“In this land all is death:”
Don Diego Vázquez de Mercado,
first secular archbishop of Manila (1608-16)
and the Vacant See (1617-20)**

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Abstract: This paper deals with the figure of Don Diego Vázquez de Mercado, the first secular archbishop of Manila. While most scholars have analyzed the religious orders’ firm opposition to episcopal visits in their district parishes, I would additionally bring to the fore other aspects of his tenure, such as his relations with the cathedral chapter and his tense relations with the governor of the Philippines, Don Juan de Silva y Enríquez (1609-1616). In dialogue with the historiography of ecclesiastical institutions in the early modern Philippines, this essay analyzes the government of Don Diego Vázquez de Mercado and the cathedral chapter beyond a strictly spiritual motivation, placing these zealous defenders of the principle of the Royal Patronage within a confessional paradigm of ecclesiastical contentiousness.

Keywords: Don Diego Vázquez de Mercado, Manila, 17th century, Philippines

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** I should like to thank Luis Abejez, Jorge Mojarro, Leticia Pérez Puente, and the journal’s reviewers for their helpful and insightful comments on this text.
Introduction

There are so far very few studies dedicated to Manila’s first archbishops, and particularly, to the first secular prelate Don Diego Vázquez de Mercado (1608-16). Some historians (Phelan, 1959; De la Costa, 1969; Cushner, 1971; Manchado López, 1994; Blanco Andrés, 2004) have analyzed the jurisdictional conflicts that emerged under his government with the religious orders, specifically, friars’ firm opposition to episcopal visits in their district parishes. But growing interest in his figure has led some scholars to address other aspects of his archbishopric, such as his relations with the cathedral chapter and his tense relations with the governor of the Philippines, Don Juan de Silva y Enríquez (1609-1616). In dialogue with the historiography of ecclesiastical institutions in the early modern Philippines, this essay analyzes the government of Don Diego Vázquez de Mercado and the cathedral chapter beyond a strictly spiritual motivation, placing these zealous defenders of the principle of the Royal Patronage within a confessional paradigm of ecclesiastical contentiousness.

Return to the Philippines

Upon the death of Archbishop Miguel de Benavides, OP in 1606, members of the cathedral chapter, including dean Juan de Vivero, archdeacon Francisco Gómez de Arellano, and canon Francisco de Carranza, complained that there was no prelate in the metropolitan see “due to the many discords, competitions, and emulations that the religious of his order have with the rest.”1 Dean Vivero and his chapter asked that a clergyman be named archbishop instead of a friar, for clergymen were “more apt at governing and administering justice.” In their opinion, friars were too dependent on their orders’ superiors, whereas diocesan clergymen were more loyal to their prelates.2 They therefore begged Philip III (1598-1621) to “swiftly name a successor, and if it were possible, let him not be a regular, due to the difficulties that they cause and because among the orders there is never a lack of conflicts and differences that necessitate the prelate’s resolution, and in friars, the love of their religious order calls to them as men, especially among those who have been here.”3

In the end, the Council of the Indies heeded the chapter’s advice4 and dismissed that given by others, such as the chapter’s schoolmaster Luis de Salinas, whose recommendation was that the oldest bishop be chosen to govern the vacant see,

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1 Archivo General de Indias (hereafter AGI), Filipinas 77, N. 21.
2 AGI, Filipinas 77, N. 26.
3 AGI, Filipinas 77, N. 21.
4 AGI, Filipinas 77, N. 36.
in detriment of the provisor and vicar general, chosen by the cathedral chapter.⁵ On the 29th of November of 1607, the Council proposed Don Diego Vázquez de Mercado (1533-1616), bishop of Yucatan, as its first candidate; and Mexican friar Pedro López de Agurto (1544-1608), OSA, as its second.⁶ A few months later, on March 29, 1608, in Aranjuez, the king dictated the Royal Decree that officially presented Manila cathedral’s chapter members. These were the four dignitaries dean Juan de Vivero, with an annual salary of 600 full-weight pesos and, with annual salaries of 500 full-weight pesos each, archdeacon Francisco Gómez de Arellano, schoolmaster Luis de Salinas, and treasurer Blas Vela Melgarejo; four canons (Francisco Rodríguez de Cervantes, Francisco de Carranza, Luis de Herrera Sandoval, and Thomas de Guimarano) whose annual salaries of 400 full-weight pesos were supposed to be used to pay for the salaries of the inquisitors of New Spain; two racioneros or portionarii (Francisco de Saavedra and Crisanto de Tamayo)⁷ with an annual salary of 300 full-weight pesos each; and two half portionarii (Thomas Braceros de Cárdenas and Francisco Núñez), each with an annual salary of 200 full-weight pesos.⁸

Cathedral chapters, which were theoretically a permanent council at the bishop’s service, often defended interests that were not necessarily aligned with those of their prelates. For this reason, on April 29, 1608, King Philip III dictated another Royal Decree, ordering the dean and vacant see of the cathedral chapter to authorize the prelate to occupy the miter of Manila, whose tithes and ecclesiastical rents ascended to 3,000 ducats a year.⁹ Nearly a year later, on March 24, 1609, Philip III wrote to the Marquis of Aytona, his ambassador in Rome (1606-09) to ask Pope Paul V (1605-21) for the expedition of the bulls that officialized the designations, which cost nearly 4,000 reales.¹⁰

The Philippines was not unfamiliar to Archbishop Diego Vázquez de Mercado (Figure 1: Map of The Philippines). In the 1580s he had traveled there with Manila’s first bishop, friar Domingo de Salazar (1512-94), OP,¹¹ with whom he had had an excellent relationship. Upon their arrival in Manila in 1581, bishop Salazar had founded the cathedral chapter in accordance with Philip II’s royal decree, which had included four prebendaries: two dignitaries (the first dean and provisor,

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⁵ AGI, Filipinas 77, N. 20.
⁶ AGI, Filipinas 1, N. 136.
⁷ AGI, Filipinas 77, N. 20, ff. 25r-26r.
⁸ AGI, Filipinas 1, N. 107.
⁹ AGI, Indiferente 449, LA1, ff.192v-193r; AGI, Filipinas 1, N. 121.
¹⁰ Archivo Histórico de la Nación, Madrid (hereafter AHN), Santa Sede, Leg. 114. Indias, 1608, f. 42r.
who had an annual salary of 500 pesos, and which fell to presbyter clergyman Don Diego Vázquez de Mercado, and that of chantre or precentor, with an annual salary of 400 pesos, which fell to Don Francisco de Morales), and two canons (Francisco Pareja y Gonzalo del Castillo), who, due to the scarce diocesan rents, received no stipend for their work. On the 28th of September of 1583, the Dominican Bishop wrote a relation of the merits and services rendered by Vázquez de Mercado, who was at that time responsible for the construction of the cathedral, and in the discharge of this duty had received a leg injury. On February 20, 1585, Salazar had named him rector and manager of the Shrine of Our Lady of Guidance (Ermita de Nuestra Señora de Guía). He was also designated priest and vicar of the Villa Rica de Arévalo in the province of Otón, and, on May 4th of that same year, faced with failing health, he was named provisor, visitor and vicar of the Manila bishopric.

In April 1594, Portuguese Jesuit Antonio Pereira, Dominican friar Cristobal de Salvatierra and governor of the archbishopric, the Franciscan guardian Agustín de

12 Francisco Moreno, Historia de la Santa Iglesia metropolitana de Filipinas: con las vidas de arzobispos y varones insignes, extensiva a hechos culminantes de la conquista y fundación de varias instituciones en esta capital hasta 1650 (Manila: Imp. de “El Oriente,” 1877), 75.
13 Gaspar de San Agustín, OSA, Descripción cronológica y topográfica de el sumptuoso templo de Nuestra Señora la Virgen Santísima de Guía, nombrada la Ermita, extramuros de la ciudad de Manila, nuevamente edificada por el Ilustrísimo y Reverendísimo Señor Maestro Don Fray Francisco de la Cuesta [...], Arzobispo de Manila [...], año de 1712. Compuesto por un religioso sacerdote de la observancia de N. P. S. Augustín (Manila, h. 1717), f. Sr.
14 AGI, Filipinas 84, N. 92.
Tordesillas, the dean, provisor, and visitor of the cathedral chapter, Diego Vázquez de Mercado, along with other leading authorities, went to the Society of Jesus’s church to partake in the founding ceremony of the Hermandad de la Santa Mesa de la Misericordia, a charitable institution promoted by clergyman and a contemplative presbyter Juan Fernández de León.\textsuperscript{15} Established next to the shrine of Our Lady of Guidance, outside Manila’s walls,\textsuperscript{16} the Hermandad de la Misericordia became one of the most important \textit{Obras Pías} (pious works) dedicated to works of charity, assistance and mercy, and in the middle of the 17\textsuperscript{th} century, to pious works for maritime loans linked to the transpacific traffic of the galleon.\textsuperscript{17}

