

The Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament of Santo Estêvão de Alfama and the assistance to the poor (1806–1820)

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Abstract

Based on unpublished manuscript sources, produced by the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament of Santo Estêvão de Alfama, we aim to evaluate the institution's role in providing assistance to the poor, studying the regiments and the daily practice of assigning alms to certain groups of destitute people. Being confraternities specialized in activities linked to the cult and the souls of the deceased, we aim to investigate the impact of charitable activities on the institution's finances. Finally, there was a concern in verifying who were the beneficiaries and the motives that had them led to be included in the category of the poor.

Keywords: brotherhood; poverty; Blessed Sacrament.

A Irmandade do Santíssimo Sacramento de Santo Estêvão de Alfama e a assistência à pobreza (1806–1820)

Resumo

Partindo de fontes manuscritas inéditas, produzidas pela irmandade do Santíssimo Sacramento de Santo Estêvão de Alfama, procuramos avaliar o papel da instituição na assistência à pobreza, analisando os regimentos e a prática quotidiana da atribuição de esmolas a determinados grupos de desvalidos. Em especial, procuramos indagar qual o peso da atividade assistencial aos pobres nas contas da instituição, visto que as confrarias se destacaram, em especial, pelas atividades ligadas ao culto e à assistência às almas dos confrades. Por outro lado, houve a preocupação de perceber quem eram os assistidos e quais os motivos que os tinham levado à categoria de pobres.

Palavras-chave: irmandade; pobreza; Santíssimo Sacramento.

La Hermandad del Santísimo Sacramento de San Esteban de Alfama y la asistencia a la pobreza (1806–1820)

Resumen

A partir de fuentes manuscritas inéditas, producidas por la Hermandad del Santísimo Sacramento de San Esteban de Alfama, buscamos evaluar el rol de la institución en la asistencia a la pobreza, analizando la normativa y la práctica cotidiana de la concesión de limosnas a ciertos grupos de desfavorecidos. En particular, se busca investigar cuál es el peso de la actividad asistencial a los pobres en las cuentas de la institución, pues las cofradías se destacaron en particular por las actividades relacionadas a la adoración y al cuidado de las almas de los miembros. Por otro lado, había la preocupación de percibir quién eran los asistidos y cuáles las razones que los habían conducido a la categoría de pobres.

Palabras clave: hermandad; pobreza; Santísimo Sacramento.

La fraternité du Saint-Sacrement de Saint Étienne d'Alfama et l'assistance à la pauvreté (1806–1820)

Résumé

Sur la base de sources manuscrites inédites produites par la fraternité de Saint Étienne d'Alfama, on a évalué du rôle de cette institution en l'assistance à la pauvreté, en analysant les règlements et la pratique quotidienne de faire l'aumône à certains groupes de pauvres. On a surtout remetté en question les poids d'assistance aux pauvres dans les comptes de l'institution, car les confréries se sont spécialement mises en évidence grâce aux activités liées au culte et à l'assistance aux âmes des confrères. D'autre part, il y a eu la préoccupation de percevoir qui étaient les assistés et les raisons qui les ont placé à la catégorie sociale des pauvres.

Mots-clés: fraternité; pauvre; Saint-Sacrement.

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The Historical Archive of the Lisbon Patriarchate keeps several documentary collections relating to topics as varied as, among others, inventories of ecclesiastical goods, *de genere* inquiries, examination of religious women, causes of the ecclesiastical court, pastoral visits along with sources relating to convents and confraternities, much of which are still being catalogued.¹ Despite the enormously rich archive, the documents deposited there have not generated much interest among researchers. In this study, we attempted to address the poverty assistance practices undertaken by the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, whose headquarters was the church of Santo Estêvão de Alfama, in Lisbon, whose document collection consists of 46 series and thousands of other documents.² Given the objective of this study, 12 series were consulted to get information. A few other series were also consulted, but their examination was fruitless for the chosen theme and chronology.

When trying to know the assistance provided by the brotherhood to the poor, we were faced with a basic question: what is the chronological scope of the approach, considering that the brotherhood was active between the 16th and 20th centuries. Actually, consulting the record offered several possibilities, considering that our interest was only the Modern Era and considering that only petitions to obtain alms from 1806 remained. The choice for 1820, the year of the Liberal Revolution and, concomitantly, the traditional date for the end of the Ancient Regime, seemed a viable option.

As is known, in Portugal, the presence of the confraternities has been documented since the Middle Ages, confirming their origins to previous ages. They were lay associations, although clerics were involved. The Church quickly controlled them, subordinating them to parishes and monasteries, although they were supervised by only the bishops in the spiritual realm. Members joined voluntarily and publicly, and their entry was concluded with an oath of *compromisso* — that is, an oath to follow the rules or statutes by which it was governed — that involved their inclusion in the confreres' book and the payment of an annual charges. In principle, these associations were open to everyone. However, the payment of annual fees immediately implied the exclusion of poorer people.³ They constituted an important social space — in the Medieval Era, they were even connected to the banquet held on the occasion of the feast of the saint patron,⁴ a practice that was later

¹A catalog with only a few years lists a tiny part of the documentation in the archive, so much so that the incorporation of documents of the various parishes of Lisbon has become a routine. Cf. Isaiás da Rosa Pereira, "Inventário Provisório do Arquivo da Cúria Patriarcal de Lisboa", *Lusitania Sacra*, tomo 9, Lisboa, 1972, p. 311-386.

²We thank Mrs. Teresa Ponces for the expertise, encouragement, and support in locating and providing the series of the topic of our interest.

³On the confraternities of the Medieval Era, cf. Maria Ângela Beirante, *Confrarias medievais portuguesas*, Lisboa, [s.n.], 1990; Maria Helena da Cruz Coelho, "As confrarias medievais portuguesas: espaços de solidariedade na vida e na morte", In: Gobierno de Navarra, Departamento de Educación y Cultura, *Cofradías, Gremios, Solidaridades en la Europa Medieval*, Navarra, Departamento de Educación y Cultura, 1992, p. 149-183.

⁴Maria Ângela Beirante, "Ritos alimentares em algumas confrarias portuguesas medievais", In: _____, *Territórios do Sagrado*. Crenças e comportamentos na Idade Média em Portugal, Lisboa, Colibri, 2011, p. 185-197.

discontinued, with the exception of the Confraternity of the Holy Spirit —,⁵ which ensured the funerals of members and established a means of showing integration and social prestige. This explains the presence of New Christians among the members,⁶ although some brotherhoods had issues regarding the purity of blood,⁷ which was the target of criticism by men like D. Luís da Cunha.⁸ However, it should be noted that some confraternities placed age limits for membership:⁹ women could join most of the confraternities¹⁰ and there were specific ones for blacks¹¹ and mulattos;¹² in the case of the former,

⁵Cf. Maria Paula Marçal Lourenço, “A casa da rainha e a Confraria do Espírito Santo de Alenquer (1645–1653)”, *Arquipélago. História*, 2ª série, vol. 5, Ponta Delgada, 2001, p. 651-668. In Spain, some mentions were found in which confraternities of the Modern Era continued to serve food on festive occasions and also offered food to the poor and imprisoned at certain times. Cf. María del Carmen Ansón Calvo; Fernando Manzano Ledesma; Nuria González Alonso, “Un ejemplo de sociabilidad gastronómica: las comidas de pobres y de fraternidad en las cofradías benaventanas en la Edad Moderna”, In: Francisco Núñez Roldán (coord.), *Ocio y vida cotidiana en el mundo hispánico en la Edad Moderna*, Sevilla, Universidade de Sevilla, 2007, p. 781-790. Also cf. Tomás Antonio Mantecón Movellán, *Contrarreforma y religiosidad popular en Cantabria*. Las cofradías religiosas, Santander, Publicaciones de la Universidad de Cantabria, 1990, p. 77.

