

En David T. Orique, Rady Roldán-Figueroa y Cynthia Folquer, *The Dominicans in the Americas and the Philippines (c. 1500–c. 1820) Devotional Life, Catholic Liter.* Nueva York (Estados Unidos): Routledge.

# **The Cofradía del Santísimo Rosario of the Order of Preachers of Tucumán: Composition, Links, and Corporate Issues (1791-1809).**

Estela Calvente.

Cita:

Estela Calvente (2024). *The Cofradía del Santísimo Rosario of the Order of Preachers of Tucumán: Composition, Links, and Corporate Issues (1791-1809)*. En David T. Orique, Rady Roldán-Figueroa y Cynthia Folquer *The Dominicans in the Americas and the Philippines (c. 1500–c. 1820) Devotional Life, Catholic Liter.* Nueva York (Estados Unidos): Routledge.

Dirección estable: <https://www.aacademica.org/estela.calvente/4>

ARK: <https://n2t.net/ark:/13683/pqUY/2Kv>



Esta obra está bajo una licencia de Creative Commons.  
Para ver una copia de esta licencia, visite  
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/deed.es>.

*Acta Académica* es un proyecto académico sin fines de lucro enmarcado en la iniciativa de acceso abierto. *Acta Académica* fue creado para facilitar a investigadores de todo el mundo el compartir su producción académica. Para crear un perfil gratuitamente o acceder a otros trabajos visite: <https://www.aacademica.org>.

## **The Cofradía del Santísimo Rosario of the Order of Preachers of Tucumán: Composition, Links, and Corporate Issues (1791-1809)**

Estela Calvente

“Institute of Historical Research “Prof. Manuel García Soriano”

Universidad del Norte Santo Tomás de Aquino

[ecalvente@unsta.edu.ar](mailto:ecalvente@unsta.edu.ar)

**Abstract:** This chapter explores little-known aspects of the corporate society of San Miguel de Tucumán by reconstructing the framework of relationships woven by the members of the Cofradía del Santísimo Rosario de la Orden de Predicadores between 1791 and 1809. The impact of the confraternity on socio-religious life in Tucumán is of great scholarly interest. An examination of the *Primer libro de la Cofradía del Santísimo Rosario* in the Dominican convent specifies the distinctive characteristics of the confraternity, the social connection of its members, and the particular links they established with other social actors, in addition to other aspects.

The chapter argues that in keeping with its dynamic development this Dominican confraternity reinforced and complexified the colonial corporate-state framework. Indeed, during the period under consideration, institutional offices of the confraternity were held by members of the local elite, who were in turn related to other city corporations, specially with the cabildo. The theoretical and methodological perspective is inscribed in approaches that developed in Argentine historiography since the restoration of democracy in the 1980s and that have been applied to colonial confraternities and to the development of the church during Spanish domination.

**Biographical note:** Estela del Valle Calvente holds a degree in History and a diploma in Argentine and Latin American History from the Universidad Nacional de Tucumán (UNT), where she is a doctoral student in Social Sciences. She is a researcher at the Institute of Historical Studies, “Prof. Manuel García Soriano”, at the Universidad del Norte de Santo Tomás de Aquino (UNSTA), and also a participant in research projects at the UNT. She was a teaching assistant to the chair of History of America (post-independence period) and to the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters of the UNT. She has published papers and presented at academic conferences. Her investigative interests are the jurisdictional configuration and the local religiosity of the colonial vicariate of San Miguel de Tucumán. She is the author of the book *History of the Municipality of Las Talitas*.

**Keywords:** “Nueva historia de la iglesia,” confraternity, Tucumán, corporation

### **Introduction**

Jesuit priests introduced the devotion of the Most Holy Rosary and its confraternity in San Miguel de Tucumán. The role of the Jesuits in this regard is well documented in a 1612 will

from the old settlement of Ibatín, where it is mentioned by the institution's majordomo, Juan Espinosa (Muñoz Moraleda, 1996: 120).<sup>1</sup> More information about the confraternity's trajectory in the region is available after the expulsion of the Society of Jesus in the second half of the next century. For example, in 1769 the city's cabildo approached the Dominican provincial with a proposal for a foundation of the Order of Preachers in San Miguel de Tucumán. The cabildo argued, among other issues, that it was necessary to "resurrect the confraternity that, due to the absence of these religious [i.e. the Dominicans], the Jesuits administered." In response, the Dominican friars settled in San José del Monte de Lules in 1785 following arduous labors. However, only after their arrival in 1790 at the old Franciscan convent of San Miguel was the desire expressed to revive the confraternity founded by the Jesuits. The expulsion of the Society of Jesus prompted the transferral of their assets to the Real Junta de Temporalidades—an administrative body created for their administration. In 1791, Dr. Ángel Mariano Moscoso—the bishop of Tucumán, signed a decree ordering the transfer of the confraternity from the cathedral to the Dominican convent, where it began to operate shortly.<sup>2</sup> However, the legal existence of the confraternity began on September 16th of that same year, when the Tucumán members of the confraternity wrote a constitution for its specific local functioning.