In 1597, Vázquez de Mercado left the Philippines for New Spain, where he was to occupy the chaplaincy of the port of Acapulco.\textsuperscript{18} On November 6, 1601, he was proposed as dean of the Church of Valladolid (present Morelia), in the region of Michoacán, in substitution of Francisco Gallegos, who had been promoted to the deanery of the church of Tlaxcala. Presented officially as such on December 18 of that same year,\textsuperscript{19} Vázquez de Mercado occupied this post for less than a year, for on the 22\textsuperscript{nd} of October of 1603, he was named Bishop of Yucatan, receiving a license to depart for his new destination on June 9, 1604, with 18 servants, four clergymen (two visitors, a provisor and a chaplain), and three slaves.\textsuperscript{20} Upon his arrival at the diocese, he undertook two visits or inspections before ceding his authority to the cathedral chapter on the 30\textsuperscript{th} of January of 1609 when his return to the Philippines seemed imminent. He then moved to Veracruz to wait for the bulls that contained his official designation, which arrived on March 11, 1609.\textsuperscript{21}

One of his greatest worries as archbishop of Manila was the economic situation of the archdiocese. On June 27, 1586, and two years later, on the 25\textsuperscript{th} of June 1588, the then dean Vázquez de Mercado, along with archdeacon don Juan de Vivero, schoolmaster Gabriel de la Cruz, canons Diego de León and Juan de Paz, 


\textsuperscript{16} This shrine returned to secular administration after 1610. See Gaspar de San Agustín, OSA, \textit{Conquistas de las islas Filipinas (1565-1615)} (Madrid: CSIC, [1698] 1975), 682).


\textsuperscript{18} AGI, Filipinas 84, N. 75.

\textsuperscript{19} The Royal Proviso is in AGI, Patronato 293, N. 23, R.10, f. 10r.

\textsuperscript{20} AGI, Contratación 5281, N. 90; AGI, Indiferente 2071, N. 21. The executorial letters are dated Valladolid, 31 January 1604 (AGI, Patronato 293, N. 26, R. 14, ff. 14r-14v. See also Gil González Dávila, \textit{Teatro eclesiástico de la primitiva iglesia de las Indias occidentales, vidas de sus arzobispos, obispos, y cosas memorables de sus sedes (Nueva España)}, Vol. 1 (León: Universidad de León, 2004), 401.


\textit{PHILIPPINIANA SACRA}, Vol. LVIII, No. 177 (September-December, 2023)

https://doi.org/10.55997/3005pslviii177a5
and the rest of the chapter’s members, had written to the king lamenting the great misery that they endured, for the dearth of tithes meant that no salary could be given to those men who labored as beadles or cross-bearers, nor any of the other offices so necessary for the procession of the acolytes. 22 Upon his return as archbishop, Vázquez de Mercado saw that things had not much improved. On the 26th of January 1609, he wrote to Philip III asking for a Royal Decree such as was dictated in favor of his predecessor friar Miguel de Benavides on June 8, 1603, ordering that if tithes did not reach three thousand ducats a year, the Royal Treasury would provide the funds needed to complete this sum. 23 He also asked the Council of the Indies to grant him half the salary that had been assigned to his predecessor during the vacant see, so as to acquire crosses, ornaments, a crosier, chant books, and other objects necessary for the performance of the liturgical rite. Such formula had been adopted in other occasions, for instance, when friar Pedro Godínez Maldonado, OFM, became bishop of New Caceres (1605-11). 24 The king signed a Royal Decree granting Vázquez de Mercado’s second request on May 17, 1609, 25 even though this same petition was elevated by Manila’s cathedral chapter to the Council of the Indies on April 8, 1609, only to have it be rejected. 26

There was no doubt that the archdiocese’s poverty and scarcity were worrisome, but this did not stop the king from asking the prelate on the 22nd of October of 1609 to stop taking camaricos 27 as payment for the administration of the sacraments—concretely, two reales or two pounds of wax—as well as presents and free labor from the natives during religious services, all under the pretense that these were given voluntarily. Apparently, Vázquez de Mercado had grown used to this practice during his bishopric in Yucatan. 28

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22 AGI, Filipinas 77, N. 2; AGI, Filipinas 77, N. 3.
23 AGI, Filipinas 74, N. 65, ff. 467-469r; AGI, Filipinas 1, N. 121. Said petition by archbishop Vázquez de Mercado was approved by a Royal Decree la Real Cédula signed in San Lorenzo del Escorial on May 13, 1609 (AGI, Indiferente 449, L. A2, ff. 12r-12v).
25 “Real Cédula a los oficiales reales de Filipinas para que paguen al licenciado Diego Vázquez de Mercado, arzobispo de Manila, la mitad del importe de los frutos de aquel arzobispado pertenecientes al prelado en el tiempo que ha estado vacante, por muerte de su antecesor, Aranjuez, 17 de mayo de 1609” (AGI, Indiferente 449, L. A2, ff.18v-19r).
26 AGI, Filipinas 77, N. 33.
27 Camaricos were offerings given by the natives to priests and other colonial authorities. In Peru, Dominican friars took camaricos and used native labor for the construction and reform of their churches. See Garci Díez de San Miguel, Visita hecha a la provincia de Chuchito… en el año 1567 (Lima: Casa de la Cultura del Perú, 1964).
28 AGI, Filipinas 329, L. 2, ff. 113v-114r.
The Spanish empire based the governability of its vast domains on a delicate equilibrium between the power of the Crown and its representatives and the power of the Church and its representatives, what María Fernanda García de los Arcos defined as a “dualist model of domination.” After his return to Cavite on June 6, 1610, the prelate, who belonged to the secular clergy, entered the cathedral under a canopy, thus contravening the wishes of Governor Juan de Silva, who had instructed him otherwise.

In episcopal capitals, such as Manila, the archbishop’s cathedral and palace were urban symbols of religious power. However, the church building that Vázquez de Mercado encountered was in great need of repairs, and he set about drafting native labor to undertake them. The chapter members recalled that the 1000 ducats offered by Philip III in 1604 had never reached the cathedral, and the monarch was asked to remedy this situation. On July 12, 1610, the prebendaries requested the construction of episcopal houses in Manila, as there were in other parts of the Indies, because the prelates and dignitaries had to rent their quarters at high prices, spending all their wealth. Finally, they lamented that the cathedral was threatened with collapse and received no help from the governors, who showed “more fondness for arms than devotion to this church.” They were not exaggerating: in 1612, the cathedral building did, indeed, collapse. Given the extreme poverty of the archbishopric, particularly due to the shortage of tithes, the dean Francisco Gómez de Arellano used his own resources to finance the reconstruction of a three-nave cathedral with seven chapels and ten altars, procuring alms and economic assistance whence he could and asking that the government allot several native workers from the nearby parish of Quiapo.

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30 AGI, Filipinas 20, R. 4, N. 39. On November 16, 1611, Philip III sent a Real Cédula to Dean Juan de Vivero and the rest of the prebendaries of the cathedral chapter reprimanding them for having received the archbishop under pallium, given that said ceremony was due only to the royal person (AGI, Filipinas 329, L. 2, ff. 137r). On December 2, 1613, these matters of protocol were again insisted upon by sending another Real Cédula on the same subject (AGI, Filipinas 329, L. 2, ff. 177v-178r).
31 AGI, Filipinas 74, N. 69.
32 AGI, Filipinas 77, N. 36.
33 AGI, Filipinas 77, N. 36. The response, two days later, is found in the “Carta de la Audiencia de Manila sobre llegada de Vázquez de Mercado, Manila, July 12, 1610” (AGI, Filipinas 20, R. 4, N. 32).
34 AGI, Filipinas 77, N. 36.
35 To thank him for his labor, the cathedral chapter granted him a special niche with bronze letterings and border “in the center of the temple’s main chapel” (AGI, Filipinas 27, N. 76, ff. 541r-544v). See also Moreno, *Historia de la Santa Iglesia metropolitana de Filipinas*, 76; Nicholas P. Cushner, SJ, *Spain in the Philippines. From Conquest to Revolution* (Quezon City, Ateneo de Manila UP, 1971), 115; Ruperto C. Santos, “A History of the Manila Cathedral: 1571 to 1945,” *Philippiniana Sacra*, 35 (103), 2000, p. 138.
On that same letter of July 12, 1610, chapter members asked for the construction of episcopal residences in Manila, as there were in other parts of the Indies, arguing that prelates and dignities spent all of their money paying for expensive lodgings. Parallelly, Vázquez de Mercado ordered to build a new chapel of Our Lady of Guidance made of stone on top of the old one, thus turning it into a parish. But Manila was not comparable to Mexico City or Lima. The number of Spanish inhabitants was scarce, barely 700 residents in 1587 to reach the 1,500 in 1601. Earthquakes, baguios (hurricanes), the terrible fires that devastated the city in 1583 and 1603, tremors, such as those of 1600 and December 31, 1603, the Sanglely rebellion of October 4, 1603, and the attacks carried out by the “Moros” and the Dutch, did not render the Philippines a particularly attractive destination. Nonetheless, the decorum of a prebendary included a respectable residence, and, given the dearth of such establishments, the archbishop demanded the construction of archiepiscopal residences to the oidores of the Real Audiencia, according to the Royal Decree, dated October 10, 1604. The Spanish society accorded cultural distinction to those who showed their nobility and prestige in their property and accoutrements (residence, slaves, goods, articles of luxury, clothing), while behaving with composure, honesty and modesty.