⁶Pedro Penteado, “Confrarias portuguesas da Época Moderna: problemas, resultados e tendências de investigação”, *Lusitânia Sacra*, 2ª série, vol. 7, Lisboa, 1995, p. 28.

⁷Cf., for example, Ana Cristina Araújo, “Corpos sociais, ritos e services religiosos numa comunidade rural. As confrarias de Gouveia na Época Moderna”, *Revista Portuguesa de História*, tomo 35, Coimbra, 2001-2002, p. 291, regarding the brotherhoods of Souls and São Cosme de Alrote; also cf. Maria João Pereira Coutinho; Sílvia Ferreira, “As irmandades da Igreja de São Roque. Tempo, propósito e legado”, *Revista Lusófona de Ciência das Religiões*, n. 5-6, Lisboa, 2004, p. 201-216; Maria de Fátima Reis, “A Confraria da Avé-maria do Convento de São Bento de Santarém: afirmação e prestígio dos estatutos de limpeza de sangue”, In: Luís Filipe Barreto; José Augusto Mourão (coords.), *Inquisição Portuguesa*. Tempo, razão e circunstância, Lisboa: Prefácio, 2007, p. 225-230. This would also happen in Spain. Cf., for example, Manuel Moreno Valero, “Religiosidad popular en Córdoba en el siglo XVIII”, In: Carlos Álvarez Santaló; María Jesús Buxó Rey; Salvador Rodríguez Becerra, *La religiosidad popular: hermandades, romerías y santuarios*, vol. 3, Barcelona, Anthropos, 1989, p. 489-499; Pedro Carasa Soto, *Historia de la beneficencia en Castilla y Leon*. Poder y pobreza en la sociedad castellana, Valladolid, Universidad de Valladolid, 1991, p. 144.

⁸D. Luís da Cunha considered: “The Inquisition is not the only one that, with their processing method, raises the number of New Christians, but the brotherhoods and confraternities also do, and this is why it should be defended that none of them, without exceptions, performs inquiries on blood purity, to check on those who want to join them; only *vita et moribus* inquiries should be allowed, checking with the parish priest about these people, because there is a tendency to tarnish very good New Christian families that do not deserve it, not showing deference to the stimuli of their devotion”. Cf. D. Luís da Cunha, *Testamento político*, Lisboa, Iniciativas Editoriais, 1978, p. 54. On other criticisms regarding this question, cf. Didier Lahon, “Esclavage, confréries noires et pureté de sang au Portugal: XVI^e-XVIII^e siècles”, *Lusitânia Sacra*, 2ª série, vol. 15, Lisboa, 2003, p. 134-136, *et passim*.

⁹Georgina Silva dos Santos, *Ofício e sangue*. A Irmandade de São Jorge e a Inquisição na Lisboa Moderna, Lisboa, Colibri, 2005, p. 163-229; *Idem*, “A ferro e fogo: o enraizamento do ideário inquisitorial entre os oficiais mecânicos da Lisboa moderna”, In: Maria da Graça A. Mateus Ventura (org.), *O associativismo*. Das confrarias e irmandades aos movimentos sociais contemporâneos, Lisboa, Colibri, 2006, p. 61; Susana Goulart Costa, *Viver e morrer religiosamente*. Ilha de São Miguel, século XVIII, Ponta Delgada, Instituto Cultural de Ponta Delgada, 2007, p. 272. Some of these confraternities also prohibited the entry of sick people.

¹⁰In some cases, paying an entry fee that was higher than that for men. Cf. Guilhermina Mota, “A Irmandade da Senhora do Carmo do Marmeleiro - Mortágua (Primeira Metade do século XVIII)”, *Revista de História das Ideias*, vol. 9, Coimbra, 1987, p. 279 *et passim*.

¹¹Maria do Rosário Pimentel, *Viagem ao fundo das consciências*. A escravatura na Época Moderna, Lisboa, Colibri, 1995; Didier Lahon, *op cit*.

¹²*Ibidem*; Larissa Viana, *O idioma da mestiçagem*. As irmandades de pardos na América Portuguesa, Campinas, Editora da UNICAMP, 2007.

in Portugal, and in the case of the latter, in Brazil. It should also be emphasized that, in confraternities, women's participation was more relevant than that which prevailed among brotherhoods of whites.¹³ Outside the continental and overseas areas, the Portuguese who migrated to other places did not cease to establish confraternities, a good portion of them under the invocation of St. Anthony. This happened in Rome¹⁴ and in several cities in Spain, such as Cádiz, Granada, Huelva, Madrid and Seville.¹⁵

Confraternities, described by Pedro Carasa Soto as "smaller churches within the church",¹⁶ could have several purposes: charitable, religious, festive, or penitential, which will dictate the existence of a diverse typology: confraternities associations (penitential and professional) and confraternities institutions (those dedicated to the management of the cult and of the assets), according to Maurice Agulhon;¹⁷ open, closed, or with automatic inscription, if we take into account the conditions of access, or horizontal (the ones that evidence the social setting) and vertical (those wishing to evade the social setting, symbolically denying it), reflecting the social category of the brothers in the words of Luís Maldonado;¹⁸ or guilds (which aggregate those of the same profession), sacramental (who provide mutual aid), and charitable (dedicated to a specific aspect of charity), according to Saborit Badenes.¹⁹ In any case, the list of possible types does not end here.²⁰

¹³Luciano Figueiredo, *O avesso da memória*. Cotidiano e trabalho da mulher em Minas Gerais no século XVIII, 2. ed., Rio de Janeiro, José Olympio, 1999, p. 152-157. On the presence of women in Portuguese confraternities, cf., for example, Laurinda Abreu, "Confrarias e irmandades em Setúbal: redes de sociabilidade e poder", *In: I Congresso Internacional do Barroco*. Actas, vol. 1, Porto, Reitoria da Universidade do Porto, Governo Civil do Porto, 1991, p. 12.

¹⁴Maria de Lurdes Pereira Rosa, "L'ospedale della nazione portoghese di Roma, sec. XIV-XX. Elementi di storia istituzionale e archivistica", *Mélanges de l'Ecole Française de Rome, Italie et Méditerranée*, tomo 106, n. 1, Roma, 1994, p. 73-128.

¹⁵Juan Ignacio Pulido Serrano, "Hermandades portuguesas fuera de Portugal (siglos XVI-XVIII)", *In: O associativismo*. Das confrarias e irmandades aos movimentos sociais contemporâneos, Lisboa, Colibri, 2006, p. 29-49.

¹⁶Pedro Carasa Soto, *Historia de la beneficencia en Castilla y Leon*. Poder y pobreza en la sociedad castellana, Valladolid, Universidad de Valladolid, 1991, p. 142.

¹⁷Maurice Agulhon, *Pénitents et franco-maçons de l'ancienne Provence*: essai sur la sociabilité méridionale, Paris, Fayard, 1984.