Modern studies about confraternities have a long tradition in Latin American historiography. Research on confraternities by Spanish and Mexican scholars has generated numerous studies. Generally, this scholarship can be subgrouped into the following foci: the confraternities and their social networks; the origin of their patrimony; the confraternities as sites of sociability, cultural, economic, devotional, and charitable activities; as well as the explanation of their origins and typology.

In Argentina, since the restoration of democracy in 1983, historians of the "Nueva Historia de la Iglesia" ("New Church History") school started valuing the study of colonial confraternities from centers of reflection, discussion, and production within national universities and affiliated institutes. These researchers are interested in a history of religion in

---

<sup>1</sup> The capital of the province of Tucumán—the city of San Miguel—was founded on the Ibatín site in 1565, to the southeast of its current location—to which it was moved in 1685. This chapter studies its jurisdiction during the period in which it was part of the Intendencia de Salta del Tucumán (1782-1814), in the Río de la Plata Viceroyalty; this study regards it as a suffragan of the Bishopric of Tucumán (1570-1806), with its head in Córdoba. A majordomo was a manager, chief steward, overseer or supervisor of some activity. Cf., "major-domo, n." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press. <https://www-oed-com.ezproxy.bu.edu/view/Entry/112628?redirectedFrom=mayordomo> (accessed July 06, 2022).

<sup>2</sup> *Primer libro de la Cofradía del Santísimo Rosario de Tucumán*, Decreto del Obispo del Tucumán, año 1791, Archivo del Convento Dominicano de Tucumán (ACDT).

general, and of Catholicism in particular, that transcends earlier skewed confessional historiography. Among others, contributors to this scholarly effort include the following: Patricia Fogelman's (2000) research on the area of Río de la Plata, which points to questions of confraternal life in the context of Marian religiosity and to works related to the conformation and activities of the confraternities; María Elena Barral's (1998; 2002) examination of confraternities of the Buenos Aires pampas in their relationship with other institutions and social networks; Héctor Cruz's (2002) analysis of different cases from the jurisdiction of Jujuy; and, Ana María Martínez de Sánchez's (2006) study of the confraternities in the bishopric of Córdoba del Tucumán.

In Tucumán, a scarcity of documents referring to the colonial confraternities, together with the difficulties of accessing certain repositories, has prevented the completion of research to address this paucity of investigations about confraternities. Documents regarding the Cofradía del Santísimo Rosario of the Order of Preachers analyzed in this chapter did not receive attention from Tucumán historians until Nélica Beatriz Robledo initiated an investigation about the functioning of the confraternities in the second half of the nineteenth century; she provided preliminary data about the beginnings of the corporation in that century (2003: 301–315). In addition to the regulations elaborated by Tucumán confraternity members, the governing constitutions for this confraternity were the so-called “apostolic constitutions,” established for all the confraternities of the Most Holy Rosary by Alejandro Numai (1440–1485)—the bishop of Forlì—and confirmed by Pope Julius II in 1503 and Leo X in 1520 (Díaz, 1866: 242).<sup>3</sup>

Preliminary research has examined the historiography in other areas of the region and of Córdoba—those closest to Tucumán. In addition to the *Primer libro de la Cofradía del Santísimo Rosario*, the sources supporting this research that reconstruct the context and functioning of the local church vary and come from diverse repositories. While the majority of documentation comes from the Archivo Histórico de la Provincia de Tucumán, some published sources come from the Archivo de Indias, and at least one of them was a contribution of traditional confessional historiography, which made enormous contributions in the area of recovery of source material.

However, the information originating in other archives that could be added to that found in the *Primer libro*, as well as its relevance to the study of this specific institution and for the reconstruction of the confraternal life in San Miguel de Tucumán, is limited. The

---

<sup>3</sup> *Primer libro de la Cofradía del Santísimo Rosario de Tucumán*, Constituciones, año 1791, ACDT.

silence of the sources, in this regard, in addition to forcing us to draw upon traces for the reconstruction of the confraternity's universe, enhances the documentary value of this book of the Cofradía del Santísimo Rosario. The *Primer Libro de la Cofradía del Santísimo Rosario* of the Order of Preachers—preserved in the local Dominican convent—is today the only known source produced by a confraternity operating in the region of Tucumán during the colonial period. The constitutions of the corporation, the elections book, and the list of members—compiled by Friar Jacinto Carrasco (1883–1956) in the twentieth century—constitute a well-preserved volume without pagination.

This chapter's goal is to explore whether belonging to this colonial Dominican confraternity provided members not only with access to spiritual benefits, but also to possible acquisition of social status and societal prestige by the expansion of communal bonds and the implementation of power strategies that allowed members to stay at the top of the privileged Tucumán *vecindario*.<sup>4</sup> Arguably, the confraternity was a forum utilized by the local elite to weave relationships that socially promoted its members and conferred prestige on them in the eyes of their peers. Accordingly, this chapter seeks to understand the colonial history of the Cofradía del Santísimo Rosario of the Order of Preachers and the most notable characteristics of its members.<sup>5</sup> The temporal period studied begins—in 1791, the year of the foundation of the confraternity, and ends—in 1809, the year in which the *Primer libro* concludes.