The Manila Archbishop and his Cathedral Chapter

Very little has been written on the political and economic activities of Manila’s cathedral chapters, particularly during the frequent periods of vacant sees (1593-98; 1598-1601; 1606-1608) during which they acquired the interim authority over the archbishopric. These corporations, moreover, were not separated from the local power network whose actors behaved according to a system of dispositions, or habitus, a practical sense that regulated interpersonal relations as well as relations with the archbishop, the religious orders, and civil authorities.

36 AGI, Filipinas 77, N. 36. The answer, sent two days later, is in “Carta de la Audiencia de Manila sobre llegada de Vázquez de Mercado, Manila, 12 de julio de 1610” (AGI, Filipinas 20, R. 4, N. 32).
39 AGI, Filipinas 20, R. 4, N. 32.
40 José Gabino Castillo Flores, La catedral de México y su cabildo eclesiástico, 1530-1612, Ph. Dissertation (Zamora, El Colegio de Michoacán, 2013), 231-72.
Cathedral chapters were platforms of local power organized in clans or parties that were often enmeshed in intense negotiations or confrontations, conflicts and incidents that altered the internal life of the metropolitan cathedral. Their prebendaries did not constitute a socially homogenous group, but were characterized by moveable interests, identities, and loyalties that depended on political and economic contexts and circumstances. In 1611, Archbishop Vázquez de Mercado complained that Governor Don Juan de Silva took it upon himself to provide prebends to favor those who were aligned with his interests. Indeed, on August 11, 1609, Governor Silva presented clergyman Juan de Aguilar to the chapter as schoolmaster, a post that Don Luis de Salinas had left vacant in 1608, and which had a yearly salary of 500 pesos. Aguilar was to have no seat in the choir nor the right to speak or vote in the chapter since he was not instituted canonically. The dignities in vacant see, led by the dean, accepted Aguilar’s presentation.

The archbishop had no problem with Juan de Aguilar, however. Aguilar had been one of the clergymen who had accompanied Vázquez de Mercado in June of 1604 when he left the Philippine archipelago for Yucatan. Aguilar had then returned to Manila in 1609 as chaplain of the nao captained by Juan Francisco Solano, recording his vision of the state of the Philippine Islands in elegant and catastrophic phrase: “in this land all is death” (en esta tierra todo es muertes). He denounced that the very loaders and supervisors stole from the nao Santo Tomás’s cargo and harassed him. Aguilar later participated as vicar general and main chaplain in the successful campaign in Playa Honda led by Governor Silva —a former officer in the army of Flanders and a renowned military man— against the Dutch fleet of Admiral François Van Wittert (24-25 April 1610), which laid Manila under siege for five months. To reward him for his services, on October 17, 1612, the governor presented Aguilar to the dignity of archdeacon, indicating that he was a benemérito who had served in the cathedrals of Mexico and Manila. This time, Aguilar asked archbishop Vázquez de Mercado for his canonical collation, and the dean and the chapter for his induction into the actual possession of his benefice. The archbishop granted his request.

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42 Coello, “Conflictividad capitular…,” 327.
43 AGI, Filipinas 74, N. 73, ff. 485r-493v.
44 Son of Diego Hurtado, from Jerez de los Caballeros (AGI, Filipinas 85, N. 29).
45 AGI, Filipinas 85, N. 29.
46 AGI, Contratación S281, N. 92.
47 AGI, Filipinas 85, N. 16.
49 AGI, Filipinas 85, N. 22.
Not all the dignities that he met upon his arrival enjoyed the good graces of Archbishop Vázquez de Mercado. After the death of Blas Vela Melgarejo, who was the titular treasurer, Governor Don Rodrigo de Vivero y Aberrucia (1608-09) had named Mexican criollo Don Luis Herrera Sandoval interim treasurer. Unlike other priests and prebendaries, such as Pablo Ruiz de Talavera (¿-1615) or Lorenzo Martín Peñato (¿-1634), who had “set an example having lived good lives as good ministers,” Sandoval led a scandalous life as “a great gambler and commits many faults in the church without any amendment.” This led Vázquez de Mercado to strongly request the incorporation of another into the office of treasury upon completing his general visit.

It was not only the governor who sought to influence who was made a dignity of the cathedral. On July 18, 1612, a letter was sent to King Philip III asking that canon Cristóbal Ramírez de Cartagena, nephew of dean Juan de Vivero (who had died on December 20, 1610) and “one of the old ones,” be elevated to the next dignity made vacant in the cathedral. This letter was signed by the president of the Real Audiencia of Manila, as well as by Governor-General Silva, dean Don Andrés de Alcaraz (1560-1622), oidores Don Cristóbal Téllez de Almazán (¿-1612), Don Manuel de Madrid y Luna (1580-1623) and Don Juan Manuel de la Vega, and Audiencia fiscal Don Juan de Alvarado y Bracamonte (1565-1637). The request was disregarded, even though, according to Governor-General Silva, these oidores acted on the archbishop’s behalf on this “and on many other things each day.”

Chapter members scored a small but significant victory against the regidores (councilmen) of the municipal cabildo and the nascent commercial oligarchy, which, backed by former Governor Pedro de Acuña (1602-06) and present Governor Juan de Silva, had prevented them from having a larger share of the galleon cargo for trade. The king had issued a Royal Decree on August 29, 1609, in which he ordered that chapter members could carry in the naos to New Spain some cloth from China to get in return some medicines for healing and preserves for them and some things of these kingdoms [i.e., books], which are very necessary for their livelihood.” This decree

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50 Isacio Rodríguez, OSA, Historia de la Provincia Agustiniana del Smo. Nombre de Jesús de Filipinas (Manila: Monumenta Provinciae Philippinarum, 1984), Vol. XVII, 229; 233; Moreno, Historia de la Santa Iglesia metropolitana de Filipinas, 204-208.
51 Rodríguez, Historia de la Provincia Agustiniana, Vol. XVII, 229.
52 AGI, Filipinas 85, N. 19.
53 AGI, Filipinas 20, R. 6, N. 45.
54 “Carta de Juan de Silva sobre diferencias con el arzobispo, Cavite, 5 de septiembre de 1610” (AGI, Filipinas 20, R. 4, N. 39). In 1622, the Audiencia’s oidores reiterated their request for the concession of the dignities of the archbishopric, given their many merits and accumulated services (AGI, Filipinas 20, R. 16, N. 107).
55 AGI, Filipinas 340, L. 3, ff. 57r-57v.
recognized their merits not only in the tending of souls, but also in their defense of the republic of Manila as true soldiers, acknowledging that, as vecinos, they had the same right to a share of lading space on the galleon as any other collective, such as the religious orders. Alva Rodríguez has argued that this was an important precedent, for in 1610 the king authorized chapter members to use a three-hundred-ton ship to trade with New Spain.56

But these decrees were not enforced, and chapter members did not get to enjoy these lading rights. On the 6th of November of 1615, they wrote a letter demanding that the lading rights recognized by the king in 1609 be enforced. But they were not the only ones whose galleon trading rights were ignored. In 1610, Dominican friars Baltasar Fort, provincial prior; Francisco Miñayo, prior of Santo Domingo in Manila; and Bernardo de Santa Catalina, commissar of the Holy Office, accused the oidores of the Real Audiencia of monopolizing the cargo of the Acapulco galleon and disrespecting the relevant royal orders. They called for the dissolution of the Audiencia,57 and demanded shares of lading space “equal to those of the vecinos in the naos of New Spain, or be given larger stipends, or some help from some quarters, because we are poorer than they are.”58

