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## Spanish and Mestizo Women of Manila

Christine Doran



Our understanding of the social dynamics of European colonies in Southeast Asia, and especially of the role of women within them, has been enhanced by recent work on the Dutch regime in Indonesia. Unfortunately no comparable advance has occurred within Philippine historiography. Since the Spanish regime in the Philippines was roughly contemporaneous with that of the Dutch in Indonesia, one might expect *prima facie* that there would be similarities and parallels between them. This article explores that hypothesis and suggests that indeed there were many similarities in the life experiences and day-to-day lifestyles of women under colonial rule in these two parts of island Southeast Asia.

An outstanding recent contribution to Indonesian colonial history was Jean Gelman Taylor's *The Social World of Batavia: European and Eurasian in Dutch Asia* (1983). Taylor made available to English readers the results of Dutch research, most notably that of Frederik de Haan, whose comprehensive three-volume history of *Oud Batavia* had been published in 1922. She reassessed the secondary works and the evidence on which they were based with sensitivity and with empathy for the women described, often quite scathingly, in the accounts of male residents or visitors to the colony. Taylor also showed the connections between the experiences of European and Eurasian women and the development in Batavia of a mixed, mestizo cultural variant combining European and Asian elements. As evidence of acculturation, Taylor highlighted the adoption by Indies-born Dutchwomen and mestizo women of a range of Asian customs and habits including wearing lighter, Asian-style dress, eating local dishes, chewing betel nut, indulging in extravagant displays of wealth, taking frequent baths and squatting on their haunches for long periods. She demonstrated that it was often women who were at the forefront of acculturation, adapting and adopting cultural mores accord-

ing to their needs. As this article will show, many of Taylor's themes were echoed in colonial Philippines.

Another important contribution to Indonesian history was Leonard Blusse's *Strange Company: Chinese Settlers, Mestizo Women and the Dutch in VOC Batavia*, which appeared in 1986 (Blusse 1986). Blusse also examined the process of acculturation among women who formed relationships with the Dutch colonizers. He emphasized the role of the Dutch Reformed Church in the process by which mestizo women were transformed into suitable marriage partners for Dutchmen and docile participants in the Dutch colonial system. Blusse argued that church discipline was an effective instrument of social control over women. As will be shown, the Catholic church played a comparable role in Spanish Manila.

This article presents evidence concerning the lifestyles and experiences of Spanish and mestizo women in colonial Manila. It also draws comparisons between the experiences of women under colonial rule in the Philippines and in Indonesia. It focuses on the experiences of certain groups of women under colonial rule. Taylor's work on Dutch Batavia, which will be the major source of comparisons, concentrated on Dutch women born in the Indies and Eurasian women who established relationships with Dutchmen. In the Philippines the comparable groups were female "Sons of the Country" (*hijos del pais*), that is, Spanish women born in the colony, and mestizas, women of mixed Spanish and Filipino or Chinese parentage. The word "mestizo" will be used to refer not only to people of mixed European and Asian ancestry, but also to the mixed cultures which developed out of contact between the two civilizations.

The first point of similarity between the two regions is the relative paucity of primary sources in this field and the overwhelming predominance, among those sources which are available, of European male views of colonial women. This was an obstacle faced by those who investigated the history of women under the Dutch regime; their achievements demonstrate what is possible through careful and sensitive use of the available sources.

### **Manila and Batavia**

The Spanish established Manila as their administrative center in the Philippines in 1571. Until the early nineteenth century Spanish colonization of the Philippines focused heavily on Manila as the

entrepot linking China and the Americas through the cross-Pacific Manila galleon trade. The Dutch built Batavia as their headquarters in the East in 1619. Until the end of the eighteenth century Batavia was administered by the VOC (the United East India Company), which as "a state within a state" implemented Dutch colonial rule in Asia. Following the bankruptcy of the company at the end of the eighteenth century the colony was ruled directly by the Dutch government.