¹⁸*Apud* Pedro Penteadó, "Confrarias", *In: Carlos Moreira de Azevedo (coord.), Dicionário de História Religiosa em Portugal*, vol. A-C, Lisboa, Círculo de Leitores, 2000, p. 459-470 (specially, p. 460).

¹⁹Pere Saborit Badenes, "Las cofradías. Estudio del significado de las cofradías a través de las del Alto Palencia", *Estudis. Revista de Historia Moderna*, n. 16, Valencia, 1990, p. 141-142.

²⁰Cf. Amalia García Pedraza; Miguel Luis López Muñoz, "Cofarías y moriscos en la Granada del siglo XVI (1500-1568)", *In: Antonio Mestre Sanchís; Enrique Giménez López (coords.), Disidencias y exilados en la España Moderna*, Alicante, Universidad de Alicante, 1997, p. 377-392; Álvaro Aragón Ruano; Xabier Alberdi Londibe, "El proceso de institucionalización de las cofradías guipuzcoanas durante la Edad Moderna: cofradías de Mareantes y de Podavines", *Vasconia*, vol. 30, Donostia, 2000, p. 205-222; Alexis Fontbonne, "Les confréries capitulaires du XII^e au XV^e siècle. Une proposition pour la typologie des confréries: de l'institutionnel au relationnel", *Confraternitas*, vol. 18, n. 2, Toronto, 2007, p. 3-16; Candelaria Castro Pérez; Mercedes Calvo Cruz; Sonia Granado Suárez, "Las cofradías en la institución parroquial, siglos XVII-XVIII. Una aplicación al señorío episcopal de la Villa de Agüimes, Canarias (España)", *Procesos Históricos*, vol. 13, Bogotá, 2008, p. 6-7.

Some medieval brotherhoods were absorbed by *Misericórdias*²¹ which did not imply the lack of creation of many new ones in the Modern Era,²² because a large number of confraternities per parish were always observed. Data compiled by Isabel dos Guimarães Sá show more than 80 confraternities in six parishes of Braga, 32 confraternities in four parishes of Aveiro, and 215 confraternities in 45 parishes of Vila Real in the 18th century.²³ Other subsequent cases can be put together. For example, Maria Antonia Lopes, when gathering information on the subject, reported that in 1792, a total of 759 confraternities were active in 274 parishes in the diocese of Viana.²⁴

*Confraternities were among the
mechanisms of social disciplining
incremented after the Council of Trent*

The numbers of confraternities under the invocation of the Blessed Sacrament, such as the confraternities of the Rosary²⁵ and of the Souls, increased after the completion of the Council of Trent. According to

²¹Maria Antónia Lopes, *Protecção social em Portugal na Idade Moderna*. Guia de estudo e investigação, Coimbra, Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, 2010, p. 107.

²²On the confraternities of the Modern Era in Europe, *cf.*, in addition to the aforementioned bibliography, Anastacio Alemán Illán, "Sociabilidad, muerte y religiosidad popular. Las cofradías de Murcia durante el siglo XVIII", *In: Carlos Álvarez Santaló; María Jesús Buxó Rey; Salvador Rodríguez Becerra (coords.), La religiosidad popular: vida y muerte - la imaginación religiosa*, vol. 2, Barcelona, Anthropos, 1989, p. 361-383. On the Portuguese confraternities, *cf.* Maria Fernanda Enes, "As confrarias do Santíssimo Sacramento e das Almas no âmbito da cultura barroca (um caso na Diocese de Angra)", *In: I Congresso Internacional do Barroco*. Actas, vol. 1, Porto, Reitoria da Universidade do Porto; Governo Civil do Porto, 1991, p. 275-289; Laurinda Abreu, "Confrarias e irmandades: a santificação do quotidiano", *In: Maria Helena Carvalho dos Santos (coord.), A Festa*. Comunicações apresentadas ao VIII Congresso Internacional, vol. 2, Lisboa, Sociedade Portuguesa de Estudos do Século XVIII: Universitária Editora, 1992, p. 429-442; Maria Marta Lobo de Araújo, "A Confraria de São Pedro da Gafanhoeira entre a aurora e o entardecer", *Cadernos do Noroeste*, Série História, vol. 15, n. 1-2, Braga, 2001, p. 359-378; *Idem*, *A Confraria do Santíssimo Sacramento do Pico de Regalados (1731-1780)*, Vila Verde, ATAHCA, 2001; *Idem*, "A ajuda aos pobres nas Confrarias de Nossa Senhora da Guia e do Espírito Santo de Ponte de Lima (séculos XVI a XIX)", *Bracara Augusta*, vol. 50, n. 104-105, Braga, 2001-2002, p. 441-468; *Idem*, *A Confraria de Nossa Senhora do Porto de Ave*. Um Itinerário sobre a Religiosidade Popular do Baixo Minho, Taíde, Póvoa de Lanhoso, Confraria de Nossa Senhora de Porto de Ave, 2006; Maria de Fátima Reis, *Santarém no tempo de D. João V*. Administração, Sociedade e Cultura, Lisboa, Colibri, 2004; Aníbal Barreira, "A Irmandade de Nossa Senhora do Terço e Caridade da Cidade do Porto - evolução da entrada de irmãos (1766-1927)", *Revista Portuguesa de História*, tomo 36, vol. 2, Coimbra, 2002-2003, p. 733-83; Vítor Paulo Pereira, *A Confraria do Divino Espírito Santo de Coura*. Origens, diáspora e expansão, [s.l.], [s.n.], 2009; Maria Ângela Beirante, *As antigas Confrarias da Vila de Cabeção: espelho da sua vida social e religiosa*, Lisboa, Colibri, 2011.

²³Isabel dos Guimarães Sá, "As confrarias e as misericórdias", *In: Nuno Gonçalo Monteiro; César de Oliveira, História dos municípios e do poder local*. Dos finais da Idade Média à União Europeia, Lisboa, Círculo de Leitores, 1995, p. 55-56.

²⁴Maria Antónia Lopes, *op cit.*, p. 105.

²⁵About the confraternities of the Rosary, mainly those related to the Dominicans, *cf.* Saul António Gomes, "Notas e documentos sobre as confrarias portuguesas entre o fim da Idade Média e o século XVII: o protagonismo dominicano de Santa Maria da Vitória", *Lusitania Sacra*, 2ª série, tomo 7, Lisboa, 1995, p. 89-150. Sobre as confrarias do Rosário em Espanha, *cf.* Tomás Antonio Mantecón Movellán, *Contrarreforma y religiosidad popular en Cantabria*. Las cofradías religiosas, Santander, Publicaciones de la Universidad de Cantabria, 1990, p. 55-57 *et passim*.

Mantecón Movellan, regardless of the invocation of the confraternities, one of the main reasons for such orders, along with the assistance to the poor and the services to the dead, was the reformation of morals by proposing new ways of life according to the conciliar decisions, favoring outer peace.²⁶ That is, confraternities were among the mechanisms of social disciplining incremented after the Council of Trent.²⁷

In the case of the fraternal orders of the Blessed Sacrament, they were an attempt to answer the theological issue raised by Protestants when they denied God's presence in the Eucharist. According to João Francisco Marques, they were the model of archconfraternity instituted in the Dominican convent of Santa Maria Sopra Minerva (Rome), approved by Paul III, in 1539, reflecting on Christianity.²⁸ Seeking the solemnization of worship in particular, these institutions invested a lot in liturgical celebrations linked to the mysteries of Christ, with the cycle of Easter becoming the most relevant. However, some of these confraternities were created earlier than, or very close to, these events, which shows the lack of influence from that reality.