**Diocesan Visits and the Regular Clergy**

When Vázquez de Mercado took possession of his see in Manila on June 4, 1610, friars were still firmly in control of the spiritual and material domain of the Church in the Philippines, especially in rural areas. Bishop Salazar had tried to submit them pointing to the Omnimoda bull of Pope Adrian VI (1522-23), which granted mendicant orders the capacity of acting as apostolic authority only in the absence of a bishop, but he had failed.59

The material and spiritual state of the islands did not augur a bright future. Upon his arrival, Vázquez de Mercado asked the Roman curia for the subrogation of his duties to a coadjutor bishop.60 The request, according to Morgado García, benefited both parties: the prebendary obtained a well-earned rest, and the coadjutor part of his rents, a seat in the chapter, and the right to succeed the archbishop in

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57 AGI, Filipinas 85, N. 14.
58 AGI, Filipinas 77, N. 38.
60 AGI, Filipinas 74, N. 70, ff. 477v-478v.
the prebend.\textsuperscript{61} It was not necessary, indeed, to be on the brink of death to ask for (and obtain) a coadjutor, and this was often used to favor friends, families, allies, or sycophants, and was thus a tool in the political struggles between sets or circles established around powerful lineages.\textsuperscript{62}

Three months later, Vázquez de Mercado went on an episcopal visit (\textit{visitatio}) of the parishes in the province of Pampanga, revealing that he was willing to ignore the stipulation of papal bull Omnimoda (1622) that granted friars ample faculties to assume the pastoral and sacramental duties of the secular clergy, and was instead bent on the implementation of the Royal Patronage, which favored the episcopal jurisdiction.\textsuperscript{63} He called a meeting with the provincials and superiors of the religious orders, whose numbers surpassed the secular clergy, and insisted in reclaiming his episcopal authority to inspect the doctrines and parishes administered by the regular clergy, which in twenty years had never been inspected.\textsuperscript{64}

On the one hand, episcopal visits were a tool that allowed the archbishop to look into the functioning of the diocesan parishes, as well as the administering of the sacraments; and no less important, on the other hand, was to make his authority visible among the religious orders. However, Vázquez de Mercado's interventionism had little to do with the application of the principles established in the Council of Trent, and according to Cushner, lots to do with the need to curb the excesses of the friars, particularly the Augustinians, whose abuse of the natives and charging of rents and duties were infamous.\textsuperscript{65} He explained that, besides periodically visiting the parishes, he intended to stop the designation of native \textit{fiscales} or \textit{mandones}.\textsuperscript{66} This the archbishop had done when he was bishop of Yucatan.


\textsuperscript{63} Phelan, \textit{The Hispanization of the Philippines}, 32; Cushner, \textit{Spain in the Philippines}, 85; De la Costa, \textit{The Jesuits in the Philippines}, 55.

\textsuperscript{64} AGI, Filipinas 77, N. 77, f. 527r. See also Cushner, \textit{Spain in the Philippines}, 83; Roberto Blanco, “El cabildo eclesiástico de Manila y la defensa de los derechos del clero secular de Manila,” \textit{Philippiniana Sacra}, vol. xxxix, nº 115 (2004), 121.


\textsuperscript{66} According to Phelan, \textit{fiscales}, or \textit{mandones}, came from New Spain. As intermediaries between friars and their parishioners, \textit{fiscales} reflect “the inalterable conviction of the Spanish clergy that the Filipinos required external discipline to compel them to perform their religious obligations” (Phelan, \textit{The Hispanization of the Philippines}, 59).
From the time of bishop Domingo de Salazar in the 1580s, parishes functioned as autonomous entities, without episcopal visits, obviating the Royal Patronage. The discomfort and complications of travel due to the difficult conditions of the roads and the climate and the dispersion of the population, posed serious obstacles to prelates' labors and facilitated a world in which religious orders reigned supreme. It was not surprising that archbishop Vázquez de Mercado hoped to establish a set of regulations that would limit the jurisdiction of friars over their parishes and the baptized populations, defying their autonomy and independence. On the 9th of July of 1610, Vázquez de Mercado stood behind a petition written by procurator friar Francisco de la Madre de Dios to bring more Augustinian Recollects to the islands.67 This new missionary order was not used to the vices and corruption of the others, and the archbishop believed that they were more likely to support his intended diocesan reforms.68

At around this same period, the archbishop of Lima, Don Bartolomé Lobo Guerrero, backed by Marqués de Montesclaros, the Viceroy of Peru (1607-15) as well as by the Society of Jesus, inaugurated the so-called visits of idolatry as an autonomous and independent institution, separate but derived from pastoral or ecclesiastical visits, whose object was to correct and eliminate the nefarious sins and vices and evil customs of the rural Andean population.69 Despite Vázquez de Mercado's interest in repressing idolatry among the Indians of Yucatan in 1608, he did not replicate this in the Philippines,70 where the general disobedience of the regular clergy as well as the constant and deleterious conflicts between the orders made such a scheme impractical, as they made impossible the full implementation of the agreements of the Synod of Manila of 1582 under Manila's first bishop, Domingo de Salazar, OP.71

In 1889, Marcelo H. del Pilar (1889) contended that the Philippines were ruled by a “friarocracy” (frailocracia) where the friars dictated the social and political

67 AGI, Filipinas 79, N. 118.
68 On May 10, 1606, thirteen Augustinian Recollects founded the province of San Nicolás de Tolentino, and were charged with the responsibility of three missions in the northern provinces of Bataan, Zambales, and Pangasinan (Francisco Sádaba del Carmen, OSA, Catálogo de los religiosos agustinos recoletos de la provincia de san Nicolás de Tolentino de Filipinas desde el año 1606, en que llegó la primera misión a Manila, hasta nuestros días (Madrid: Imp. del Asilo de Huérfanos del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús, 1906).
life in the archipelago.\textsuperscript{72} While it is true that the religious orders were too fragmented to constitute a single powerholder, the Church had nonetheless an overarching influence over these aspects of life in the Philippines, extending even to the economic issues.\textsuperscript{73} One thing that united the friars of the different orders was in fact their opposition to pastoral visits whose main object was curbing the abuses committed in their parishes.\textsuperscript{74} Their opposition had no legal foundation, for according to the dispositions of the Council of Trent, as doctrine ministers they depended upon the episcopal jurisdiction as well as upon the hierarchical organization of their religious institutions.\textsuperscript{75} However, despite the existing regulations, the disobedience of the regular doctrine priests or \textit{doctrineros}, prevailed. Thus, according to a relation written by archbishop Vázquez de Mercado,

Some days before the first visit departed, more than a year and a half ago, I spoke with the prelates of the orders that were found in this city to tell them that I wanted to carry out a visit, as was ordered by His Majesty in his Royal Orders and as was rightful that I should inspect the Blessed Sacrament, the baptismal fonts, the churches and how they were built, that they were forewarned, and that they should tell their priors and guardians. This they received very angrily, saying that such a visit had never before been undertaken and that there was no reason for me to undertake it.\textsuperscript{76}

Not only did they refuse to accept the pastoral visit, but the government did not grant the archbishop a license to visit the native parishes as was stipulated in the Royal Decrees and the Royal Patronage. After it did, the \textit{oidores} of the Real Audiencia pressured the prelate to desist in his intentions. Vázquez de Mercado responded by carrying out his intended visits to the doctrines, even though he could not inspect the churches nor the Blessed Sacrament because the friars expressly opposed him, having made themselves such lords over the Indians that they were as “bishops” who “did not acknowledge the archbishop.”\textsuperscript{77} He thus had to content himself with administering the sacraments, naming \textit{fiscales}, in accordance with the dispositions of Royal Decree of 1594,\textsuperscript{78} and rooting out some idolatries, witchcraft, and public sins.

\textsuperscript{73} Rolando V. de la Rosa, OP, \textit{Beginnings of the Filipino Dominicans: A Critical Inquiry Into the Late Emergence of Native Dominicans in the Philippines and Their Attempt at Self-government}, Quezon City: Dominican Province of the Philippines, 1990.
\textsuperscript{74} Phelan, \textit{The Hispanization of the Philippines}, 32-33.
\textsuperscript{75} Pedro Rubio Merino, \textit{Don Diego Camacho y Ávila, arzobispo de Manila y de Guadalajara de México (1695-1712)} (Sevilla: CSIC, 1958), 227-28.
\textsuperscript{76} AGI, Filipinas 74, N. 77, f. 526r. My translation.
\textsuperscript{77} AGI, Filipinas 74, N. 77, ff. 527r-527v.
\textsuperscript{78} In 1594, King Philip II sent Governor Luis Pérez Dasmariñas a Royal Order forbidding mendicant orders from naming \textit{fiscales}, or native assistants, without license from the diocese’s ordinary (Cushner, \textit{Spain in the Philippines}, 79).
Upon completing the first visit in Lumbang, Vázquez de Mercado became ill. After a six-month convalescence, he visited the Manila hinterlands, where the Franciscans administered some parishes along Laguna de Bay and in Camarines. He interviewed friars Hernando Moraga and Gaspar Velázquez, and later friar Juan de Noguera, who begged him to abandon his visits, because the natives had no alms to give him. Let us remember that the king had expressly forbidden Vázquez de Mercado from demanding camaricos from the natives, as he had done in Yucatan. Significantly, the dean Santiago de Castro denounced that the Franciscan religious established in Laguna de Bay had committed many excesses, “exceeding and contravening the obedience that as such parishioners should have,” proceeding to report them to the Real Audiencia.