In terms of physical setting there were many similarities between Manila and Batavia. The Europeans carefully chose the sites for their administrative headquarters, taking into account natural and strategic advantages. Both cities were founded on the sites of previous port towns and both had superior natural harbors. They were already important centers of trade, with resident populations of Chinese traders. Both cities were founded on rivers, the Pasig and the Ciliwung. On these sites the Europeans constructed walled cities dominated by fortified castles and surrounded by moats. In Manila walls were built around the central part of the city, called *Intramuros*, which encompassed the government offices, residences of officials and the main religious institutions including a cathedral and several churches. In *Intramuros* the Spanish tried to recreate as far as possible the appearance of a town in their home land. The square fortress of Batavia castle was built at the mouth of the Ciliwung River. Within the castle were administrative buildings, living quarters of higher officials of the VOC, a barracks, a church and several warehouses. The township constructed in the shadow of the castle was criss-crossed by canals and the architecture was unmistakably Dutch, the colonizers trying to recreate the sort of urban landscape they were familiar with in Holland.

The European colonizers tried to reproduce the physical environment they had come from and transplant fragments of European society on the other side of the world, but pressures towards cultural adaptation were difficult to withstand. The populations of both Manila and Batavia were ethnically very mixed and a great deal of interaction occurred between the various groups. In Manila Spaniards and other ethnic groups lived in suburbs along the banks of the Pasig River, the Chinese, for instance, congregating in a suburb called the *Parian*. The non-Spanish population was not usually allowed in *Intramuros*, the central administrative area, but non-European servants and tradespeople frequented *Intramuros*, and most Spaniards lived beyond the walls and often visited the markets and shops of

the Parian. In Batavia the Dutch allowed other ethnic groups, most notably the Chinese, to live within the city, mainly for their protection. These groups tended to congregate in particular sections of the city where they lived according to their own customs, but all came into regular contact at the city markets.

The social relationships which developed in these colonial outposts showed many similarities. The Spaniards of Manila preferred to marry Spanish women, partly because such unions could secure social or economic advantages or career advancement. Like Dutch and mestizo women in Batavia, Spanish and mestizo women in Manila were usually betrothed early, sometimes as young as twelve years of age. Within marriage women had to accept a subordinate position. For instance, strict fidelity was expected of the wife, and the husband would be within his legal rights to murder both his wife and her lover if he ever caught them in *flagrante delicto* (Boxer 1975, 94). On the other hand, adultery on the part of husbands was looked upon with tolerance (Boxer 1975, 108-12). In marriage Spanish women were expected to obey their husbands just as they had previously obeyed their fathers.

In Manila Europeans did not usually marry non-Europeans. Nevertheless, other forms of relationship, such as concubinage, were quite common. Spanish men at this time generally followed the maxim "fornication is no sin," especially with an unmarried woman (Boxer 1975, 127). Women kept as concubines were expected to be as faithful as if they were married, though similar restrictions did not apply to their partners. It often happened that when a Spaniard finished his stint in the Philippines, the woman was left with children to support (Devins 1905, 127). Spanish men also frequented prostitutes, most of whom were Spanish and Chinese mestizas and Filipinas (Martinez de Zuñiga 1973, 223; Chirino 1969, 374)

The situation in Batavia was a little different because of VOC policy. Among higher officials of the VOC marriage was limited to Dutch women, first, European-born women and later, as more Dutch people were born in the Indies and the family system developed, Indies-born women. However, in its recruiting for the lower ranks of the service, the VOC gave preference to bachelors, and encouraged them to marry local women. Initially, freed slaves and other local women were taken as wives, but increasingly the men showed a preference for Eurasian women. Although the company tried to encourage marriage, partly for its own purposes of keeping employees in the Indies as long as possible, and tried to stamp out what they saw as

immorality, in fact concubinage was common at all levels of the official hierarchy. Prostitution was also rife. Thus although VOC policy was intended to produce a different set of social relations in Batavia than that which prevailed in Manila, in fact the company's success was limited and the outcomes were very similar.

The number of European women who came to the Southeast Asian colonies was very limited. Because Spanish men in the Philippines preferred to marry Spanish women, the opening of the first convent in Manila in 1621, the Franciscan Poor Clares, provoked loud protests from the bachelors of the town. Within a few years twenty-two young Spanish ladies joined the convent, reducing the pool of eligible Spanish women of high class by half, and thus emphasizing the scarcity of European women in this colonial outpost (Phelan 1959, 106).