In fact, the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament of the church of Santo Estêvão de Alfama, was established in around 1540, and, in June of that same year, it had obtained permission to place an alms box in the church.²⁹ In the same century, the same church hosted other confraternities: Immaculate Conception, Our Lady of Heaven, and Holy Spirit and Jesus.³⁰ A few years later, in 1551, Cristóvão Rodrigues de Oliveira announced that the parish hosted

²⁶Tomás Antonio Mantecón Movellán, *Contrarreforma y religiosidad popular en Cantabria*. Las cofradías religiosas, Santander, Publicaciones de la Universidad de Cantabria, 1990.

²⁷On this issue, cf. Winfried Schulze, "Il concetto di 'disciplinamento sociale nella prima Età Moderna' in Gerhard Oestreich", *Annali dell'Istituto Storico Italo-Germanico in Trento*, vol. 18, Bolonha, 1992, p. 371-411; Wolfgang Reinhard, "Disciplinamento sociale, confessionalizzazione, modernizzazione. Un discorso storiografico", In: Paolo Prodi; Carla Penuti, *Disciplina dell'Anima, Disciplina del Corpo e Disciplina della Società tra Medioevo ad Età Moderna*, Bolonha, Società Editrice Il Mulino, 1994, p. 101-123; Heinz Schilling, "Chiese confessionali e disciplinamento sociale. Un bilancio provvisorio della ricerca storica", In: *Ibidem*, p. 125-160; *Idem*, "L'Europa delle chiese e delle confessioni", In: Maria Antonietta Visceglia (dir.), *La radici storiche dell' Europa. L'Età Moderna*, Roma, Viella, 2007, p. 69-81; Adriano Prosperi, "Riforma cattolica, contrariforma, disciplinamento sociale", In: Gabriele De Rosa; Tullio Gregory (dirs.), *L'Età Moderna*, Roma; Bari, Laterza, 1994, p. 3-48; *Idem*, *Tribunali della coscienza*. Inquisitori, confessori, missionari, Turim, Einaudi, 1996; Federico Palomo, "'Disciplina christiana': apuntes historiográficos en torno a la disciplina y el disciplinamento social como categorías de la historia religiosa de la Alta Edad Moderna", *Cuadernos de Historia Moderna*, n. 18, Madrid, 1997, p. 119-136; Elena Brambilla, *La giustizia intollerante*. Inquisizione e Tribunali Confessionali in Europa (secoli IV-XVIII), Roma, Carocci Editore, 2006. With regard specifically to women, cf. María Luisa Candau Chacón, "Disciplinamiento católico e identidad de género. Mujeres, sensualidad y penitencia en la España Moderna", *Manuscrits*, vol. 25, Madrid, 2007, p. 21-237.

²⁸João Francisco Marques, "A renovação das práticas devocionais", In: Carlos Moreira de Azevedo (dir.), *História Religiosa de Portugal: Humanismo e Reforma*, vol. 2, Lisboa, Círculo de Leitores, 2000, p. 568-570. Also cf. Franquelim Neiva Soares, "A Confraria do Santíssimo Sacramento de S. Miguel das Marinhas", *Cadernos do Noroeste*, Série História, vol. 3, Braga, 2003, p. 223 *et passim*.

²⁹Isaías da Rosa Pereira, *Documentos para a história do patriarcado de Lisboa*. Visitações (1540-1561); Livro de Aniversários e Tombos de Bens (século XV) da Freguesia de Santo Estêvão de Alfama, Lisboa, Vida Católica, 1993, p. 12; 17.

³⁰The church of Santo Estêvão de Alfama, originally a temple of the 12th century, was the subject of reconstruction in 1316 and 1543, completely rebuilt in 1733, and partially rebuilt after the earthquake of 1755. In the thirties of the 19w, it was restored. Cf. Gustavo Couto, *Historia da Igreja de Santo Estevam de Lisboa*, Lisboa, Tipografia do Comércio, 1927, p. 10; Sidónio Miguel, *A Igreja e o Sítio de Santo Estêvão de Alfama*, Lisboa, [s.n.], 1939, p. 14; Portugal. Património Cultural. Available from: <<http://www.igespar.pt/pt/patrimonio/pesquisa/geral/patrimonioimovel/detail/70627>>. Accessed on: March 1st, 2012.

the confraternities of the Blessed Sacrament, Our Lady of the Conception, São Sebastião, and Santo Estêvão, which yielded 165 *cruzados*.³¹ Strengthening the care with their service, it is known that, on 24th March 1670, the obligations of vesting the chancel and vestry and of the three burning lamps, giving the brothers, wives, and sons 12 graves in the church, were passed on to the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament.³²

Let us focus on the material assistance³³ to the poor practiced by the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament of Santo Estêvão de Alfama, an open and sacramental confraternity, composed of lay and clergy, presumably with many people linked to maritime activities.³⁴ How many people, who, for what reasons and in what ways were the beneficiaries of charity, are some of the questions whose answers must be found. Concomitantly, our purpose is to observe the extent to which the Confraternity was engaged in the material assistance given to the underprivileged.

Let us first clarify the concepts of poor and poverty, according to the period. We may cite Rafael Bluteau, who, simply and realistically, classifies poor as whoever does not have the necessary means for sustenance, and uses the terms unfortunate, miserable and sad as synonyms.³⁵ Let us move on to the present and consider the theory propounded by Jean-Pierre Gutton, in a somewhat old, but still relevant, text. According to the author, poor people were those who lived only on their work because, at any time, they could become indigent. Given the total absence of social security, those who had no assets — that is, the overwhelming majority of the population — and also did not work were poor and, consequently, depended on private and institutional charity. The author did not forget to mention the mechanisms through which society produced and judged the poor, besides dwelling on what he termed as the vast vocabulary of misery. Finally, he chose to typify three categories of poor:

³¹Cristóvão Rodrigues de Oliveira, *Lisboa em 1551*. Sumário, apresentação e notas de José da Felicidade Alves, Lisboa, Livros Horizonte, 1987, p. 32-33.

³²Sidónio Miguel, *A Igreja e o Sítio de Santo Estêvão de Alfama*, Lisboa, [s.n.], 1939, p. 14.

³³Although spiritual care is very important in any confraternity, even this one, we opted to focus on the material assistance embodied in monetary donations to the detriment of all the spiritual support, including that linked to funerals and the care for the soul, issues that were left out of this study.

³⁴We were unable to ascertain the overwhelming majority of the activities in which the confreres were engaged. However, the random examples found for the chronology under study may allow the presumption of what was affirmed. On confraternities with high percentages of clergy, cf. Paula Alexandra de Carvalho Sobral Gomes, *Oficiais e confrades em Braga no Tempo de Pombal*. Contributos para o Estudo do Movimento e Organização Confraternal Bracarense no século XVIII, Master's dissertation, Universidade do Minho, Braga, 2002, p. 165 *et passim*. On confraternities with automatic inscription, cf. Paulo Drumond Braga, "Uma confraria da Inquisição: a Irmandade de São Pedro Mártir (breves notas)", *Arquipélago. História*, 2ª série, vol. 2, Ponta Delgada, 1997, p. 449-458; Ricardo Pessa de Oliveira, "Para o estudo da Irmandade de São Pedro Mártir no final do século XVIII", *In: IV Congresso Histórico de Guimarães "Do Absolutismo ao Liberalismo"*. Actas, vol. I, Guimarães, Câmara Municipal de Guimarães, 2009, p. 509-530.