Governor Silva and the Real Audiencia still sided with the friars, particularly the Augustinians. Indeed, on July 1, 1614, the Audiencia and the governor supported a request sent by the Augustinian provincial, friar Vicente de Sepúlveda, definitors, and general procurator in the court, friar Miguel García Serrano (1569-1629), OSA, begging the king to allow new members of their order to come to the archipelago. According to the archbishop, the Augustinians had “won over most of the oidores of this Royal Audiencia with presents and gifts, and the governor Don Juan de Silva with more than this, according to what is said, so that their province is as large as they wish it.”

These were very serious accusations, but they were not the only ones leveled by the archbishop against the religious orders. He also accused the Franciscans as well as the Augustinians of charging excessively for burials and marriages, pointing out that they did so motu proprio, on their own account. For their part, the friars accused Vázquez de Mercado of demanding all kinds of contributions from the natives for his maintenance and designating fiscales to extort irregular exactions from the natives. The archbishop denied these accusations, arguing that “I was very well-received by all of them [the natives] and by the religious who knew my actions and

80 AGI, Filipinas 74, N. 77, f. 526r.
81 Fray Blas de la Madre de Dios, “Representación del provincial [de San Gregorio de Filipinas] defendiendo los privilegios de los religiosos de San Francisco,” Manila, 1616 (Biblioteca Nacional de México (hereafter BNM), Fondo Reservado, Archivo Franciscano (AFRA) AF61/1196.6, ff. 1r.2v).
82 AGI, Filipinas 85, N. 26.
83 AGI, Filipinas 74, N. 77, f. 528r.
84 AGI, Filipinas 74, N. 77, f. 528r.
85 AGI, Filipinas 74, N. 77, f. 530r.
saw that I went alone, with very few servants and how far I was from gifts and such cares.” These accusations against the archbishop were probably meant to disparage him for having exposed the friars’ abuses of the natives and having compelled the civil authorities to intervene, particularly against the Franciscans and the Augustinians. In a letter written on the 18th of July of 1621, Vázquez de Mercado had said that,

for the simplest things they whip them and mistreat them, in these ill-treatments the religious of the Society of Jesus do not partake because they are very charitable and communicate and teach the mysteries of our Faith with love and give and grant them what they have but the other orders punish them very much, especially the Franciscans and the Augustinians, and to keep us from knowing this they do not want the archbishop to go to their doctrines.

The archbishop argued that if he could only visit the churches, he would put an end to these abuses. But the Augustinian and Franciscan friars wrote a document which, according to Vázquez de Mercado, was not well-received by neither the Dominicans or Jesuits despite their adhesion to it, and which exploited the great enmity that existed between the archbishop and Governor Silva. The friars stated that if the archbishop persisted in carrying out diocesan visits, they would retire to their convents, renouncing or abandoning their parishes—and the prelate finally desisted.

Thus, although he had gained the support of the state authorities to carry out his pastoral visits, Vázquez de Mercado still found it difficult to implement the royal instructions regarding diocesan authority. The following excerpt makes manifest the power held by the religious orders, whose procurators, as global agents, could influence decision-making in Rome and in Madrid, whereas the prelate was alone: his obligations in Manila made it quite hard for him to gather complete intelligence regarding the various irregularities that took place in the hinterlands. Thus,

The Indian doctrines, the harm of which is not admitted in [the Royal Orders], suffer innumerable difficulties, which are impossible to represent through a letter, for they are of such a nature that some must be masked and thus they will not seem what they are besides the fact that there are so many interests in the contrary and they [the regular clergy] place great

86 AGI, Filipinas 74, N. 77, f. 527v. My translation.
87 AGI, Filipinas 74, N. 77, f. 527v. My translation.
88 AGI, Filipinas 74, N. 77, f. 528r.
89 De la Costa, The Jesuits in the Philippines, 51-52; Marta Mª Manchado López, Conflictos Iglesia-Estado en el Extremo Oriente Ibérico, Filipinas (Córdoba: Publicaciones de la Universidad de Córdoba, 1994), 21-22; Alva Rodríguez, “La centuria desconocida…,” 244; Blanco Andrés, “El cabildo eclesiástico de Manila…,” 121.
care in their business, personally negotiating through their procurators so that those of us who are here and could shed light on all that is happening stop to write thus, because most things cannot be consigned in letters, for regardless of what could be said it would all be as if dead which would be otherwise if it could be viva voce.90

As Vicente Rafael famously stated, friars were “double agents” who executed, but at the same time defied, the absolutist vocation of the king’s sovereignty.91 Unlike the religious orders, which regularly sent procurators to the court, the archbishop was limited in his capacity to communicate with the court, and was thus incapable of personally relating the scandals that he did not wish to consign to writing. It seems evident that he had much to say about the friars’ abuses in the doctrines as well as the compulsory labors endured by Tagalos and Pampangos, which, in his opinion, was not only contrary to natural law, but tyrannical. Bishop Salazar’s critiques against the abuse and exploitation of the Indians had apparently not been heeded.92 Corregidores and alcaldes mayores were in charge of drafting the natives between the ages of 16 and 60 to work forty days in the construction of bridges, churches, skiffs, and the cutting and transporting of timber for ship construction.93 According to the Royal Decree of May 26, 1609, the distribution of Indians for private or public work was strictly forbidden, as they were to be hired from Chinese or Japanese who were in Manila, or from Indians who volunteered.94 Two days later, on May 28, Count Lemos y de Andrade (1560-1622), president of the Royal Council of the Indies, wrote a letter to Governor Juan de Silva expressing his deep uneasiness about the personal services of the natives.95 None of those abuses was ever solved. This tyranny of greed, in the words of Francisco Combés (1620-65), SJ, led many of them to purchase substitutes, “paying sometimes as much as ten pesos.”96

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90 AGI, Filipinas 74, N. 77, f. 526r. My translation.
91 Vicente Rafael, “La vida después del Imperio: Soberanía y revolución en las Filipinas españolas,” in Repensar Filipinas. Política, Identidad y Religión en la construcción de la nación filipina, eds. Mª Dolores Elizalde Pérez-Grueso (Barcelona: Bellaterra, 2009), 186.
92 Sínodo de Manila de 1582 / Domingo de Salazar. Estudio introductorio, glosa y transcripción de los textos sinodales a cargo de José Luis Porras Camuñez (Madrid, CSIC, 1988), 314-315.
93 In his Memoria estadística (…) sobre las bajas de la población indígena y sus causas (Manila, 1620), Friar Pedro de San Pablo, provincial of the Franciscan province of San Gregorio, had also denounced the abuses and outrages committed against the inhabitants of Manila and Camarines (Cayetano Sánchez Fuertes, OFM, “Promoción humana y aculturación en Filipinas,” Archivo Ibero-American, 185-188 (1987), 299-300).
95 BNM, AFRA AF.61/1196.1, ff. 1r-1v.
96 Francisco Combés, SJ, Encomio al Discurso Parenético (Manila, Imprenta de la Compañía de Jesús, 1657) (Archivo Romanum Societatis Iesu (hereafter ARSI), Phillip. 11, f. 353r).
the civil authorities refused to pay for the food, clothing, and travel expenses incurred by the natives from their homes to the shipyards.97

On June 8, 1614, friar Miguel García Serrano went to the court asking for a license to return to the Philippines with fifty Augustinian friars, servants, and the necessary provisions. The natives, he said, were “dispersed across the forests,” and, despite the orders dictated by the Council of the Indies, the encomenderos had not reduced them, especially those in the Visayan islands, which made their evangelization difficult.98 Although the archbishop Vázquez de Mercado had laconically acknowledged that the Augustinians administered more convents than any other order in the Philippines (specifically, fifty-seven convents), and that the death of many of their members meant that they needed to refresh their numbers with new arrivals, his preferences were elsewhere.99

On the 1st of July 1614, the archbishop had lent his support to the request of Valladolid-born friar Rodrigo de San Miguel (¿-1626), procurator of the Augustinian Recollects, arguing that the “religious of this order are of great edification and a good example and much perfection in their actions.”100 He suggested that they should be granted four or five convents (and reducciones) held by the Augustinians in Batangas and Laguna de Bonbon (Taal), which lacked a prior. Although on June 24, 1614, the archbishop had expressed his satisfaction with the election of the new provincial, Fray Vicente de Sepúlveda,101 it was clear that Vázquez de Mercado sought to favor the discalced Recollects over the Augustinians, who had shown themselves negligent in the observance of their evangelical duties. The Recollects, a reformist offshoot of the Augustinians that sought to embrace the simplicity of life, promised more subjection to diocesan authority as well as more moral discipline than the other orders.