At the time the total Spanish population of Manila numbered about 4,000. In the early years of Batavia larger numbers of Dutch women emigrated. Jan Coen, the founder of Batavia, had a vision of the city's future as a settlement of solid respectable burgher families. Immigration of Dutch women was obviously an important part of the plan and during the first decade of Batavia's history the directors of the VOC were compliant. In 1632, however, the VOC brought an end to the immigration scheme for reasons of economy, and because the directors were convinced that marriage to Asian women would encourage officers to remain in the East. From this time, until the late 19th century, only small numbers of Dutch women came to Batavia (See Taylor 1983, 12-15).

In addition to the small numbers of female European immigrants arriving in Manila, two other groups of women were closely involved in the Spanish colonizing enterprise: locally-born women of Spanish parentage, and mestizo women, usually with Spanish fathers and Filipino or Chinese mothers. European-born Spaniards, the *peninsulares*, considered themselves at the apex of the social hierarchy. They regarded Spaniards born in the Philippines as inferior and called them by the offensive name of *cagapalays*, a reference to locally-grown crude rice (Mallat 1983, 334; see also Goncharov 1974, 163). Their sense of superiority was founded partly on ideas about the effects on vitality of being raised in a tropical climate, and on doubts about whether the primary loyalty of the locally-born lay with the mother country or with the Philippines. Spaniards born in the Philippines, the Sons of the Country, resented these superior attitudes and the associated discrimination which usually kept them out of

high office. Nevertheless, the whiteness of their skin put them unquestionably higher in the social scale and in life prospects compared to the mestizos.

*Peninsulares* generally kept strictly to European cultural norms during their stay in Manila, although the longer they stayed the stronger the pressures for adaptation became.

The Europeans residing in Manila have kept, with every little changes, the customs of Europe, and it is only those who have formed intimate liaisons with sons of the country or who have entered into their families through marriages, who have adopted their practices and way of life. (Mallat 1983, 344)

Among Spanish Sons of the Country the pressures for cultural adaptation and mixing were far stronger. Born in the Philippines, they were usually raised by Filipino servants in their households, spending more time with them in their formative years than with their Spanish parents. They were exposed daily to Filipino customs, many of which could be expected to be more suited to the local environment than European mores.

Mestizos also had a close acquaintance with local culture. Usually their fathers were Spanish, and even if they were recognized and legitimized, which was rare, their fathers, following European customs of the time, would have had little to do with their upbringing. Marriages between Spaniards and Filipino or Chinese women were infrequent, although fairly stable relationships of concubinage were more common. As Phelan (1959, 106) comments, "In those days mestizo and illegitimate were synonymous terms." Thus children of mixed parentage were raised by their mothers and their mothers' families according to either Chinese or Filipino customs. Nevertheless, their European parentage and features gave them a higher social status than either the Chinese or Filipinos. Usually enjoying greater access to educational and employment opportunities as well, some mestizos wished to imitate European ways: "The Spanish mestizos are possessed by the urge to pass wherever they can as Spaniards" (Goncharov 1974, 163; see also Martinez de Zuñiga 1973, 208).

Thus it was among the Sons of the Country and the mestizos that the forces of acculturation were at their strongest. These groups, and especially the women among them, were the source of new mestizo cultural variants. A number of male visitors to Manila felt the impulse to write about the Spanish and mestizo women, just as Euro-

peans who called at Batavia felt similarly impelled. Their commentaries were often highly critical, but reading between the lines one can catch glimpses of processes of cultural adaptation at work.

