch secured a special legal status for the Congregation of Mercy, making it a fraternity under the direct protection of the Portuguese Crown, which meant that although it was Catholic, it was within the

jurisdictional power of the King and was a secular institution rather than a subordinate body of the Church (Lopes & Sá, 2008). This is the main difference between the Church of Mercy and other religious orders. Therefore, Mercy Church is a charitable organization independent of the government and religion.

Charity can help the poor and the needy, and it can be used as a tool to reorganize society and solve social problems, as it can provide incentives or discipline to members of society according to the rationing of relief resources (Goode, & Erich, 2015). In 16th century Europe, charitable aid had become a means of social control for the elite. The churches of mercy, which were rapidly established along with the footsteps of Portuguese maritime expansion, were also, from the perspective of governance, a place of social control provided by the Portuguese crown for the local Portuguese elite in its various overseas colonies and settlements, which could assist the local administration in the management of the members of society.

Although Portuguese expansion abroad had begun in the 16th century, neither the Portuguese Crown nor the Portuguese Governor had yet incorporated Macau into their colonial territory. 1557 saw the arrival of the Portuguese in Macau, and Portuguese merchants used Macau as a trading post (Feitoria) and leased it. In 1569, the Bishop of Janeiro established the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau.

The Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau, modeled after the Lisbon House of Mercy, was the first charitable institution in Macao. The initial organization and constitution of the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau did not differ much from that of the General Church of Lisbon, and the first few decades of its operation were basically modeled on the General Church of Lisbon. However, from 1627 onwards, since the political, commercial and religious development of the Portuguese residents in Macau depended to a large extent on the policies of the Chinese government, the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau issued a localized constitution in order to better adapt to the local situation. With the application of the new constitution, the Church of Mercy gradually became institutionalized and bureaucratized, but also had a greater social influence as a result (Sousa, 2005).

When the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau was first established, Bishop Janeiro positioned it as a charitable institution, but with the privileges granted by the Crown and the operation of the Portuguese-resident elite, it became much more than that in practice.

The Historical Role of the Santa Casa Da Misericórdia De Macau

The Charity Relief

the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau has set up hospitals, nurseries, orphanages and retreats in Macau, and regularly provides alms to provide medical and social assistance to Portuguese residents and their relatives.

In terms of medical care, the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau has a hospital and leprosarium attached to it. As soon as Bishop Janeiro arrived in Macau, he established a Hospital dos Pobres (Hospital for the Poor). The Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau hired doctors, nurses, and other staff, and assigned a general

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superintendent to the hospital to assist the doctors and the feed the patients. Doctors would treat patients at the hospital or visit the homes of the poor, and would also make medicines for the pharmacy. the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau was responsible for the hospital's expenses, which were mainly funded by donations from wealthy Portuguese merchants.

In addition, the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau also provided assistance to leprosy patients. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, leprosy was a relatively common and serious infectious disease. Due to the limited knowledge of infectious diseases and the lack of medical knowledge, lepers were isolated in the middle of nowhere or even buried alive once they became ill (Ma, 2006). Faced with the dire situation of leprosy patients, the charter of the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau of 1627 provided for the relief of leprosy patients, both in soul and body. In 1568, he moved the leprosarium outside the city and named it after the saint of the lepers, "Lazarus". The Lazarus Hospital was closed in 1896 and patients were transferred to new government leprosariums in Ká Hó (now known as Coloane) and Ilha de D. João (Little Yokohama) (Seabra, 2019).