Epilogue: the Church Chapter, in Vacant See (1617-1619)

After Governor Silva’s death during his unsuccessful journey against the Dutch in March of 1616, his uncle Jerónimo de Silva (1616-17), former governor of the Moluccas (1612-17), assumed command of the Philippine military while the senior oidor, Don Andrés de Alcaraz, took charge of the civilian government.102

97 De la Costa, The Jesuits in the Philippines, 343-44. Cushner says that the minimum wage of substitution was 40 reales (Cited in Patricio Hidalgo Nuchera, La recta administración. Primeros tiempos de colonización hispana en Filipinas: la situación de la población nativa (Madrid: Polifemo, 2001), 87.
98 AGI, Filipinas 85, N. 26.
100 AGI, Filipinas 79, N. 118, f. 329r.
102 On the 10th of July of 1614, after 27 years of service and finding himself old, unwell, and a widower, oidor Alcaraz had asked to be transferred to the Audiencia of Mexico or to be given a license
They did not have a good relationship. Nonetheless, on April 16, 1617, the Dutch squadron, led by Joris van Spilbergen, was defeated by the Spanish fleet in the bay of Playa Honda. According to oidor Alcaraz, the defense of Maluku was impossible to undertake for the Dutch forces were so strong that they could reach the very doors of Manila, and such labor, moreover, was the responsibility of the government’s military arm.

Old and infirm, Vázquez de Mercado had already renounced his archbishopric in 1614, but he remained in his post until June 12, 1616, when he died in an accident, leaving the government of the archdiocese in the hands of the cathedral chapter in vacant see. But oidor Alcaraz and the rest of the Real Audiencia’s magistrates challenged this arrangement, and granted the government of the archdiocese to the bishop of Cebu, Don Pedro de Arce (1615-1645), according to two instructions that had never been applied before—the secondment of the apostolic bull dictated by Pope Paul V (1605-21) sealed in Manila on January 12, 1612, and the Royal Decree of May 29 of that same year. Both established that “in the three next vacant sees only the government and administration of that archbishop in the spiritual and temporal will be assumed by the oldest bishop in the islands.” There had already been three vacant sees (1593-98; 1598-1601; 1606-1608), and, moreover, the edict did not enjoy the approval of the majority of the cathedral chapter. Two of the three suffragan dioceses in the islands were vacant: the bishop of Nueva Segovia, Diego de Soria, to return to Spain and don the habit. On December 1614, the Council of the Indies acceded to his petition and granted him a year’s salary, but Governor Fajardo did not let him leave Manila, for he regarded his presence as indispensable (AGI, Filipinas 20, R. 9, N. 61). See also Marta Mª Manchado López, Manila y su Real Audiencia. Convivencia y conflicto (1584-1630) (Sevilla: Publicaciones de la Universidad de Sevilla, 2019), 118; Marta Mª Manchado López, «Que aquí muy poco se usa alabar a nadie». Convivencia y conflicto en Manila en las primeras décadas del siglo XVII», en G. Gaudin y P. Machuca (eds.), Las Filipinas, ¿una periferia global?, Toulouse – Zamora, Michoacán, El Colegio de Michoacán & Presses universitaires du Midi, 2022, 91.

According to Father Diego de Bobadilla’s Relación, “in the year of 1616, [the Mindanaos] went out with a powerful armada, being in league with the Dutch, who came in ten galleons and entered Manila Bay on All Saints’ Day, although they were later defeated, and destroyed by our armada on the next April [14] of 1617, whose general was Don Juan Ronquillo [del Castillo]” (Diego de Bobadilla, SJ, Relación de las gloriosas victorias que en mar, y tierra an tenido las Armas de nuestro invictíssimo Rey, y Monarca Felipe IV, el Grande, en las islas Filipinas, contra los Moros de la gran Isla de Mindanao, y su rey Cachil Corralat, debajo de la conducta de don Sebastián Hurtado de Corcuera, caballero de la orden de Alcántara, y del Consejo de Guerra de su Majestad, Gobernador y Capitán General de aquellas islas (Mexico, Imprenta de Pedro de Quiñones, 1638), f. 11r).

Manchado López, Manila y su Real Audiencia, 118.

He wrote a letter to the king dated May 4, 1614, in which he confessed his incapacity to govern the archdiocese of Manila due to his age and his many infirmities as well as “the faults I commit in my office” (AGI, Filipinas 74, cited in Rodríguez, Historia de la Provincia Agustiniana, Vol. XVII, 319).

AGI, Filipinas 74, N. 79; AGI, Filipinas 77, N. 40. See also Santos, “A History of the Manila Cathedral...,” p. 139.

AGI, Filipinas 74, N. 74; AGI, Filipinas 77, N. 44; AGI, Filipinas 329, L.2, ff.148v-149r.
OP, had died in 1613, but his successor, Juan de Rentería, was still to arrive (and
who would not do so until 1618), while the Diocese of Nueva Cáceres was under
Diego de Guevara, OSA (1616-21), former visitor and reformer of the Augustinian
Province of the Santísimo Nombre de Jesús.108 Regarding the bishop of Cebu, friar
Pedro de Arce, Vázquez de Mercado had declared in 1614 that he was unfit to govern
the archdiocese109. Thus had spoken the Manila prelate of the man who would assume the
future government of the archdiocese:

He is a religious [man] for his cell but he has studied nowhere and has never
dealt with matters of government and in this great faults can be committed,
supposedly because with the little that he has worked with these things
any request takes him everywhere and thus these dealings will knock over
those others... and with these cares, knowing of him that he is not made for
this, it is well-known that he never sought this but that given the easygoing
nature that the friars of his order find in him they made him accept.110

Leetrados, university graduates (literally “men of letters”), were mostly
ecclesiastical figures whose command of Latin put them into a privileged position
in the Republic of Letters. However, the prelate’s words revealed that the archbishop
did not think favorably of the bishop of Cebú’s capacities for high office, and indeed,
regarded him as unfit for the office of archbishop.111 It is possible that after what
Augustinian provincial Sepúlveda had denounced regarding his confreres in 1616,
part of the archbishop’s antipathy against Arce was due to his membership in the
Augustinian order. Sepúlveda had made accusations similar to those made by
Augustinian friars Martín de Rada (1533-78) y Diego de Herrera (¿-1576) decades
earlier regarding the misbehavior of the military leaders that accompanied adelantado
Don Miguel López de Legazpi (1502-72).112

Unanimously elected in 1615 in the chapter of the convent of Guadalupe,
provincial Sepúlveda was a decisive man of a strong character who was expected to
bring about “the reformation of this province.”113 His attention was soon focused

108 “Carta del P. Diego de Guevara, OSA, a S.M. sobre la imposibilidad de acabar la visita y
reforma de la Orden de San Agustín de Filipinas en el tiempo de dos años...,” Manila, July 1, 1610, in
109 AGI, Filipinas 76, N. 67.
110 AGI, Filipinas 74, N. 79, f. 548r.
111 This opinion was shared by the oidores of the Audiencia of Manila Don Jerónimo Legazpi de
Echevarría and Don Álvaro de Mesa y Lugo, who regarded the bishop as “naturally limited,” given to
prayer and Little else (Manchado López, Manila y su Real Audiencia, 107).
112 Jorge Mojarro, “La defensa del indio en la temprana literatura hispano-filipina colonial (1569-
113 AGI, Filipinas 85, N. 26; Rodríguez, Historia de la Provincia Agustiniana, Vol. XVII, 45.
on the scandalous indignities and abuses suffered by the natives in the provinces of Pampanga, Pintados, and Ilocos under Augustinian guardianship. They were not only forced to work in shipyards and carrying wood for such long periods that their crops were lost, they were also owed a total of 112,579 full-weight pesos for rice, wood, etc. It is no wonder that, despite being recommended by the governor and captain general of the Philippines Don Francisco Tello de Guzmán II (1596-1602) as early as 1605 to fill one of the vacant sees as bishop, Augustinian friar Jerónimo de Salas (1590-1617), prior of the convent and visitor of his order with twenty years of experience in the evangelization of the natives of Guagua (1602-11) and Macabebe (1605), never did become prelate. For, besides the accusations raised by members of the order against their confreres’ abusive practices, more scandals made it unseemly to place more honor on Augustinian friars. Provincial Salas was poisoned on May 17, 1617, and on July 31 of that same year, his successor, Castilian-born Father Vicente de Sepúlveda, was strangled in his cell by Madrid-born Father Juan de Ocádiz and criollo deacons Ignacio Alcaraz, Juan de Quintana, and Andrés de Encinas.