³⁵Rafael Bluteau, *Vocabulário português e latino*, tomo 6, Lisboa, Oficina de Pascoal da Silva, 1720, p. 557. Data elaborated in other locations do not differ. Cf. Vittorio Beonio Brocchiero, "Miserabili e vagabondi", *In: Laura Barletta (dir.), Vita privata e scena pubblica. Vivere, abitare, viaggiare in Età Moderna*, Milão, Encyclomedia Publishers, 2010, p. 121-124.

the sick, the old, and the widower noting that most people in unprivileged situations were females.³⁶

Throughout history, the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament of Santo Estêvão de Alfama had several statutes, and all of them included sections on the assistance to be given to the underprivileged. In 1806, when the petitions for alms under study here started, the statutes of 1805 were in force, which were confirmed on 28th May, 1816, by King John VI.³⁷ On 18th November 1804, the Confraternity decided to convene to hear the new *compromisso*, which occurred on 9th December, as shown by their book of rulings, terms and proceedings.³⁸ These statutes came to replace those of August 1749, which was confirmed by the Cardinal Patriarch on 17th January 1750.³⁹ Regarding the aid granted to the poor, the descriptions in these two texts are different; however, in both cases, there is great concern with this issue.

The regiment of the 18th century dedicated chapter 23 to the assistance to the poor:

1. The true work of our good brothers: seek to assist one another in your miseries, for that greatly pleases Our Lord. As soon as a brother falls ill, the board will ensure that he is seen by an assignee, who will verify if he needs anything and will advise him to confess in sacrament, offering him the benefit of salvation.
2. If he is poor and has a prolonged disease, having no money to spend, the judge and the officers of the Confraternity will provide him with what is most necessary, seeking to assist him in the best way possible.
3. If any brother falls into poverty, in such way that he is not able to honor his annual payments, not only will the board relieve him of this obligation, but also assist him in any way it can. The same goes for the sisters and widows of our brothers — but only those living honestly as widows, because those who are married will not benefit from the Confraternity and its vows.
4. Also, if any brother is imprisoned for any honest cause, for which the Confraternity will not oppose to have him as a brother, and the Board is informed that any personal measures are required to see him free, it will order an assignee to do it with all care and for service to Our Lord, until he is effectively released from jail.⁴⁰

In chapter 9 of the statute of 1805 (Figure 1), we read:

³⁶Jean-Pierre Gutton, *La société et les pauvres. L'exemple de la généralité de Lyon (1534-1789)*, Paris, Société d'Édition Les Belles Lettres, 1971, p. 1-46. More recently, other authors have also dwelled on the conceptualization of poor and poverty. Regarding Portugal, cf. Maria Antónia Lopes, *Pobreza, assistência e controlo social. Coimbra (1750-1850)*, vol. 1, Viseu, Palimage Editores, Centro de História da Sociedade e da Cultura, 2000, p. 13-17 (on the subject of the poor in the discourse of the elites, cf. p. 35-163); *Idem*, *Protecção social em Portugal na Idade Moderna. Guia de estudo e investigação*, Coimbra, Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, 2010, p. 19-20. António Manuel Hespanha, *Imbecillitas. As bem-aventuranças da inferioridade nas sociedades de Antigo Regime*, São Paulo, Annablume, 2010, p. 233-234. For other locations, cf. Patricia Crawford, *Parents of poor children in England: 1580-1800*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 6-9.

³⁷Lisboa, Arquivo Histórico do Patriarcado de Lisboa (AHP), PLSB36/ISS/01/003.

³⁸*Ibidem*, PLSB36/ISS/03/004, fls. 43-43v.

³⁹*Ibidem*, PLSB36/ISS/01/002.

⁴⁰*Ibidem*.



Figure 1. Detail of water-colored page from Chapter 9 “On the Treasurer of the Poor, his obligations and annual payment”, from the 1805 statute. Lisboa, Arquivo Histórico do Patriarcado de Lisboa, PLSB36/ISS/01/003.

§1 The treasurer of the poor will have the obligation to evaluate the needs of poor brothers, especially when they ask for alms through a petition to the board, because he will know from the district president brother if the current need is true. §2 The treasurer will have the key to the poor brothers’ safe, where lies all the money that belongs to them, and this will not be opened without an act of the Leadership or a conference; he will collect from his brothers, from the board and the new ones, the payments belonging to this safe, as stated in the relevant chapters.⁴¹

Further ahead, in chapter 15, it is stated that:

⁴¹Lisboa, AHPL, PLSB36/ISS/01/003. Estatutos e Compromisso por onde se há de reger a Irmandade do Santíssimo Sacramento da Parrochial Igreja de Santo Estêvão desta Cidade de Lisboa. Feito no anno de 1805, chapter 9.

§5 If any brother falls into poverty and cannot honor the annual payments, not only he will be relieved from this obligation, but he will be assisted with anything that is within the Confraternity's power, and the same will occur with widow sisters living in that state.⁴²

What were the sources of revenue of the Confraternity and how much money was spent in helping the underprivileged? In compliance with the statutory requirements, the revenue came from the collection of the entry payments by the brothers, and the annual charges owned by members depending on their different positions, namely the judge would pay 3,200 réis; the two assistants of the judge, 1,600 (each); the first secretary, 1,600; the second, 1,200, as well as the directors; the treasurer of the poor, 800, as well as the brothers; and the stewards, 480 réis⁴³. The Confraternity had revenue and expenses ledgers of the Safe of the Poor, in which cash inflows and outflows were recorded.

Based on Table 1, we can see that, regarding assistance, the accounts of the Confraternity were always good. With the exception of the years 1818 and 1819, the balance was always positive and, between 1806 and 1820, the accumulated surplus amounted to 63,100 réis, given that we ignore what had accumulated before 1806. That is, the monetary help given to the poor brothers was not a problem, although we are unaware of any request that was turned down.

To understand the accounts of the Confraternity, let us examine the revenues and expenses and calculate the portion reserved for providing material assistance to the poor. As in similar institutions,⁴⁴ the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament of Santo Estêvão de Alfama had diversified sources of income: receiving member payments, sums obtained in charitable campaigns, legacies, amounts earned by performing baptisms, earned income, court proceedings and interest charged as a result of the practice of lending money. For its part, the overheads covered the amounts spent on mass celebrations, demands, works, the wages of assignees, wax, vestments, sermons, and, above all, the festivities of Holy Week and Corpus Christi.

⁴²Lisboa, AHPL, PLSB36/ISS/01/003. Estatutos e Compromisso por onde se há de reger a Irmandade do Santíssimo Sacramento da Parrochial Igreja de Santo Estêvão desta Cidade de Lisboa. Feito no anno de 1805, chapter 9.

⁴³*Ibidem*, chapter 15.