### **Ethnic and Social Composition of the Confraternity<sup>6</sup>**

Perhaps the most pronounced feature about late-colonial Tucumán confraternities is the lack of information concerning the society's ethnic composition. As a result of eighteenth-century social transformations by the end of this period, determining this ethnic factor was impossible.<sup>7</sup> On the one hand, boundaries in these associations were erased over the years

---

<sup>4</sup> *Vecindario* was composed of householders (*vecinos*), citizens of a town or of a *real minas*, which was frequently restricted to whites during the colonial period.

<sup>5</sup> This chapter only analyzes male confraternity members.

<sup>6</sup> In the 1950s, Latin American social scientists began to use ethnic categories in their research. These pertain to “membership criteria based on a set of ideas, symbols, and feelings constantly recreated and redefined in the daily practice of individual lives, while linking its identity with the affiliation to groups considered to be characterized by some cultural peculiarity.” After the Second World War, the concept of race, with its emphasis on biological differences of the studied societies, was abandoned; there was a “critique of the pseudo-scientific logic that once served as the basis for the diversity hierarchy.” See Terrén (2002).

<sup>7</sup> In this century, important population growth took place in the countryside, which was populated by whites and *mestizos*, by locals and migrants in ranches and hamlets, by Indians *conchabados* or living in villages, and by slaves living on farms. It was the most densely populated jurisdiction of the Salta Intendency. Between 1778 and 1810 the inhabitants of the campaign made up 80% of the total population, while only 20% of the Tucumán population resided in the city. According to census data from 1778, the group afro mestizo accounted for 60% of the population, while slaves accounted for 5%. Spanish, peninsular and American population, increased from

and, by the end of Spanish domination, the confraternities were no longer the exclusive domain of one particular ethnic group. On the other hand, there was also the hoarding of positions by prominent members of the local elite who sought to obtain the advantages and privileges that would accrue to a member of one of the corporations of the *republic*.<sup>8</sup>

The Cofradía del Santísimo Rosario is a good example of the first case that was just mentioned. In the opening pages of the *Primer libro*, the confraternity is called “del Santísimo Rosario de Españoles y Naturales” o “de Españoles e Indios” (“of the Most Holy Rosary of Spaniards and Naturals” or “of Spaniards and Indians”), but once established in the Dominican convent with diocesan approval, it was renamed as the “Cofradía del Santísimo Rosario,” without specifying any ethnic component.

Furthermore, greater precision is possible as we query the origins of the confraternity’s original designation. A 1784 inventory of jewels, ornaments, and sacred images mentions the representation of “Nuestra Señora del Rosario de la Cofradía de Naturales” (“Our Lady of the Rosary of the Confraternity of Naturals”). The inventory also mentions the image of “Nuestra Señora del Tránsito” (“Our Lady of Translation”). As the inventory itself indicates: “...which corresponds to the confraternity of Spaniards, with all its jewelry, is also translated to the cathedral, also by superior order.”<sup>9</sup> An overview of the confraternity’s election book does not show evidence of indigenous or castas among its membership.<sup>10</sup> This suggests that, perhaps, the congregation dedicated to the Nuestra Señora del Tránsito was dissolved, just as the one dedicated to the Rosario de Naturales, while the latter was recast after the transfer to the Dominican convent with a predominantly (but perhaps not exclusively) Spanish membership, both peninsular and American.

Beginning in the eighteenth century, through a process of social “whitening,” a sector of the population called *castas libres* avoided the obstacles of social ascent and blended themselves with whites. Consequently, to a certain extent, many of the differentiating markers between whites and non-whites were blurred. Thus, possibly some of the unidentified confreres in the various registers might have been one of these cases. These social variables

---

15% to 25% as a result of improved economic and living conditions, immigration and the process of “blanqueamiento” (López, 2003:67-75; Gil Montero, 2005).

<sup>8</sup> According to the Real Academia Española’s *Diccionario de autoridades* (1726), *república* means: “El gobierno del público. Se toma también por la causa pública, el común o su utilidad. Por extensión se llaman también algunos pueblos.” *Diccionario de Autoridades*, Madrid: Autor. Recuperado de: <http://web.frl.es/DA.html> consulta: 16/12/2018.

<sup>9</sup> “...q. corresponde â la Cofradía de Españoles, y con todas sus Alhajas, se halla también trasladada â aquella Iga. Matriz también pr. ordn. Superior.” Sección Administrativa (SA), Vol. X, año 1784, Archivo Histórico de Tucumán (AHT).

<sup>10</sup> Casta is a general term denoting mixed racial heritage.

reflect the great difficulty in establishing categories of ethnic identification in the colonial population (López, 2003: 70-71; Gil Montero, 2005).