### **Life Style of the Women of Manila**

A French visitor to Manila, Jean Mallat, provided a stylized account of the daily routine of the Spanish women of Manila. On rising from bed, a Spanish lady would go to bathe, either at home or in a nearby stream. Women and men bathed together in the rivers, but always fully dressed. After swimming or showering with jugs of water, the Spanish woman would be dried by a Filipino servant. From the bath "women come out with dishevelled hair, lightly clothed in white underwear with bare feet enclosed" in richly patterned slippers. Breakfast followed, usually comprising rice, ham, fish, tropical fruits and jams. All meals, but especially breakfast, were finished with a cigar and betel nut. In local dress, with their hair loose, the women would then walk, pay visits or go shopping until lunchtime. Lunch was served in the early afternoon and consisted of a great variety of dishes, sometimes accompanied by wine. The meal was generally followed by a siesta. At five in the afternoon the women dressed themselves up: "elegantly coiffured with their hair interspersed with natural flowers, clothed in dresses with short sleeves of fine embroidered cloths," they went to show themselves in public. Traveling by means of two-horse carriages, all of colonial society assembled at this time of day for the promenade along the seashore. The walk was interrupted by frequent greetings and polite exchanges. Afterwards everyone returned home to take chocolate or tea. At night women paid visits to the salons, attended dances or the theater, or walked, sat or talked in the bazaar. By eleven o'clock everyone was back at home, where they were offered supper, usually consisting of chicken with pumpkin and rice, and accompanied by drinks, cigars and betel (Mallat 1983, 345-49). From this account it is clear that in their daily lives Spanish women in Manila had adopted many local Filipino customs and habits. Commentaries of other visitors confirm this.

Many observers remarked on the unexpected physical appearance of the women. A French visitor, Chretien de Guignes (1965, 122), described the dress of Spanish women, especially those in the group known as Sons of the Country:



The lady of the governor, and some other ladies of distinction, alone dress in European style. The rest wear no powder; they either have their hair turned up and knotted on the back of the head, or plaited and hanging over the shoulders. Generally speaking they show but little taste in their manner of dressing their hair. Their petticoats are short . . . The men dress better.

Father Joaquin Martínez de Zuñiga (1973, 220) was also critical of Spanish women's dress:

The ladies display dresses that are somewhat ridiculous. It is a chemise with tight-fitting long sleeves reaching down to the fist (with a cotton shawl like those worn by country women of Spain), cotton skirt, and hose; cork-soled shoes complete their dress. At times, they add a jacket of fine cotton. There are occasions when they dress 'a la Europea,' but it is rather rare for them to desire to appear even in gala affairs wearing a long, wide gown which is the reigning fashion of the times.

Although de Guignes and de Zuñiga were critical of the abandonment of European standards of dress, make-up and coiffure, their descriptions suggest that the Spanish women were adapting to the tropical climate, the fabrics most readily available and the relaxed lifestyle of Manila.

The physical attributes of the mestiza drew more favorable male comment:

that which distinguished the female half-breed [Spanish mestiza or Chinese mestiza] is a singularly intelligent and expressive physiognomy. Their hair drawn back from the face, and sustained by long golden pins, is of marvellous luxuriance (De la Gironiere 1962, 15).

However, the appeal of the mestiza was also spoiled in some male eyes by the adoption of Asian dress: "Many of the mestizas are extremely pretty, but their gait drags a little, from their habit of wearing slippers" (Jagor 1965, 23). Mestizas wore their own costume consisting of a striped or multi-colored skirt and a white mantilla; the black mantilla was the exclusive head-dress of pure-blood Spanish women (Goncharov 1974, 163). Observing mestizas promenading on the esplanade and boulevards, the male gaze was appreciative, giving a strong sexual undertone to the commentary:

In the evening, Spaniards, English, and French, go to the promenades to ogle the beautiful and facile half-breed women, whose transparent robes reveal their splendid figures . . . Nothing can be more charming, coquettish, and fascinating than this costume, which excites in the highest degree the admiration of strangers. The [mestizas] know so well the effect it produces on the Europeans, that nothing would induce them to alter it (De la Gironiere 1962, 16).

In their own houses both Spanish women and mestizas usually wore the light local costume because of its coolness. Unlike women in Europe at the time, they did not wear corsets, except for balls and grand ceremonies (De la Gironiere 1962, 16; Mallat 1983, 334).