⁴⁴*Cf.*, for example, Pere Saborit Badenes, "Las cofradías. Estudio del significado de las cofradías a través de las del Alto Palencia", *Estudis. Revista de Historia Moderna*, n. 16, Valencia, 1990, p. 156; Belarmino Afonso, "Confrarias e mentalidade barroca", *In: I Congresso Internacional do Barroco*. Actas, vol. 1, Porto, Reitoria da Universidade do Porto; Governo Civil do Porto, 1991, p. 32-33; Maria Fernanda Enes, "As confrarias do Santíssimo Sacramento e das Almas no âmbito da cultura barroca (um caso na Diocese de Angra)", *In: Ibidem*, p. 285-294; Maria Marta Lobo de Araújo, *A Confraria do Santíssimo Sacramento do Pico de Regalados (1731-1780)*, Vila Verde, ATAHCA, 2001, p. 109-126; *Idem*, *A Confraria de Nossa Senhora do Porto de Ave*. Um Itinerário sobre a Religiosidade Popular do Baixo Minho, Taíde, Póvoa de Lanhoso, Confraria de Nossa Senhora de Porto de Ave, 2006, p. 135-215; Susana Goulart Costa, *Viver e morrer religiosamente*. Ilha de São Miguel, século XVIII, Ponta Delgada, Instituto Cultural de Ponta Delgada, 2007, p. 275; 285-287. In some confraternities in the rural areas of the island of São Miguel, the entry and annual charges were paid in grains.

Table 1. Income and expenses (in réis) of the Safe of the Poor (1806-1820)

Year	Revenue	Expenses	Balance	Accumulated balance
1806	30,930	29,800	1,130	-
1807	20,010	17,200	2,810	3,940
1808	23,610	18,800	4,810	8,750
1809	27,210	16,640	10,570	19,320
1810	29,210	20,120	9,090	28,410
1811	35,320	26,240	9,080	37,490
1812	34,290	24,720	9,570	47,060
1813	29,490	25,760	3,730	50,790
1814	30,610	29,920	690	51,480
1815	34,605	26,800	7,805	59,285
1816	40,285	28,560	11,725	71,010
1817	34,525	33,600	925	71,935
1818	22,045	30,240	-8,195	63,740
1819	11,600	12,400	-800	62,940
1820	17,280	17,120	160	63,100

Source: data from the revenue and expenses ledgers of the Safe of the Poor. Cf. Lisboa, Arquivo Histórico do Patriarcado de Lisboa, PLSB36/ISS/33/002, fls. 24-45, and Lisboa, Arquivo Histórico do Patriarcado de Lisboa, PLSB36/ISS/33/003, fls. 49-64.

It is noteworthy that the religious celebrations, in some confraternities, spent almost all of the revenues,⁴⁵ which did not happen in the Blessed Sacrament of Santo Estêvão de Alfama. It is known, for example, that in the years 1818–1820, spending on the celebration of the festivities of Holy Week, the most important feast in the liturgical calendar for the members, amounted to 104,250, 96,310, and 98,430 réis,⁴⁶ which corresponded, respectively, to 8.4, 12.7 and 13.6%, of the overheads. Even considering that other festive occasions, such as for the Corpus Christi, were also a cause for celebration, in which it spent about half or slightly more than half of what was expended on the festivities of Holy Week, and also knowing that the daily worship entailed spending on wax, olive oil, and a few pieces of silver or other non-precious metals that were bought or on cleaning objects and frequent arrangements, the money spent on the items that did not represent the entirety of the costs was very significant. Even so, there were still amounts meant for mass celebrations, preaching the sermon, the salaries of the walkers and the assignees; for the spending with demands, taxes on rustic and urban properties, washing clothes, acquisition of garments for the members and a large group of other sundry expenses often not discriminated (Table 2).

⁴⁵Laurinda Abreu, "Confrarias e irmandades em Setúbal: redes de sociabilidade e poder", *In: I Congresso Internacional do Barroco*. Actas, vol. 1, Porto, Reitoria da Universidade do Porto; Governo Civil do Porto, 1991, p. 433.

⁴⁶Lisboa, AHPL, PLSB36/ISS/38/docs. 326, 338 and 350.

Table 2. Expenses (in réis) incurred on the Holy Week celebrations of 1818

Goods and services	Sum
5 sermons on Sundays of Lent	24,000
2 sermons on Friday evening and on Easter Sunday	12,800
Collegiate Church	4,800
Myths in Palm Sunday	16,660
Palm branches	2,400
Shay for the preacher	1,840
4 branches of rosemary	1,260
Guards for the procession	8,000
Music with drums	7,360
Wine, sweets and liquor to the guards of the preachers	7,910
Sacristan	480
Sweepers	600
Crocks for Easter Saturday	6,220
Cleaning of the 4 lamps	3,200
Tips of the walker	720
2 dozen garments and 1 cross	1,200
1 ½ of garments of S. Vicente	600
Purple ornaments of Remédios	600
Transportation	1,300
Washing of church and other expenses stated in the list given by José Caetano	2,300
Total	104,250

Back to the revenue and overheads, if we add to them the revenues and expenditures of the safe of the poor confreres, we can calculate the percentage that the Confraternity reserved for the assistance of underprivileged members, and try to understand the extent to which material assistance was or was not a priority.

As can be seen in Table 3, the overall revenues were always higher than the expenditures, indicating surpluses every year. If we add the amounts of revenue and expenditures of the safe of the poor confreres to these figures, we can verify that these represented, on average, 2.6% of the total, with a minor annual fluctuation. Note, however, that these values fell significantly short of what was spent on the celebrations of Holy Week alone, which makes it clear that material assistance to the brothers was in no way a priority for the Confraternity.

The number of donation recipients varied greatly over the years, with people who were contemplated for several successive years. It was common that, after the death of a brother, his widow would become a sister, in many cases, being registered as poor in the books. While some only intended be fully or partially exempt from their payments — that is, annuities— others requested effective alms, situations that were also observed in other places.⁴⁷

⁴⁷Maria Marta Lobo de Araújo, "A ajuda aos pobres nas Confrarias de Nossa Senhora da Guia e do Espírito Santo de Ponte de Lima (séculos XVI a XIX)", *Bracara Augusta*, vol. 50, n. 104-105, Braga, 2001-2002, p. 441-468. For Spain, cf., for example, Miguel Luis López Muñoz, *La labor benéfico-social de las Cofradías en la Granada Moderna*. Granada, Universidade de Granada, 1994, p. 36-56.

Table 3. Income and expenses (in réis) of the Confraternity (1806-1820)

Year	Income	Expenses	Balance	Income from the Safe of the Poor	Expenses from the Safe of the Poor	Total income	Total expenses	Percentage of expenses with the poor
1806	1,265,925	841,915	424,010	30,930	29,800	1,296,855	871,715	3.4
1807	1,247,520	1,044,695	202,825	20,010	17,200	1,267,530	1,061,895	1.6
1808	1,076,395	883,450	192,945	23,610	18,800	1,100,005	902,250	2.1
1809	844,364	775,428	68,936	27,210	16,640	871,574	792,068	2.1
1810	916,810	755,595	161,215	29,210	20,120	946,020	775,715	2.6
1811	923,210	780,155	143,055	35,320	26,240	958,530	806,395	3.3
1812	1,011,621	760,550	251,071	34,290	24,720	1,045,911	785,270	3.1
1813	1,066,687	810,724	255,963	29,490	25,760	1,096,177	836,484	3.1
1814	1,066,273	848,785	217,488	30,610	29,920	1,096,883	878,705	3.4
1815	1,217,338	1,067,745	149,593	34,605	26,800	1,251,943	1,094,545	2.4
1816	1,061,303	921,907	139,396	40,285	28,560	1,101,588	950,467	3.0
1817	1,425,606	1,050,395	375,211	34,525	33,600	1,460,131	1,083,995	3.1
1818	1,446,791	1,236,314	210,477	22,045	30,240	1,468,836	1,266,554	2.4
1819	824,645	758,059	66,586	11,600	12,400	836,245	770,459	1.6
1820	738,576	719,616	18,960	17,280	17,120	755,856	736,736	2.3
Total	16,133,064	13,255,333	2,877,731	421,020	357,920	16,554,084	13,613,253	2.6

Source: prepared based on the income and expense ledgers of the Confraternity. Cf. Lisboa, Arquivo Histórico do Patriarcado de Lisboa, PLSB36/ISS/30/016, fls. 98-121; PLSB36/ISS/30/018, fls. 27-65 and PLSB36/ISS/30/017, fls. 83-116.