However, as in every collective body, all who held positions in the confraternity accepted that they had been selected by committees who choose them from among individuals considered worthy to fulfill those roles. Thus, the person's social status and moral reputation were linked in addition to their good behavior, family origin, material resources, vocation of service, and personal integrity (Lempéire, 2008:99). Furthermore, the constitutions that governed the confraternities of the Rosary throughout the world stated: "A person of any state and quality may enter this confraternity without being required to pay anything, but only having [their name] written in their book by whomever has authority [to do so]."<sup>11</sup> As such, access to the confraternity would be unrestricted for women and men from any sector of society, without any considerations of the social variables of ethnicity, estate, pecuniary, and social "quality" of those who could increase their ranks.<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, in the confraternity of the Dominican convent, the different positions were divided among a group of confreres with certain peculiarities.<sup>13</sup> The concept of equality, which we assume when reading "of any state and quality," was not shared by contemporaries. For the latter, society was essentially hierarchical, and they very likely believed that any institution was reserved for people of note or, at least, for Spanish and creole heads of households. The leadership of the institution was in the hands of the most extolled members of the local elite, such as those distinguished by the principal surnames at the top of the social ladder. This group consisted of families with deep roots and of peninsulares who had arrived in greater numbers in the second half of the eighteenth century. The last to arrive implemented a series of strategies aimed at successfully inserting and entrenching themselves in the Tucumán social environment. Offspring of former families of conquerors and encomenderos (such as those of the Medina Montalvo or the Bazán) and others of old roots (for example, the Aráoz or the Garcías), together with recently arrived peninsulares (like Garmendía, Laguna, and Posse), lived on the income of the positions they occupied.

Ultimately, this cultural factor addresses those socially similar—men whose social equality was subject to the judgment of their peers and not dependent on ethnicity or fortune.

---

<sup>11</sup> *Primer libro de la Cofradía del Santísimo Rosario de Tucumán, Constituciones*, año 1791, ACDT.

<sup>12</sup> The source available to determine the composition of the core leadership is the *Libro de elecciones*, which details the positions held from 1791 to 1809, the year to which the last page of the *Primer libro de la Cofradía* corresponds.

<sup>13</sup> The positions were: *capellán, mayordomo y mayordoma mayores; mayordomo y mayordoma menores; tesorero; secretarios y prosecretario; vocales; sacristanes y sacristanas de andas; maestro de ceremonias; limosneros y limosneras; alumbrantes de novenas. Primer libro de la Cofradía del Santísimo Rosario de Tucumán*, años 1791–1809, ACDT.

Although honor and prestige were stressed by the old-regime society, these values gave way to the status of wealth and of holding public office in times when the monarchy endowed the colonial territories with new functions within the bureaucracy of the Indies.

Accordingly, this study takes into account the seventeen-year period during which elections were held annually to cover the different positions. In addition to that of chaplain, who was always a friar of the Dominican Order, the most important position was that of chief majordomo. During these years, this position was occupied eleven times by peninsular Spaniards, five times by Americans, and three times by individuals of an undetermined geographical origin. Following the rank of importance of the offices, the post of lower majordomo was assumed three times by peninsulares, six times by Americans, and six times by individuals of undetermined geographical origin, and, for one year, by a Genoese based in San Miguel de Tucumán. In the first three years of operation of the confraternity, the treasurer was of peninsular origin. In the case of the secretary, during the years when no election was held for this office, peninsulares fulfilled that function, except in 1791 and 1800 when Americans assumed the duty. With respect to the position of sacristan, the greatest number were of indeterminate ethnic and geographic origin. However, among the members of the juntas, there was a notable numerical superiority of peninsulares.

### **Men of Fortune**

To understand membership composition, the origin of members' patrimony must also be addressed. In a study of the confraternity of the Santísimo Sacramento of the late-colonial city of Salta, Victor Quinteros points out the heterogeneous composition of the group, distinguishing between members of the elite and traders, and underscores the integration of the rising commercial peninsular sector and its insertion into the hegemonic social group (2008:4). The process of transformation of the Salta elite was similar to that of the jurisdiction of San Miguel de Tucumán, which is why local peninsular traders should not be disassociated from the rest of the people of note, because they were an integral part, indeed, the most dynamic and thriving, part of the "más sano del vecindario" ("healthiest sector of the neighborhood"). Referring to the upper social group, "los vecinos" ("the neighbors"), Tío Vallejo argues that "at the same time, landowners and traders—the neighbors—did not disregard enrichment opportunities and often used traditional marriage as a means to consolidate their states; in the latter, they were also flexible in the incorporation of newly

arrived peninsulares or successful neighbors—although their origins were not from the most notable families” (2001:42).<sup>14</sup>

Related to these matrimonial ties and to business or other connections, the old families of the jurisdiction formed an extensive network of relationships.<sup>15</sup> In addition, the former refocused their economic activities by dabbling in trade and shipping, while the new neighbors invested much of their fortunes in rural properties intended for production. Cristina López highlights the presence of a significant number of peninsular merchants as the new local elite (1999:58-59). Arriving with the last Spanish migrations of the colonial period, they had certain characteristics that allowed them to rapidly become the richest and most influential neighbors of the city: they quickly integrated with the traditional elite of “*estancieros, encomenderos, and fleteros*” (ranch owners, encomenderos, and porters); they speedily influenced the local economy with their capital and contacts, and they directly participated in production or in “enabling” producers or carriers.

Certain positions imposed great responsibilities within the confraternity because they were the guarantors of the common good and the counterpart of incorporation. These positions also adjudicated certain authority with respect to fortune, education, and prestige—in addition to the obligation to serve, which could not be refused when appointed. This also involved understanding that this duty was an expensive obligation or at least paid without remuneration. Foremost, the majordomes were the most visible secular members of the group who, among other things, looked after the resources of the confraternity. In the years under analysis, this position of authority was held eleven times by merchants of peninsular origin—among whom were the most powerful in the city square—and on eight occasions by other members of the elite among whom we also find persons of fortune.