The table manners of the ladies of Manila attracted considerable critical comment, such as this description by Father Joaquin de Zuñiga:

The ladies, as a rule, do not eat bread but rice which they mix and stir with the stewed meat, using no eating utensils except their fingers. This method of eating is somewhat filthy and necessitates the washing of hands before and after eating, but it is said that it is very delightful. Those who have been taught to eat this way do not like to use any other method (Martinez de Zuñiga 1973, 221-22; see also Marryat 146).

Again, the women were adapting readily both to the diet and eating techniques of the Filipinos.

After having surmounted the first surprise caused by manners so different from those one has been accustomed to, one can not stop oneself from contemplating with a curiosity mixed with interest, a young and pretty woman, crouched in the style of the Indio woman, *saya* tucked up between the legs, revealing delicate feet in velvet slippers embroidered in gold and silver gracefully run her hand from the *morisqueta* to the other dishes, getting from each of them some savory morsel, and put the *bocadito* in a mouth decorated with teeth as white as pearls (Mallat 1983, 347).

The everyday lifestyle of Manila appears to have been extremely relaxed, or even, according to many visitors, lazy. The women, especially, responded to the tropical climate by sleeping late and indulging in siestas, coming to life in the cooler hours of the evening.

like the Indians, they [Spanish women and mestizas] sleep half the day, and are scarcely alive till sun-down, when they dress for the alameda or esplanade (Marryat 1974, 131).

The ladies are to be pitied; for they pass three-fourths of their time in dishabille, with their maids around them, sleeping, dressing, lolling, and combing their hair (Wilkes 1974, 40).

In the same way, indolence was often pointed to as an outstanding characteristic of the ladies of Batavia:

These little ladies in general, Dutch, but also Half-Castes and Mestizas, and especially in Batavia . . . let themselves be waited on like princesses, and some have many slaves, men and women, in their service who must watch over them like guard dogs night and day . . . and they are so lazy that they will not lift a hand for anything, not even a straw on the floor close to them, but they call out at once for one of their slaves to do it (De Graaff quoted in Taylor 1983, 41-42).

The women of Manila were also noted for their habit of chewing betel nut, which stained their teeth and gums red and promoted frequent spitting of pulp and juice. Antonio de Morga explained the use and narcotic effects of betel juice:

The most usual dainty throughout the islands and in much of the mainland of those regions, is *buyo* which is made from a tree with a mulberry-shaped leaf. Its fruit, called *bonga*, is like an oak acorn and is white inside; this is cut lengthwise in strips, which are then put into envelopes or cornets made from the leaf. A little quicklime powder is put inside the *bonga* and the whole preparation is put into the mouth and chewed. The resultant mixture is so strong and burns so much as to induce sleep and drunkenness, and sharply scalds the mouth of those not used to it. The whole of the mouth and saliva become red as blood, though the taste is not bad. After having been chewed for a long time it is spat out, and only the juice called *sapa*, remains (De Morga 1971, 258-59).

De Morga stressed that the chewing of betel was virtually universal in the Philippines:

What is indeed apparent to all is that it is used by natives and Spaniards, by seculars and religious, by men and women, and this so

commonly and habitually that morning and night, in parties and visits, or alone at home, their greatest treat and delight consists of *buyo*, served on heavy gilded and prettily adorned plates and salvers, as they do chocolate in New Spain (De Morga 1971, 258-59; Martinez de Zuñiga 1973, 223).

Similarly, visitors to Batavia almost invariably commented, often with disgust, on women's use of this substance, as did Jean-Baptiste Tavernier (quoted in Taylor 1983, 41):

Men and women always chew it when they go out, even in church; and that's how these ladies piously say their prayers. It is an infamous sight, for their mouths are always full of red spittle, as if their teeth had been smashed.

Another peculiarity of the ladies of Manila noted by visitors, usually with disgust, was their habit of smoking thick cigars. Tobacco from central America had been introduced into the Philippines by the Spanish.

Everybody smokes, the women as much as the men. Tobacco is rolled for this purpose into lengths of four, or five or six inches, more or less, about as thick as the thumb, or slightly less. It is lighted at one end and smoke is drawn through the other while held by the teeth or between the lips, as one would do with a pipe. One rarely sees a woman in the streets, especially a half-caste, without a cigar in her mouth (Le Gentil 1964, 80).