Between 1806 and 1820, there were 294 petitions submitted by the poor. Among them, nine referred to alms given to walkers,⁴⁸ 30 were nothing more than requests for being registered on the book of the poor and be relieved

⁴⁸During the study period, the walkers were José Caetano do Amaral and Bento José dos Santos. On May 12, 1816, it was decided that the walker José Caetano de Amaral would receive 40,000 réis as salary, and he would have the right to occupy a house, while Bento José dos Santos would receive 30,000. Since then, they would not ask the Board any allowances. They had an obligation to walk on weekdays and to share any tips received. The first had to accompany the Blessed Sacrament every time he went out, but the second was relieved of this task. He should only accompany the Blessed Sacrament at night, with the obligation of collecting money for charitable campaigns shared by both. Cf. Lisboa, AHPL, PLSB36/ISS/03/004, fl. 52. Soon after, the first walker, José Caetano do Amaral, was fired, "never to be able to serve this confraternity again for being found guilty in the whole chapter of our *compromisso* regarding walkers", according to the decision of July 1st, 1821. Cf. *Ibidem*, fl. 55. Now, in chapter 17 of the *compromisso*, concerning walkers, it is observed that it gave preference to men who could read and write, and also informed about the functions of walkers, "§2 required to continuously attend church with their garments, which will always bring the medal of the Blessed Sacrament; will have great care in grooming the altar or chapel where the Blessed Sacrament is placed, where all decorations shall be in their appropriate places and very clean, and they shall be well stored as soon the bells first ring for the Blessed Sacrament to leave; he shall be at the church to get everything ready when necessary, not having the slightest doubt or carelessness in this act; he shall walk ahead with some torches for any brother who accompanies him, or to replace any that breaks; if there are two walkers, the other shall remain in the church while the Blessed Sacrament is not stored away. §3 He shall obey the Board, doing everything commanded by it, report to the Board's prosecutor brother whatever is going on in the church, every day, both regarding baptized and any other action that the Board should participate in; if the position of first walker is left vacant, the second shall be given access to it, if he is able. §4 If he does not comply with his obligations, or presents any vice or misconduct, if it is not a serious offense, he shall be reprimanded by the Board's prosecutor on the first occurrence, and if a second occurs, the same prosecutor shall report it to the Board, which, knowing the truth, shall dismiss the walker; he shall occupy a house near the church and his annual salary shall be 30,600 réis; 24,000 réis, for the second walker". Cf. *Idem*, PLSB36/ISS/01/003. That is, in conclusion, the deposed walker, who was admitted on September 8, 1796, replacing Joaquim Pedro, deposed on September 4 of that year, because he failed to fulfill his obligations and met the same fate as his predecessor. Cf. *Ibidem*, PLSB36/ISS/03/004, fls. 36-36v.

of the obligatory payments, 30 consisted of a legacy that did not favor the confreres, and the remaining 225 effectively constituted requests for monetary assistance from members of the Confraternity. In such cases, the alms varied widely, from a minimum of 800 and a maximum of 6,400 réis. The average was at 1,450 réis per assistance. The 225 beneficiaries consisted of 180 women, all widows, and 45 men, three of whom were married. However, these were not 225 different people. In this case, this donation was given to 51 persons, and it is noteworthy that 31 received it more than once over the years. In this case, widows were once again benefitted, including eight who received 10–20 donations between 1806 and 1820. This type of information is corroborated by notes in the records.⁴⁹

The sample is rich and varied, both in petitions for exemption from payment and in those referring to a request to be registered as poor, or even those who effectively received monetary donations. Petitions from females were predominant, but there were also some by men.

*Religious celebrations, in some confraternities,
spent almost all of their revenue*

Thus, in 1810, a widow, Bernardina Teresa Rosa, claimed state of indigence to justify the delay in her payments and be registered as poor,⁵⁰ as did another widow, two years later, who justified her request saying she was very “alienated” after her husband’s death, citing the “hardships of the time”, a possible allusion to the aftermath of the French invasions.⁵¹ With regard to men, for example, in 1808, António Francisco, who married Teresa Rosa, requested exemption from payment claiming to have “in his house, some three beds with people suffering from grand mal seizure, meaning the supplicant barely had enough money to feed, let alone to treat such diseases, thus finding himself in such a situation”.⁵²

The year of 1814 was particularly good for donations. In fact, the legacy of João António Vitorino, which should be distributed among poor women (single, married or widowed), was included in the revenue of that year. It is not known if the legacy was left while João António Vitorino was alive or through a will, although the second hypothesis seems more plausible because some of the

⁴⁹Lisboa, AHPL, PLSB36/ISS/05.

⁵⁰*Ibidem*, PLSB36/ISS/39, doc. 45.

⁵¹*Ibidem*, doc. 46.

⁵²*Ibidem*, PLSB36/ISS/13, doc. 45.

petitioners alluded to the fact that the benefactor was dead.⁵³ The news of this donation spread swiftly, because 30 women applied for it, and at least 23 received 2,352 réis each, totaling 54,096 réis, or 70,560 réis, if all were contemplated. In these cases, it was common for women to request the benefit for themselves — claiming poverty, disease, or having maiden daughters or young sons — or ask alms for their maiden daughters. In most of the petitions — 25 widows, three single and two married women — there were allusions to the fact that they lived in retirement or had a commendable behavior, showing the parish priest as a witness. Let us bear in mind that among the characteristics that defined the dignified and honorable woman, were seriousness, circumspection, modesty, prudence and, of course, virginity, especially as the female honor depended on sexual behavior.⁵⁴ This explains the educational proposals designed for females throughout the Modern Era.⁵⁵ Moreover, as was the case of endowed women, as Maria Antonia Lopes wrote, the creation of dowries made the goals of the assistance visible, which was “not the prevention of economic destitution, but the prevention of moral destitution. If one acts financially to prevent economic hardship, is only because this leads to moral poverty.”⁵⁶ That is, the target was the strict control of women’s behavior through an economic mechanism, which was well internalized by all, even by part of those women who requested for alms. After all, the debate about the selection of the poor according to their behavior motivated interventions among both the laity and the churchmen.⁵⁷

Some examples make the situation clearer. The petition by Inácia Maria, widow of Jerónimo de Sousa, reads:

heard the news that the deceased João António Vitorino— God rest his soul in glory — left alms for the poor widows, and as the supplicant is poor and has three children, living so well on donations, finds herself on a circumstance in which she believes to be worthy of your compassion and to be one of the beneficiaries.⁵⁸

Antónia Joaquina wrote that:

the supplicant, due to her husband’s death, has been living in poverty, with no other income source than her work as a seamstress, insufficient to support herself, although she has been living with honesty in retirement, which is true according to the priest of this parish.⁵⁹

⁵³The Confraternity’s revenue ledgers contained only the legacy. Cf. Lisboa, AHPL, PLSB36/ISS/30/018, fl. 51v. The file does not contain testaments of that date.