Considering the position of treasurer—voted on in those years—this responsibility fell on the prosperous Basque merchant José Ignacio de Garmendia. As in his case, the crown assigned government offices to those who demonstrated economic solvency, managed wealth, and were subjects of “deep roots and credibility.” In this way, merchants of the regional network were given the opportunity to participate in the administration (Tío Vallejo, 2001:90). Likewise, confreres’ economic capacity as well as suitability to manage funds could be considered as requirements when choosing those who would manage the assets of the corporation. Peninsulares recently incorporated into the local neighborhood

---

<sup>14</sup> *Vecinos* were citizens of a town or a real minas; frequently restricted to whites during the colonial period.

<sup>15</sup> The network exceeded the local space to extend to other cities in the region, Upper Peru, or the Rioplatense area through commercial ties and/or kinship. Tío Vallejo (2001:42).

predominantly occupied positions of the greatest responsibility and excelled in social abilities within the confraternity. Some members of the confraternity, such as Velarde, Moure, and Laguna, were partners in commercial operations. They “enabled” other merchants in the marketplace by supplying shops and grocery stores of the city, such as the one of Cayetano Rodríguez, with the imported goods; but, they usually acted for family interests and eventually for those of larger associations (López, 1999: 58).

### **Confraternity Members and Relatives in Spaces of Power**

Furthermore, the created fabric of kinship or pseudo-kinship relationships is discernible.<sup>16</sup> These social interminglings, however, did not imply the existence of a homogenous esprit de corps within the association with reverberations in other areas of local public life. The expulsion of the Society of Jesus in 1767 led to a division of notable social figures into opposing factions who conducted themselves in different open public spaces in agreement with the royal decree. Thereafter, conflicts proliferated among the factions and the different authorities. In addition, administrative areas were expanded, which gave more possibilities for the *vecinos* to participate in the colonial government. The banishment of the Jesuits involved the Cofradía del Santísimo Rosario in the person of Don Francisco Tejerina, who was a subdelegate, together with his son Fermín, of the expulsion commission in the jurisdiction.<sup>17</sup> They prepared inventories of the seized goods and located debtors and holders of such goods to collect them. Don Francisco managed to strengthen numerous bonds: those that he developed by himself and those that emerged from the relationships of his son Don Fermín, who was the brother-in-law of Captain José de Molina; along with his sons-in-law—Don Manuel Fernández Carranza and Don Manuel Posse; in addition to Don Francisco Javier Villafañe. All of those mentioned were members of the confraternity, with whom Don Fermín formed a faction that Governor Andrés Mestre supported. Fermín also served on the Junta Municipal de Temporalidades as a deputy for the town hall (García Calderón: 2014: 143). The Aráoz family was an opposing clan with numerous members in the corporation. They were united by several marriages to the prestigious Villafañe family. The Aráoz clan established their own prestige in the seventeenth century and later would welcome prosperous peninsulares into their network (Bascary, 1997: 175-197).

---

<sup>16</sup> To appreciate these interwoven personal ties that extended to the heart of the confraternity, consider the following: José Velarde, Cayetano Fernández de Moure, Cayetano, and Rodríguez Moure were related through marriage with the daughters of Don Diego de Villafañe; later, Francisco Bores and Bernabé Aráoz, son-in-law of Velarde, also joined this network by marriage (García Calderón, 2014).

<sup>17</sup> Sección Judicial del Crimen (SJC), Serie A, Caja 22, Exp. 12, año 1767, AHT.

A close examination of the administrators of the assets of the Company of Jesus reveals that some members of the Cofradía del Santísimo Rosario formed the Junta Municipal de Temporalidades of San Miguel de Tucumán.<sup>18</sup> These individuals included Tejerina, Fernández de Moure, Villafañe, García Cárdenas, among others, who were appointed junior administrators and were subject to Buenos Aires until the dissolution of municipal junta in 1788 (García Calderón, 2014:200-211). Nevertheless, the factions formed by the actions of these men in the junta, and in other spaces of power that arose after the Jesuits' expulsion, probably exceeded the loyalties coined from the confraternal activity. Seemingly, these loyalties did not transcend the strictly religious space, as was proven for other spaces (Barral, 2002: 71-106; Quinteros, 2008:18). As *vecinos*, these members of the confraternity of the Rosary also participated in the government of the *república* through the cabildo, where they exercised their representation in the city's political body, since several confreres controlled much of the charter trades (see table). This makes sense in the case of Tucumán, if one takes into account the closeness of the neighborhood that led the prominent *vecinos* to be at the forefront of all the institutions of the *república*.

Barral argues that the confraternities offered notable members an arena and tools for their formation as a power group or for their individual and community leadership at the local level, which may have even happened the other way around. Yet, the truth is that these main *vecinos* valued relationships with the consecrated, with the religion, and with the "church." Participation in the activities of the convent, its contribution to the arrangement and maintenance of the temple and religious festivities, had a spiritual significance because in this sacred space parishioners developed their religious experience. Moreover, a close relationship with local ecclesiastical authorities had benefits of its own—all of which could constitute significant elements in the construction of the identity of the community (Barral, 2002:97-98).