They all smoke; the cigars for the women are about five or six inches long and thick as a good-sized finger (De Guignes 1965, 124; see also Martinez de Zuñiga 1973, 223).

Le Gentil, a French visitor appalled by what he considered the low morals of the women of Manila, observed that it was the custom for men and women to arrange assignations while exchanging lights for their cigars (Le Gentil 1964, 88). Cigar smoking was one trait the women of Manila did not share with their sisters in Batavia, but it evoked just as critical a response from European male observers as did betel chewing among the Batavian ladies.

Frequent bathing was another Asian habit adopted by the Spanish and mestizo women of Manila, one in which European visitors could see little merit. To facilitate this custom, houses built near streams were equipped with small huts of bamboo for disrobing and

entering the water. The women of Manila were strong swimmers: "Living in the water is the greatest pleasure of Philippine women; they all know how to swim perfectly . . . they cross the Pasig River with the greatest facility (Mallat 1983, 345; see also Martinez de Zuñiga 1973, 222). Similarly, the houses in Old Batavia had bathing boxes built beside the canals, though the women's habit of bathing openly in the Ciliwung River often raised objections from the men (Taylor 1983, 41).

Because of the small extent of the Spanish community in Manila, they were always looking for novel evening entertainments. Often it came to making their own fun. Visitors who compared society in Manila to the glitter of social life in Europe could be disappointed:

The diversions of Manila are few. There are occasional evening parties. Society is on a dull and distant footing. The young ladies sing and play on the piano. The women are generally seated on one side and the men on the other. The women have rather high voices, and sing from the throat (De Guignes 1965, 124).

Nevertheless there were plenty of occasions for conspicuous display:

Dances are one of the most sought-after entertainments in Manila. Here gather up to seventy dancers, whose dress display the most dazzling luxury in Chinese silk, diamonds from Borneo, pearls from Solou. Young ladies are dressed with no less brilliance than married women and they never wear the same dress twice (Mallat 1983, 352).

Like women in Batavia, the ladies of Manila were noted for extravagant displays of wealth. Despite the sumptuous costumes, society balls and official dances seemed too dull and decorous for some visitors, but in private Spanish women were reputed to be less inhibited:

In private parties the ladies dance minuets, but in a manner somewhat singular, blending with them occasionally some steps of the fandango. In general they appear little accustomed to this dance, for the minuets would last through the night were the dancers not admonished of the time to conclude. I shall not describe the dances of the mestizos and some Spaniards in private parties; they are lascivious in the extreme (De Guignes 1965, 124; see also de la Gironiere 1962, 15).

The moral purity of the ladies of Manila was often a concern of male observers. The Frenchman, Le Gentil, was shocked by the moral

tone of Manila when he visited in the late eighteenth century. He was appalled, for instance, by the custom of mixed bathing. Le Gentil portrayed Manila as one of the most depraved cities in the world (Le Gentil 1964, 87-88). At the beginning of the next century Father Joaquin de Zuñiga questioned many of Le Gentil's assessments. On the morals of the women of Manila he wrote:

He who sees Manila ladies will take them as less shy, which is what they are because they talk more freely than women of other lands . . . The women talk frankly of their monthly ailment, of the public concubinage, and take, as a good natured joke, the solemn declarations of love by their suitors, something not expected for a naturally shy woman.

And a woman who shows more boldness in certain things than what the established customs allow is not a bad woman. And he who is not acquainted with these women will think of them as loose, but those who know how she behaves will find out that there is no less licentiousness in other cities than in Manila, where circumstances rather impel looseness in the same way (Martinez de Zuñiga 1973, 223).

De Zuñiga concluded that the women were not shy, but not loose, or at least not more loose than one would expect in the circumstances, and certainly "not as loose as Monsieur Le Gentil supposes" (Martinez de Zuñiga 1973, 223).