In addition to the hospitals, the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau also opened a nursery, an orphanage and a retreat. In Macau during the Ming and Qing dynasties, abandoned babies were a widespread social problem. Therefore, the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau established an abandoned baby hall at a very early stage. These abandoned babies were basically the children of Chinese women, and since there was not enough space to house them, the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau would also take the adopted Chinese children and place them with local religious families, expanding the Chinese Catholic population in this way. In the early 18th century, Mercy established a Home for Orphaned Girls, a temporary fund for 30 widows and orphans to feed and clothe them, teach them housekeeping, and even provide them with a dowry (Gu, 2016). In 1726, Mercy established a Recolhimento. However, it was not open to everyone. Due to the limited size of the orphanages and shelters, there was a "priority" for the recipients, in order of priority: the wives and daughters of the members of the Congregation of Mercy, the daughters of Macau citizens, and finally the daughters of Portuguese who did not work in the above institutions. In the selection of recipients, the reputation of chastity of women is a key criterion for the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau, and those who misbehave will not be eligible for assistance. To receive a dowry, applicants had to go through a complicated process - undergoing social, moral, and religious investigations - before being selected by vote. These selected recipients must first be Catholics, and priority is given to those whose fathers are of high social standing or who have given money to Mercy, and who are reputable, chaste and obedient to Mercy's rules. For the purpose of screening (Sousa, 2005).

The Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau also distributed alms to the poor. The accounts show that during the years 1757-1774, it had an annual public distribution of money during Holy Week and on July 2, where about 5,000 people (the population of Catholics in Macau) would receive aid, and the Chinese would also have the opportunity to receive coins. This distribution is also part of the religious activities of the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau. When a Catholic dies, the Church will pray for the deceased and hold a Catholic funeral for them.

Overall, as a charitable organization, the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau provides medical assistance and social relief. However, in its actual relief activities, Mercy Church does not help all people equally,

as Bishop Janeiro says. The number of people who received relief was a small percentage of the Macau community, limited by charitable resources and the state of the Sino-Portuguese division of governance, and was dominated by Portuguese and their families. The total number of people saved in the poor hospitals and leprosariums was about 40-50 per year, and the number of adoptions did not exceed 100. Therefore, historical documents always show that there were many beggars in Macau, and most of them were not admitted. It was almost exclusively selective in the selection of rescues within the Portuguese community. By establishing rules, the population understood that those who followed the rules would be given priority and that only the leprosarium would admit Chinese converts, because once they chose to be Catholic, they were no longer accepted by the Chinese. In contrast to what Bishop Janeiro said about the purpose of the creation of Mercy Church in Macau, it seems that it was an institution dedicated to the Portuguese-Catholic community. Among the bequests received by the Church of Mercy, more funds were donated to orphaned girls (Shi, 2007), and the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau gradually built a Portuguese-Catholic community in Macau through a tendentious distribution of dowries, restraining women's behavior, controlling the marriage market, and facilitating Eurasian-Catholic marriages.

The Financial Institutions

The Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau also plays a role similar to that of a financial institution. They engage in financial activities such as trusteeship and credit. Some Portuguese residents will make a will during their lifetime, giving their estate to a Benevolent Church or entrusting it with the administration of the estate, which will then hand over the wealth to their loved ones. Because of the network of the Benevolent Congregations throughout the Portuguese colonies, heirs can even withdraw their inheritance off-site. Nobles, merchants, adventurers, and soldiers who lived in Macau for long or short periods of time generously gave their wealth to the Congregation of Mercy, trusting that it would use the money to care for orphans and widows, visit prisoners, educate and convert slaves into Catholics, or that they would want the Congregation to pray for their souls and prepare a Catholic funeral for them (Sousa, 2005).

the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau has accumulated a great deal of wealth, land, and property through estate administration and endowment, and uses these assets for investment or lending activities, categories that can be divided by source into loans on land and loans at sea. The former refers to the circulation of funds in the internal market, such as loans to the Council House to pay for the city and local residents, or investments in the local area, usually at an interest rate of 7% to 10% (Sousa & Arrais, 1991). Maritime loans mainly refer to lending to maritime trading activities and charging interest. The small land area of Macau was not suitable for productive activities, so Portuguese merchants mainly made their living from maritime trade. In the second half of the 18th century, the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau was the main lender in Macau, as it was able to provide loans to merchants at an interest rate of 20-25%, depending on the distance to the destination and the risks involved in the sea route (Li, 2012).

It can be seen that with the development of the Portuguese maritime trade, the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau gradually expanded its trusteeship and credit business, accumulating wealth and becoming more and more like a financial institution, while its initial social relief work was weakened. Representing the interests of the Portuguese elite rather than the poor, the Benevolent Church gradually became a tool for the local elite families to perpetuate their wealth and for the common people to establish their social status.