The members of the chapter also opposed the designation of the Augustinian friar and bishop of Cebu, Pedro de Arce, arguing for the legitimacy of the vacant see. According to them, Vázquez de Mercado never imputed any of the decisions and actions taken by the chapter during the second vacant see (1606-08). This constituted a bureaucratically powerful argument that suggested that things that are not broken, should not be fixed, that is, if the chapter’s government during vacant sees had proven itself useful and successful, it was not sensible to change the arrangement that granted it interim authority. Especially as it regarded the rules of the choir and the general decorum during mass, which the chapter managed, maintaining good relations with local power holding groups. The archbishop had, however, confronted powerful local power holders, including the religious orders, which opposed any kind of oversight of their churches and parishes, and Governor Silva. He had been defeated.

114 AGI, Filipinas 85, N. 30. See also friar Vicente de Sepúlveda’s certification, from August 13, 1616, regarding the large amount of money owed by the king to the Philippine natives for labor and provisions facilitated in the struggle against the Dutch (AGI, Filipinas 20, R. 11, N. 70).
115 Gaspar de San Agustín, OSA, Conquistas de las islas Filipinas, 723; Castro, Misioneros agustinos en el Extremo Oriente, 298; “Carta a S.M. de Don Juan de Alvarado Bracamonte, Fiscal de la Audiencia de Manila, dando cuenta de la muerte del Oidor Don Juan Manuel de la Vega, y de la muerte violenta del Provincial de San Agustín, Fr. Vicente de Sepúlveda, ocurrida el primero de agosto de 1617,” Manila, August 20, 1617, and “Carta de la Audiencia de Filipinas a S.M. sobre el ejemplar castigo ejecutado en los autores de la muerte del Provincial de San Agustín...,” Manila, November 8, 1617, in Rodríguez, Historia de la Provincia Agustiniana, Vol. XVII, 339-43; 360-66.
116 AGI, Filipinas 77, N. 44.
On August 17, 1616, Don Pedro Muñoz de Herrera, public notary of the Real Audiencia de Manila, submitted information on the qualifications of cathedral chapter dean Francisco Gómez de Arellano; archdeacon don Juan de Aguilar; schoolmaster Rodrigo Díaz Guiral; precentor Santiago de Castro; treasurer Francisco Cervantes; and canons Thomas Guimarano, Miguel Garcetas, and Lorenzo Martín Peñato. Between the 8th and the 12th of August, important personages of Manila requested this information, including Father Juan de Ribera (1565-1624), rector of Manila’s Jesuit college; friar Bernardo de Santa Catalina, provincial of the Dominican order; and Diego de Chinchón, the Franciscan provincial; as well as several captains and generals, such as Don Juan Ronquillo de Castillo (1558-1617). All of these individuals attested to the capacity of the chapter’s members to their positions of governance in the chapter, and spoke against transferring any suffragan bishop from his see to Manila to govern it as archbishop.\footnote{AGI, Filipinas 77, N. 44.}

Despite the chapter’s frontal opposition, and the support that it found among Manila’s prominent citizens, friar Pedro de Arce wrote to the king on the 21st of May of 1616, asking that the Treasury pay what it owed him as bishop of Cebu, which amounted to 500,000 maravedis.\footnote{AGI, Filipinas 76, N. 6.} And less than a month later, on June 12, 1616, he took possession of the archbishopric “to the great notice and prejudice of said dean and chapter members,” who quickly mobilized to defend their interests.\footnote{AGI, Filipinas 77, N. 44.} They wrote to King Philip III and the Council of the Indies on the 8th of August expressing their disconformity with what they regarded as an offense against the chapter’s good name, a chapter whose members were “advantaged, virtuous graduates and of quality, who have had and have weighty offices the performance of which they have given account of and continue to do so.” They then sent as evidence information gathered from six witnesses, three men from the civil service (captains Don Cristóbal Gurría, Don Pedro de Ortega, and General Don Juan Ronquillo del Castillo) and three from the ecclesiastical realm (father Rector Juan de Ribera, SJ; provincial Bernardo de Santa Catalina, OP; and provincial Diego de Chinchón, OFM) on the 23rd of August of 1617, which accredited the chapter’s good governance during the three vacant sees, as well as the quality, learning, and virtue of its members.\footnote{AGI, Filipinas 77, N. 44.}

Meanwhile, the Tribunal of the Holy Office of New Spain responded to the complaints of the Bishop of Cebu, Fray Pedro de Arce, dated Manila, February 20, 1616, regarding a bench, or dais of great proportions, which had been placed in the cathedral to accommodate the relatives of the Holy Office. The bench caused many
inconveniences because it hindered the passage to the sacristy and the processions. On July 3, 1617, the inquisitors ordered the bench to be moved to another location, “nailed with chains so that it could be moved, but not removed from the designated place.”121

The dean Don Francisco Gómez Arellano and the members of the chapter also wrote a memorial on the 18th of August of 1617, forbidding the designation or promotion of any dignity, prebend, or curate of Spaniards or Indians in the cathedral to men who had left, been expelled, or been fired from the religious orders, particularly the Society of Jesus, who were not professed of the four vows. In their memorial, presented to king Philip III, they lamented that in the past some men who had been expelled from the orders were admitted as parish ministers, even though “experience has shown that they are not fit for this ministry.”122

This memorial was opposed, however, by members of the colonial government, because it violated the liberty and power of the Royal Patronage. On the 20th of August, the Real Audiencia fiscal Don Juan de Alvarado y Bracamonte, who acted as protector of Indians and sangleyes, wrote a letter to the Council of the Indies denouncing that,

the Chapter of this holy cathedral church has no man learned in any science, and the most presumptuous among them is no more than a bachiller (...) and for this reason they attempt to keep men who know more than them from being presented by the governor of these islands to any prebend, dignity, or benefice, because they don’t want their defects to be revealed123

On the 24th of July, 1617, chapter members had written a stern letter to the king accusing fiscal Alvarado of “benefitting his servants, relatives, friends, and lackeys,” especially the alderman of Manila, Don Fernando Centeno Maldonado, and master sergeant Don Esteban de Alcázar, to the detriment of the great number of benemérito soldiers who lived in great poverty.124 They also accused him of collecting large sums of money from the sangleyes in exchange of protection.125 The magistrate

121 Archivo General de la Nación (hereafter, AGN), Inquisición, Vol 293, Exp. 62, ff. 514r-514v.
122 AGI, Filipinas 77, N. 42. See also Rodríguez, Historia de la Provincia Agustiniana, Vol. X, 271.
123 AGI, Filipinas 20, R. 11, N. 72, f. 179r. On February 19, 1619, Philip III issued a Royal Decree confirming the memorial drawn by the dean and ecclesiastical chapter of Manila regarding the admission of those expelled priests of the religious orders to the cathedral chapter (APM RC, I, doc. Nº 14; f. 595, cited in Rodríguez, Historia de la Provincia Agustiniana, Vol. X, 264-67).
124 Both Centeno Maldonado and Alcázar married Alvarado y Bracamonte’s sisters María and Isabel, respectively. On this particular issue, see Manchado López, “«Que aquí muy poco se usa alabar a nadie»…, 89-91.
125 AGI, Filipinas 77, N. 40, cited in Rodríguez, Historia de la Provincia Agustiniana, Vol. XVII, 335. On December 10, 1619, the oidores of the Real Audiencia also accused fiscal Alvarado and Governor Fajardo of taking advantage of the Chinese merchants, whom they repeatedly extorted (AGI, Filipinas
never forgot this affront, and he later accused the chapter members of not deserving the offices that they held, pointing out that “where letters [studies] are lacking, ignorance abounds.”  