Among many other qualities of the ladies of Manila noted by visitors was their ability to squat on their haunches for long periods with comfort, a capacity they shared with the women of Batavia (Mallat 1983, 346; cf. Taylor 1983, 66). A criticism frequently levelled against them, as against women in Batavia, was their lack of education beyond basic reading and writing (Mallat 1983, 334; Marryat 1974, 131; cf. Taylor 1983, 64). Their opportunities for education were far more restricted than those available to their male counterparts.

The peculiar and sometimes unsavory ways of the women of Manila were often attributed to the fact that they had been raised by Filipino servants and so had been exposed to Filipino ways from an early age. Thus Jean Mallat (1983, 350) commented on the objectionable manners "derived by the young Manila ladies from the almost continual contact with the Indios with whom often they were raised." Similar child-rearing practices were followed in Batavia, apparently with similar results:

Those born in the Indies especially are incapable, or rather too lazy, to raise their own children. Instead, as soon as they come into the world [the mothers] hand them over to a Black wetnurse, a slave whore, or to one of their women Slaves to nurse and rear, so that they trouble themselves little with their own children; which is why children prefer being with their Black nurse and the men and women slaves to being with their parents . . . they are raised by [slaves] and imbibe all their manners. (De Graaff quoted in Taylor 1983, 42-43).

### Women in Religious and State Institutions

Most observers who recorded their impressions of Manila concentrated on the more visible lives of women in society. However, there were two other groups of women in Manila with a lower social profile: women in religious communities and those in state institutions. Often victims of male abuse or neglect, or of the weak economic and social position of women, the latter reflected the dark underside of patriarchal society and thus were usually kept from public view.

By the eighteenth century there were six religious institutions for women in Manila: one convent, the Royal Monastery of Santa Clara, which had been established in 1621, and five *beaterios*. A *beaterio* was a religious community whose members wore the habit and took simple vows. Three of the religious communities set up for women in Manila were established by Spanish ladies, one by a Chinese mestiza, one by two Filipinas, and one by a Spanish friar (Santiago 1989, 212). The government set up Houses of Recollection (*Casas de Recogimiento*) for laywomen where they could teach young girls Christian doctrine, good conduct, basic reading and writing, and homecrafts. Under this scheme, in the mid-eighteenth century all the *beaterios* in the Philippines were granted royal protection as tax-exempt teaching institutions (Santiago 1989, 213).

Most women who joined these religious institutions committed themselves for life, though in some cases they joined only at an advanced age, upon widowhood, for instance. There were cases, however, when women decided they had been mistaken about their vocation. In one instance this caused a notorious scandal. In the middle of the eighteenth century, Mother Cecilia, who had been a Dominican nun for sixteen years, decided that she wished to have

her profession annulled in order to marry Don Francisco de Figueroa, secretary in the colonial government. The Dominican order strongly opposed her application. The case was appealed to Mexico, but in the meantime the couple created outrage by marrying before sailing to Acapulco. After litigation lasting ten years, both the church and the king eventually confirmed the validity of the marriage (Boxer 1975, 94-95; see Blair and Robertson 1903, 48: 155-58).

Regarding women's involvement in the religious sphere, it is interesting to note that the first saint in the Philippines, indeed in the New World, was a woman. A Spanish mestiza, Rossa Talangpaz, was canonized in 1671, about fifty years after her death. The Pope declared her the patron saint of the Philippines and of the New World (Santiago 1989, 223).

Apart from women who joined the religious orders, the Church also played a role in regulating the lives of women outside the cloisters. The church in Manila, as in Batavia, played an important role in teaching women to be docile, to be obedient to fathers and husbands and to accept the sexual double standard: "Obedience to the husband by the wife was something which clerical moralists never failed to stress in or out of season (Boxer 1975, 111-12; cf. Blusse 1986, 166-71). Father Pedro Chirino mentioned in his account of Manila in the late sixteenth century two women who had been treated so badly by their husbands that they wished to commit suicide. However, the point he emphasized was that through faith and repentance, and in one case by divine intervention, they sustained their marriages (Chirino 1969, 344-45). In the same period the Society of Jesus took into their school for girls "a number of women who because of the absence of their husbands were in moral danger" (Chirino 1969, 343). The Jesuits also made arrangements with the Governor to promote the marriages of several other women, the Governor assisting "not only with his authority but with his personal funds" (Chirino 1969, 343-44).