These advantages of belonging to a confraternity were multiplied, of course, by joining more than one confraternity. This situation was quite common in different areas and verified in at least two cases: Don Fermín Molina and Don Manuel Fernández Carranza, who in addition to the confraternities of the Rosary, were religious administrators of the confraternity of La Merced and of the confraternity of the Santísimo Sacramento based in the cathedral, respectively. Moreover, in 1782, Don Manuel Erazú informed the cabildo that he

---

<sup>18</sup> The administration of the Jesuits' assets was awarded to a Municipal Junta that was accountable to the local cabildo, some of whose members participated in this new body and were in charge of the different functions established to manage the sizable patrimony of the Society of Jesus. Tío Vallejo (2001:115).

possessed the title of patron of the Mercedarian convent.<sup>19</sup> Scholars have interpreted this kind of multiple memberships as a way of insertion into partnerships that favored and expanded the density of networks in which confraternities nurtured their social ties and implemented their local power strategies (Fogelman, 2000:21); or because the spaces that the confraternity members joined gave them social prestige and status within their social group (Martínez de Sánchez, 2006:280); or because these spaces allowed them to increase the possibilities of accruing benefits for the salvation of the soul (Levi, 1990:178). Finally, beyond spiritual motivations, the participation of elite women covering available positions could respond to family interests and factions as they fought for spaces of social power and prestige, as seen through the analyzed documents; these women were daughters, wives, mothers, sisters, sisters-in-law, etc., of the male members of the confraternity to whose authority the women were subordinate.<sup>20</sup>

### **Changes in the Composition and Decline of the Confraternity**

From 1798 onwards, the Dominican confraternity began to experience a progressive abandonment of various positions until finally it survived with nothing more than the functions of majordomes. In the last page of the *Primer libro*, one can read that in 1808 there were those who offered to cover those positions and that “the other functions are not done because the RP<sup>21</sup> ex-provincial and prior of the convent maintained that those appointed to those positions never attended to their obligation, so their appointment was in vain and they were left in this way.”<sup>22</sup> In like manner, the appearance since 1803 of the figures of “perpetual” sacristans, in care of members of the wealthiest families of the city, can be considered a sign of the abandonment of these positions, at least for part of the membership, since only those *vecinos* who were able to cope with the pecuniary burdens would take these positions. This idea was also suggested in a comment made in 1804 during the visit of Friar Andrés Rodríguez, O.P. to the confraternity. He ordered the junta “to free the convent of the insufferable allowance for recruits from the alms” for the confraternity, and to take into account what was established in the constitutions. In other words, by this time the confraternity was insolvent and required the aid of the sheltering institution to operate. The

---

<sup>19</sup> Actas Capitulares (AC), Vol. X, year 1782, AHT.

<sup>20</sup> The subject will be studied in future research.

<sup>21</sup> “Reverend Father.”

<sup>22</sup> *Primer libro de la Cofradía del Santísimo Rosario de Tucumán*, Libro de Elecciones, año 1808, ACDT.

confraternity also needed the support of the few remaining confraternity members, who by virtue of their assumed positions took charge of settling various costs.

However, in these early years of the nineteenth century, the primary objective of the institution was obfuscated, and those who continued to practice the religiosity within it could no longer breath fervor for the Rosary. A visit made in 1804 offered this observation:

Finding themselves in the junta... F. Andrés Rodríguez examined this book which noted the elections and agreements of the said confraternity and approved the zeal and care of this confraternity for both its formality and advancement: but in accordance with the primordial purpose they had in the church... pious incentive to attract the faithful [for] better worship... and service of Holy Mary by attendance to her Holy exercises of the Rosary... he instructed his majordomes and juntas to put in this their greatest care in order that the devotion to Holy Mary might be propagated and not be in the decline in which it is found.<sup>23</sup>

In her study of viceregal Buenos Aires, Susan Socolow observed the decline of elite confraternities and the preference that people of note had for the Third Orders, which gained great prestige and were even more selective and rigorous in fulfilling the religious practices (Di Stefano, 2002: 40-41). Indeed, in 1807, three tertiary orders were founded in San Miguel de Tucumán and, among them, the Third Order of Saint Dominic.<sup>24</sup> Perhaps, the fact that the fraternity might have lost some of its elitist character is significant—at least in terms of its leadership; this might have been a very important reason for the gradual abandonment of the confraternity by its members. This loss of social exclusivity was recorded in the documentation when, as a result of the same visit to which we have been referring, the confreres' most recurrent excuses for not attending juntas and functions are exposed. As the visitor noted: "... repeatedly the members were summoned and some excused [...] for their activities, others because they were not in service that year; again, there was no shortage of those who answered that it was not normal for a confraternity to have a *pulpero* [storekeeper] for a majordomo."<sup>25</sup> The records in the first decade of the nineteenth century include the *pulpero*. This indicates that the composition of the managerial nucleus had diversified, since this social actor was entering into spaces of power from which he had been previously barred. The arrival of new actors, who decided the destiny of the group may have led to the

---

<sup>23</sup> *Primer libro de la Cofradía del Santísimo Rosario de Tucumán*, Libro de Elecciones, año 1804, ACDT.