Jesuits, he argued, even those who were expelled from the order, were learned men with years of study behind them. The rigor in the formation of Jesuit novices (two years) and the Society of Jesus’ particular government was meant to procure exemplary behavior among Jesuit priests, for it authorized the immediate expulsion of any of its members, especially if he committed a fault of modesty. But many bishops and chapters considered expelled Jesuit apostates, rebels who were incapable of adapting to their institute, and so forbade them from acceding to prebends and ecclesiastical benefices. Fiscal Alvarado, who was under the special protection of Governor Silva, asked that the Society’s expelled priests be allowed to take up vacancies in the cathedral chapter, for in them “concurred the parts of virtue and learning necessary” that made them “legitimately capable” of filling these vacancies “in accordance with their constitutions and apostolic bulls,” and suggested that the cathedral chapter’s demands revealed that it “abhorred science and nobility.”

Finally, on the 19th of February of 1619, the king wrote a Royal Decree that confirmed the chapter’s statute, dictating that those religious who were expelled from their orders could not be given any dignities, prebends, or curacies for Spaniards or Indians in the archbishopric of Manila. Moreover, those friars or priests expelled from the orders should be sent back to Castile, instead of being “consented to live or reside in the Indies.” There was, however, one exception: Jesuits who had professed the four vows were allowed to be readmitted to curacies outside the capital after three years of good conduct and the approval of the archbishop.

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20, cited in Rodríguez, Historia de la Provincia Agustiniana, XVII, 46). On January 29, 1619, the Council of Indies informed the governor Don Alonso Fajardo to remove Alvarado Bracamonte from his position at the Audiencia of Manila due to the high level of corruption, greed, and social unrest during his tenure (Manchado López, “«Que aquí muy poco se usa alabar a nadie»…, 91).

126 AGI, Filipinas 20, R. 11, N. 72, f. 179r.


128 AGI, Filipinas 20, R. 11, N. 72.


130 On May 11, 1621, a Jesuit expelled between 1614 and 1615, named Juan de Mesa, committed adultery with Doña Catalina Maria de Zambrana, wife of Governor Don Alonso Fajardo de Tenza (1618-24). This episode ended with the death of both lovers, becoming one of the most notorious of the first third of the XVII century in the Philippines (“News from the province of Filipinas. Alonso Roman,” Manila, July of 1621. BR, Vol. XX (1621-24), pp. 34-43).

131 AGI, Filipinas 5, N. 197; AGI, Filipinas 340, L. 3, ff. 185r-187r.
The cathedral chapter’s object was to protect its members’ aspirations and interests, particularly those of the oldest prebendaries, such as Bernardino de Casasola, who had served for more than 16 years as cathedral portionari, and who received a canonry ad interim when Miguel Garcetas was promoted as treasurer (¿-1647). On April 10, 1618, Casasola was promoted to treasurer and was accepted on by the chapter dean and archbishop Pedro de Arce, receiving the collation and canonical institution of the commissioner of the Holy Crusade and dean of the chapter, Don Francisco Gómez de Arellano. Soon afterwards, Juan Maestre Briceno (¿-1638), who had arrived at the Philippines accompanying archbishop Vázquez de Mercado, was granted the perpetual benefice of the district of Tabuco. On July 17, 1618, he was promoted to a canonry by the new Governor-General Don Alonso Fajardo de Tenza (1618-24), born in Murcia, upon the death of canon Juan de la Cruz Godínez. Finally, the governor presented Mexican cleric Juan de Miranda Salazar (¿-1645) to fill a vacant position of portionari in the cathedral chapter. Later on, archbishop Miguel García Serrano (1620-29) explained that Miranda, a very good singer, had lived in the Philippines as a child and had grown up in the cathedral, and begged the king to confirm the prebend’s collation that he had granted Father Miranda. He added that, unlike other candidates who went to the court asking for undeserved benefices and prebends, Juan de Miranda was a benemérito.

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132 Miguel Garcetas was designated by the next archbishop, Fray Miguel García Serrano, as the substitute in the deanery of Don Francisco Gómez de Arellano, “a person of all satisfaction and virtue,” whom the bishop and governor of Manila did not allow to retire because of the need he had for his person. In case of force majeure, he suggested that the treasurer Miguel de Garcetas be his natural substitute “because of his known virtue, life, letters and example” (“Carta de Fr. Miguel García Serrano, OSA., obispo de N. Segovia, y arzobispo electo de Manila, agradeciendo a S.M. la gracia de haberle presentado para este arzobispado…,” Manila, August 7, 1618, in AGI, México 2488, cited in Rodríguez, Historia de la Provincia Agustiniana, Vol. XVII, 443).

133 In his statement, dated in Manila, August 7, 1618, Bishop Fray Pedro de Arce highlighted as merit of the candidate that in 1615, when Governor Don Juan de Silva was organizing his imposing armada against Malacca, the racionero Casasola managed to gather in a month and a half rice, oil and six thousand arrobas of abaca from the province of Catanduanes, so that the armada had no delay in its departure, which took place by December, 1615 (AGI, Filipinas 85, N. 35). Subsequently, on June 1, 1619, and years later, on July 2, 1624, Casasola requested his promotion to another dignity of the cathedral chapter (AGI, Filipinas 85, N. 35; AGI, Filipinas 85, N. 58).

134 On May 27, 1617, presbyter Juan Maestre Briceno was the interim occupant of the ecclesiastical benefice of Luban until he was presented to the perpetual curacy of Tabuco when its holder, Father Francisco de Saavedra, died. Meanwhile, dean Francisco Gómez de Arellano, apostolic commissioner and general delegate of the Holy Bull of the Crusade in the district of the Real Audiencia of Manila, named Briceno preaching commissioner of the Holy Bull in Tabuco (AGI, Filipinas 85, N. 50; AGI, Filipinas 1, N. 195).

135 Moreno, Historia de la Santa Iglesia metropolitana de Filipinas, 171.

136 On the 30th of August of 1624, Miranda de Salazar asked for the confirmation of his office, but this was denied due to insufficient evidence of his condition of benemérito or of his qualifications (AGI, Filipinas 85, N. 59).
At that time Fray Pedro de Arce had requested to be relieved of the office of bishop of Cebu because he was “old and needy to recover in a cell for the rest of his life.” Likewise, on June 7, 1618, he begged to be granted two clergymen, a priest of Spaniards and another of Indians with a salary of 200 pesos each, to help him administer the sacraments in the pontifical acts of consecration. He complained that he had no other help than that of his Augustinian confreres, regretting that the members of the Society of Jesus had excused themselves due to the express prohibition of their institute. For this reason, he requested the appointment of said coadjutors, as well as six chaplains, given the decadent state of divine worship.

None of the previous cases, however, were as shocking as of the case of Patricio Arcaya de Guevara, of Murcia, whom Governor Fajardo presented to occupy ad interim the office of treasurer in the cathedral chapter when Don Miguel Garcetas was promoted to the chantry (1619) upon Juan de Aguilar’s death, and then, to the deanery (1620), with a salary of 500 pesos. Arcaya had been expelled from the Augustine order in Andalucía, and it seems that his conduct continued to be anything but exemplary, for the Manila archbishop, García Serrano, testified in July 1621 that said cleric “lived with frivolity and discredit and less modesty than would be convenient,” and that he should be denied any dignity to which he aspired, for he deserved none.

To conclude, this article focused on the archbishopric of Manila under the administration of Don Diego Vázquez de Mercado, the first secular archbishop of Manila, paying special attention to the problems he faced during his administration. These problems involved lack of funds and staunch opposition of the religious orders to be visited by their prelate, without forgetting the high level of corruption and abuses committed by the friars, and particularly, by the Augustinians, who used to overcharge the natives for their religious services. His successor, the archbishop Miguel García Serrano, OSA, faced similar problems during his tenure (1620-29).

On a final note, it would be worth mentioning that bishop Pedro de Arce, who found no favor with the archbishop Vázquez de Mercado, ruled over the following vacant see (1630-34). Unlike his predecessors (Vázquez de Mercado; García Serrano), the Augustinian bishop was contrary to the increase of secular

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139 AGI, Filipinas 20, R. 12, N. 78.
140 AGI, Filipinas 85, N. 43.
141 AGI, Filipinas 85, N. 42; AGI, Filipinas 1, N. 191; AGI, Filipinas 1, N. 199.
142 AGI, Filipinas 74, N. 118, ff. 667r-667v.
clergy in the native parishes, arguing that there were not enough diocesan priests to take them over.143 A bold statement that not only confirmed the so-called frailocracy in the Philippines, but the ongoing meddling of religious orders in the administration of the archbishoprics in Manila.

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143 Alexandre Coello de la Rosa, “Una persona santa y de vida inculpable”: fray Pedro de Arce y la tercera sede vacante en el arzobispado de Manila,” Hispania Sacra, vol. 74, nº 150 (2022), 525–38.

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https://doi.org/10.55997/3005pslviii177a5
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