Some Spanish and part-Spanish women were dependent upon the state authorities for their support. In providing for the needy and destitute, the Spanish in Manila were certainly in advance of other European colonizers. The first such institution, the House or College of Santa Potenciana, was founded in 1594. Its functions were described by Antonio de Morga in the early seventeenth century:

It is a royal foundation and the Prioress lives there with her confidential assistants . . . They admit women in distress, and maidens of



the city, to a sort of religious retirement. Some of the girls leave there to marry, others remain there permanently. The institute has its own workrooms and a choir, partly maintained by royal grant; the rest they find for themselves by their own labour and from their property. They have their own steward and a chaplain who acts as administrator (De Morga 1971, 285).

At the beginning of the seventeenth century about sixty women and girls were residents of the house, including four main groups:

1. The daughters of impoverished old *conquistadores* and soldiers, who had been left destitute on their fathers' deaths.
2. The illegitimate daughters of Spaniards and Indian (Filipina) women, "and they are numerous."
3. Some married women who had quarrelled with their husbands and who took refuge there until the marital discord was smoothed over.
4. Some poor but respectable widows (Boxer 1975, 92-93 citing Blair and Robertson 282-88).

A century later another visitor, Giovanni Careri, wrote that the occupants comprised poor orphans, married women, and "lewd women put in by the magistrates" (quoted in Boxer 1975, 92). The inmates were therefore women who as orphans, widows, illegitimate offspring, estranged wives or prostitutes, could not be accommodated in the mainstream of male-dominated colonial society.

A similar institution, the College of Santa Isabel, was founded in 1632 by the Manila branch of the Santa Casa de Misericordia. Father Domingo Navarrete, who visited Manila in 1656-57, mentioned "a stately Church of the Misericordia, with a School, in which they breed up many Spanish Fatherless Maids, and give them Portions to marry" (Cummins 1962, 94). In 1736 Santa Isabel was still performing the same functions, but had also established a reputation for the education provided its residents:

the house and seminary of Santa Isabel, built in order to rear Spanish orphan girls with thorough instruction in Christian doctrine and good morals . . . Thence the girls go out with dowries sufficient for the estate of marriage to which they naturally tend . . . It is a Seminary of such great reputation and honor that although it has been used from its beginning as a refuge for girls . . . the best citizens of the community do not hesitate today to send their daughters there. Thence

they go out to assume the state of matrimony, or as nuns of St. Clare (Boxer 1975, 93).

The education offered the girls was primarily of a religious and moral character; they were "instructed in the obligations of womanhood. They are brought up in the fear of the Lord and in good manners and right conduct under the guidance of a lady rector" (Martinez de Zuñiga 1973, 192).

In addition to these there was also a correctional institution for women in Manila. Here the Vicar General sent "a few wayward women to be reformed and taught to live properly" (Martinez de Zuñiga 1973, 192). Church and state worked hand in hand in colonial Manila. As in Batavia, the church took responsibility for producing young women who would be suitable marriage partners for the male colonists and compliant participants in the colonial order.

## Conclusion

Despite restrictions imposed by both church and state, travellers' accounts clearly indicate that a process of acculturation was taking place among the Spanish women and mestizas of Manila. These women were adjusting to a tropical environment, leaving behind some aspects of European culture and adopting some of the mores of the local people. Thus a mixed mestizo culture was being created.

The comments of visitors to Manila suggest that such changes were occurring more noticeably and rapidly among colonial women than among their male counterparts. A number of reasons for this might be suggested. Locally-born Spanish and mestizo men had far greater access to European education than the women, which imbued them with European culture. The need for them to find employment and advancement in a society where Europeanness was a standard of social status would have made them less culturally flexible than the women. Furthermore, because they worked, they spent far less time than the women in households numerically dominated by Filipinos. Among the groups most likely to engage in cultural mixing, the Sons of the Country and mestizos, the women were therefore especially open to cultural change. The lifestyle the women created for themselves and the mestizo culture which emerged bear many resemblances to what was taking place in Dutch Batavia in the same period.

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