<sup>24</sup> In early-nineteenth-century Tucumán, the Third Order of lay Franciscans was founded in the Franciscan convent and the Third Order of lay Mercedarians in the Mercedarian convent (Folquer, 2013:83).

<sup>25</sup> *Primer libro de la Cofradía del Santísimo Rosario de Tucumán*, Libro de Elecciones, año 1804, ACDT. Don Antonio Viaña, who was a lower majordomo in 1802, appeared listed in a payroll of *pulperos* ("storekeepers, grocers") registered in the cabildo that year. SA, Vol. XV, año 1802, AHT. In a list of 1814, Don Diego Bazán, limosnero of the confraternity between 1791 and 1794, is mentioned. However, it is not clear if he occupied that office during the period under consideration (Ávila, 2003:140).

displeasure of some of the confreres from the prominent elite, who would not have accepted such openness for access to positions of greater responsibility and social prestige.

Beginning in the mid-eighteenth century, the enlightened inspiration of the royal officials from the metropolis prompted a series of measures consisting of stricter control of confraternal groups by the civil authorities, of their accounts, of their observance of their statutes or constitutions, and of the requirement of canonical approval for their implementation. The most ambitious plan of royal power intervention in lay associations was substantiated through the so-called *Expediente General de Cofradías*, although so far there is no indication of the implementation of a similar policy in Tucumán (Martínez de Sánchez, 2006:100).

However, in midst of this adverse context for pious associations, the Cofradía del Santísimo Rosario of the Order of Preachers in San Miguel was founded in 1791, with the aim of promoting prayer dedicated to Mary, in order to seek the eternal salvation of the deceased members of the confraternity through prayer, and to pursue secular purposes, as already explained. This foundation demonstrates that the fellowship model was in good health at the end of colonial domination; at least, in this part of the empire, these institutions were not subjected to an aggressive policy by Enlightenment officials. Perhaps, this was because the confraternities here were not a threat to royal sovereignty, as long as they never reached the degree of development and of political, material, and symbolic power as did their peers in the viceroyalties of New Spain or Peru. They were still groups in which the vassals fit within the order of the “Christian republic”—a corporate order that perhaps the monarchs of the House of Bourbon never intended to harm.

### **Final Considerations**

At the conclusion of the analysis of a part of the *Primer libro de la Cofradía del Santísimo Rosario*, a profile of the members of this confraternity of the Dominican Order in Tucumán is discernible: there were Spaniards, creoles, or peninsulares, and there might also have been indigenous or castas—who benefited from the “whitening” process and by holding the title of “Don.” Members of the elite held the leadership positions: these were men from traditional encomendero families and from recently arrived peninsulares into the jurisdiction, whose fortunes originated in commercial activity and shipping, and whose economic solvency, as well as their capacity in wealth management and administration, were valued as deserving the highest positions. Different links united these individuals, which would not have prevented

them from being part of opposing groups in contrasting arenas of action outside the confraternity, nor would these links have prevented them from being part of factions in conflict as a result of the challenges that occurred at this juncture of the late-eighteenth century and the early days of the next. In short, ascription to the Rosary would not have transmitted a spirit of unity beyond the confraternity.

Belonging to the confraternity of the Santísimo Rosario not only brought spiritual benefit to its members, but it also facilitated access to social prestige and status because societal ties multiplied and because the confraternity itself was a space which provided various strategies to increase and to implement the possible power held. Contemporaries and historians have noted the decline of the confraternities throughout the Spanish domains in the late eighteenth century. In the case at hand, one can observe the appropriation of the most important positions by lauded families of the elite and the elevation to leadership roles of newly-arrived social actors from among the prosperous sectors of the jurisdiction. But, on the other hand, there was a general dropping out from most of the remaining duties. Perhaps the opening of the most important positions to individuals in obvious social ascent might have provoked disintegration of a part of the elite enlisted in the group. This dynamic would have made their functions scarcely viable, to the point of needing regular pecuniary assistance from the convent (disobeying the constitutions) and their wealthiest members. Some of the most prosperous confreres who remained in the confraternity and who—on account of their economic means—could assume the obligations neglected by those who no longer attended these responsibilities, held some positions in perpetuity. Those who left the fraternity, however, enlisted in the new tertiary orders, which would be new open spaces in nineteenth-century San Miguel de Tucumán for the deployment of local religiosity.

## **Bibliography**

### **Primary Sources**

#### **a. Archives**

##### **Archivo Histórico de Tucumán (AHT)**

*Actas Capitulares (AC), Vol. X, 1782.*

*Sección Administrativa (SA), Vol. X, 1784.*

*Sección Judicial del Crimen (SJC), Serie A, Caja 22, Exp. 12,1767.*

##### **Archivo del Convento Dominicano de Tucumán (ACDT)**

*Primer libro de la Cofradía del Santísimo Rosario de Tucumán, Constituciones, año 1791.*

## **b. Secondary Sources**

Ávila, Julio (2003). *La ciudad arribeña. Tucumán, 1810-1816. Reconstrucción histórica*, Ediciones del Rectorado, UNT, Tucumán.