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The Control of Society

In the concept of sociology, social control is to exert various influences on the members of society through specific and operable ways and means, by which the purpose of maintaining social harmony and stability is achieved. In the author's view, with its own privileges and the role it played in society, the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau gradually developed into a tool for the local elite to achieve social control, mainly reflected by the following aspects.

First, as a charitable institution, the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau was able to assist the councils and other administrative bodies in regulating the behavior of the people and maintaining social order.

Secondly, the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau played an important role in consolidating the position of Catholicism in Macau, and religion itself was a means of social control

Third, the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau can assist the Portuguese-American elite in dividing social classes and adjusting the social structure. The Council and the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau insisted on the primacy of descent and were staunch defenders of white interests and stratification. For a long time, the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau allowed only Portuguese and their descendants to join, even though they made up only a small percentage of Macau's population and were not widely represented in society.

Fourth, the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau had a close relationship with the Council, forming a coalition that represented the interests of the local Portuguese elite. In those days, almost no Portuguese women would come to the East; only men would come to Macau from Portugal. Local mixed-race Portuguese women chose their mates in preference to pure-blooded Portuguese, and even though most of these new immigrants were from humble origins, they could enter the upper echelons of Macau society through marriage. Local Portuguese merchants elected their sons-in-law to the Council and the House of Mercy, thus perpetuating the dominance of the Portuguese in the local Portuguese governing body from generation to generation. In addition to this, the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau also intervened to change the social status of the members of the community and to restructure the society, gradually building the Portuguese Catholic community in Macau through a tendency to allocate charitable resources, such as giving priority to those who had fallen down the social ladder or using dowries to guide the marriage of orphaned girls. In addition, some Portuguese merchants borrowed money from the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau and became rich through their business activities. The Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau not only promotes the socio-economic development of Macau and creates wealth for the Portuguese community, but also creates new Portuguese elites for the community in this way.

Fifth, in eighteenth centuries, it was not uncommon for the Portuguese elite in Macau to elect each other to positions in the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau, or to exchange positions with members of the Council. In many cases, even representatives of the Portuguese Crown were unable to interfere with the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau, which in the 16th and 18th centuries was a powerful and self-governing body for the Portuguese in Australia, and the Congregation of Mercy, which had a close relationship with it, was therefore more powerful. Compared to the church system, the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau was loosely regulated and was only accountable to the King, who in most cases delegated authority to the Presidents of

the local Congregations of Mercy. The Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau is thus relatively autonomous and independent, with a more stable power relationship than the royal representatives who rotate every few years, where the interests of the local social elite are virtually unchallenged (Lopes & Sá, 2008).

It is noteworthy that the institution of the House of Mercy was established by the Portuguese Crown and extended to overseas Portuguese settlements, and was an important part of the social administration system in the Portuguese colonies. At a deeper level, the Portuguese king was able to exercise a certain degree of social control over Macau "from a distance" through the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau, laying the foundation for possible colonial rule in the future.

Conclusion

This study points out that in the 16th and 18th centuries, the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau played a role as a financial institution and, to some extent, as a social control for the Portuguese residents of Macau, in addition to its charitable role. The existence of the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau served the needs of both the Portuguese social elite and the Portuguese Crown. It could both establish the image of a benevolent patron for the Portuguese King and provide an opportunity for social control for the local elite, as well as help Portugal establish a Portuguese-Catholic community in Macau, laying the foundation for the establishment of an Australian-Portuguese colonial government in the future.

Thus, the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau was not only a charitable organization, but also one of the tools used by the Portuguese to achieve social control in Macau. During the 16th and 18th centuries, when the Ming and Qing governments had divided Macau between China and Portugal and therefore had little interference in the internal governance of the Portuguese community, and when the Portuguese side had not yet established a sound management system, the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Macau, as a charitable organization independent of the government and religion, assumed some of the social functions to make up for the absence of the government and made a certain contribution to the management of Macau society.

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