Barral, María Elena (1998). "Iglesia, poder y parentesco en el mundo rural colonial. La cofradía de Benditas Ánimas del Purgatorio, Pilar: 1774." *Cuadernos de Trabajo*, N° 10, UNLu, pp. 15-56.

Barral, María Elena (2002). "¿Voces vagas e infundadas? Los vecinos de Pilar y el ejercicio del ministerio parroquial a fines del siglo XVIII." *Sociedad y Religión*, Centro de Estudios e Investigaciones Laborales, núm. 20-21, pp. 77-114.

Barral, María Elena (2013). "La iglesia católica en Iberoamérica: las instituciones locales en una época de cambios (siglo XVIII)." *Revista de História São Paulo*, N° 169, Julho / Dezembro, pp. 145-180.

Bascary, Ana María (1997). "La saga de los Villafañe: una red familiar en el Tucumán colonial." *Andes. Antropología e historia*, Universidad de Salta, n°8, pp. 175-198.

Cruz, Héctor (2002). "Autoridades socio-religiosas en el antiguo régimen. Los mayordomos de cofradías en el Jujuy colonial". *Cuadernos del Sur, Universidad Nacional del Sur*, Vol. 30/31, pp. 35-56.

Díaz, Domingo (1866). *La Corona de la Madre de Jesús: excelencias del Smo. Rosario, de la Sma. Virgen y de su augusta cofradía*. Antonio Pereyra y Real.

Di Stefano, Roberto (2012). "¿De qué hablamos cuando decimos 'Iglesia'? Reflexiones sobre el uso historiográfico de un término polisémico." *Ariadna Histórica. Lenguajes, conceptos, metáforas*, Universidad del País Vasco, núm. 1, pp. 197-202.

Di Stefano, Roberto (2002). "Orígenes del movimiento asociativo: de las cofradías coloniales al auge mutualista." Luna, Elba y Ceconi, Elida (Coord.). *De las cofradías a las organizaciones de la sociedad civil. Historia de la iniciativa asociativa en la Argentina. 1776- 1990*. Buenos Aires: Gadis, (pp. 23-97).

Fogelman, Patricia (2000). "Una cofradía mariana urbana y otra rural en Buenos Aires a fines del período colonial." *Revista Andes* núm. 11, CEPIHA-Universidad Nacional de Salta, pp. 179-207.

Folquer, Cynthia (2013). "Política y religiosidad en las mujeres de Tucumán (Argentina) a fines de siglo XIX." García Jordán, Pilar (ed.). *La articulación del Estado en América Latina. La construcción social, política y simbólica de la nación, siglos XIX- XX*. Barcelona: Edicions Universitat Barcelona, (pp. 77-106).

García Calderón, María Lelia (2014). *Familia y poder en Tucumán a fines del período colonial (1774-1810). El impacto de las reformas borbónicas en la reorganización de los*

*grupos hegemónicos*. Tesis de Doctorado (inédita). Doctorado en Ciencias Sociales (Orientación Historia): Facultad de Filosofía y Letras. UNT.

Gil Montero, Raquel (2005). "La población colonial del Tucumán." *Cuadernos de Historia de la Población*, 3-4, pp. 65-112.

Lempérière, Annick (2008). "República y publicidad a finales del Antiguo Régimen (Nueva España)." Guerra, François y Lempérière, Annick (coords.). *Los espacios públicos en Iberoamérica. Ambigüedades y problemas. Siglos XVIII-XIX*. México: FCE, (54-79).

Levi, Giovanni (1990). *La herencia inmaterial. La historia de un exorcista piemontés del siglo XVII*. Madrid: Nerea.

López, Cristina (2003). *Los dueños de la tierra. Economía, sociedad y poder en Tucumán (1770-1820)*. Tucumán: Facultad de Filosofía y Letras-UNT.

López de Albornoz, Cristina (1999). "Negocios familiares: redes mercantiles y redes de parentesco en el Tucumán Colonial." *Revista del Departamento de Historia*. Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, N° 7, año 7, pp. 48-69.

Martínez de Sánchez, Ana María (2006). *Cofradías y obras pías en Córdoba del Tucumán*. Córdoba: Editorial de la Universidad Católica de Córdoba.

Muñoz Moraleda, Ernesto (1996). "Las celebraciones religiosas en San Miguel de Tucumán y su jurisdicción (1750-1800)." *Revista de la Junta de Estudios Históricos de Tucumán*, núm. 8, Diciembre, pp. 107-129.

Quinteros, Víctor (2008). "Las cofradías en la ciudad de Salta hacia fines del siglo XVIII." *Actas 2º Jornadas de Historia de la Iglesia*. Salta: (CD-ROM).

Robledo, Nélica Beatriz (2003). "La cofradía del Santísimo Rosario del convento de Predicadores de Tucumán." *Primeras jornadas de historia de la orden dominicana en la Argentina*. Tucumán: UNSTA, pp. 301-315.

Tío Vallejo, Gabriela (2001). *Antiguo Régimen y Liberalismo. Tucumán, 1770-1830*. Tucumán: Cuadernos de Humanitas, UNT.

Terrén, Eduardo (2002). "La etnicidad y sus formas: aproximación a un modelo complejo de la pertenencia étnica". *Papers* 66, 45-57.