⁵⁴Maria Antónia Lopes, *Mulheres, espaço e sociabilidade*. A transformação dos papéis femininos em Portugal à luz das fontes literárias (segunda metade do século XVIII), Lisboa, Livros Horizonte, 1989, p. 21-25; 174-178.

⁵⁵Isabel M. R. Mendes Drumond Braga, “A educação feminina em Portugal no século XVIII: tradição ou inovação”, In: _____, *Cultura, religião e quotidiano*. Portugal: século XVIII, Lisboa, Hugin, 2005, p. 135-163.

⁵⁶Maria Antónia Lopes, *Pobreza, assistência e controlo social*. Coimbra (1750-1850), vol. 1, Viseu, Palimage Editores, Centro de História da Sociedade e da Cultura, 2000, p. 805.

⁵⁷*Ibidem*, p. 74-78.

⁵⁸Lisboa, AHPL, PLSB36/ISS/13, doc. 128.

⁵⁹*Ibidem*, doc. 143.

Isabel Maria, another widow, said that she “has been living in helplessness, without anyone to help except for the benefactors who did her good, as the priest of the parish can attest”.⁶⁰ On the other hand, Maria Teodora, single and fatherless, declared that she lived “with honesty, in retirement and very poor, because, due to the French invasion, I lost everything I had, living out of the charity of those faithful to God”.⁶¹

Poverty motivated women and men to beg, mostly claiming widowhood, old age, illness, or the fact that they could not work for any other reason. If we take into account the typology of poor reported by Jean-Pierre Gutton⁶² (i.e., the sick, the old, and the widows), we can verify that in the period under study, we have a group of people who were widows, old and sick, and who did not have the capacity to undertake physical work, although it is true that, in most cases, more than one reason was cited for poverty or simply an explanation that they were poor, with no additional reasons to be in such a situation.

The number of donation recipients varied greatly over the years, with people who were contemplated for several successive years

Here are some examples. Among women claiming poverty without clarifying the reason, one said that “she was living in utmost poverty, without the means to feed and care for one 7-month-old son who is sick”.⁶³ Justina Teresa did not diverge from the same type of discourse:

due to her poverty and indigence, she has been assisted by the Board of this confraternity, she is in a miserable state, not only due to poverty, but also due to the very serious diseases she is suffering from, and is, continuously and notoriously, in great need.⁶⁴

In other cases, the widowhood was reported as the main cause of poverty. For example, Teresa da Piedade made it known that “due to the death of her husband, she was living in poverty, lacking the means to be able to sustain her and one deranged son”.⁶⁵ D. Josefa Barbosa stated:

[She] became really poor after the death of her husband, in the company of two sons, without any sources of income besides from her handiwork, from which she makes a living and that she is currently unable to perform the work due to an illness.⁶⁶

⁶⁰Lisboa, AHPL, PLSB36/ISS/13, doc. 148.

⁶¹*Ibidem*, doc. 149.

⁶²*Ibidem*, doc. 149.

⁶³*Ibidem*, doc. 1. On child diseases, cf. Hugh Cunningham, *Children & childhood in Western society since 1500*, Londres, Longman, 1995, p. 111-117; Patricia Crawford, *Parents of poor children in England: 1580-1800*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 127-129.

⁶⁴Lisboa, AHPL, doc. 2.

⁶⁵*Ibidem*, doc. 5.

⁶⁶*Ibidem*, doc. 114.

Tomásia Joaquina claimed the loss of her son-in-law: “she lives in poverty, with a blind daughter and minor grandchildren, without her son-in-law, who left nothing to support her financially”.⁶⁷

Widowhood, together with disease, was claimed by Joana Barbosa de Freitas:

who, due to the passing of her husband, became very poor and with no means to support herself other than the small handiwork she performed, which was not enough to fulfill all her needs, especially having been suffering from a severe heart illness and being unable to perform even small tasks.⁶⁸

Naturally, the disease itself was cited on a recurring basis. For example, Joana Freitas Barbosa Perpétua declared that “in addition to currently suffering from an illness, she also is experiencing great hardship as a result of poverty, living in retirement and in constant good behavior”,⁶⁹ whereas Maria Joaquina das Necessidades clarified that she “finds herself living in poverty along with one servant, and has been depending on those faithful to God to be able to feed herself”.⁷⁰ In addition:

[She] finds herself living in poverty and crippled in her bed, and recently found herself in danger of death, being blessed and anointed in the company of her servant, who, through the charity of those faithful to God, buys the little food she can to feed her, at great cost.⁷¹

And, in another petition:

[She] finds herself crippled in her bed for a few years now, and recently having felt a new stupor, expects to soon give account to God, but currently finds herself with no means to feed herself but the donations that those faithful to God can give to her.⁷²

Tomásia Joaquina, “in addition to being sick, has no means to support herself, living in the house of a married daughter, who takes care of her for the Love of God”.⁷³

Notice that, in one of the cases studied, the author of the petition bears the title of *dona* and lives with a servant, clearly indicating that she had been in a better situation before.

Women, when claiming old age, mostly preferred referring to the fact euphemistically. Joaquina Baptista said to be “of a certain age” and “bulging in years”,⁷⁴ whereas Maria Joaquina claimed to be of “hefty age”.⁷⁵ In any case,

⁶⁷Lisboa, AHPL, PLSB36/ISS/13, doc. 118.

⁶⁸*Ibidem*, doc. 166.

⁶⁹*Ibidem*, doc. 32.

⁷⁰*Ibidem*, doc. 33.

⁷¹*Ibidem*, doc. 51.

⁷²*Ibidem*, doc. 76.

⁷³*Ibidem*, doc. 165.

⁷⁴*Ibidem*, doc. 11 and doc. 35.

⁷⁵*Ibidem*, doc. 19.

Josefa Maria Campos claimed to be more than 80 years old,⁷⁶ and Josefa Maria made it clear she was a senior citizen of well over 90 years old.⁷⁷

In the male group, these situations were not very different. In 1813, Bernardo José Moreira reported that he needed alms because his wife was seriously ill and, therefore, he had no means to treat her.⁷⁸ In the same year, Simplício Xavier cited one of the basic principles of poverty, the link between lack of work and pauperism, “finding himself seriously ill with an internal disease that deprives him of working, and because of it, he has been spending large amounts, and because he lives on his newspaper and has no other means to support himself, he has no more money to spend.”⁷⁹

Also, in 1815, Joaquim José Franco was included in the category of poor for being old and “crippled”,⁸⁰ whereas José Pinto Malheiro was included on the basis of old age;⁸¹ clearly, both were poor because they could not work. The disease was also one of the causes cited by António Ferreira: “he finds himself very ill, blood pouring from his mouth, lacking the means to afford treatment”.⁸² In turn, Manuel Lourenço reported that “he has been suffering from a prolonged disease and his condition has been deteriorating because of it, without any means to support his wife and two younger daughters”,⁸³ whereas José Caetano de Amaral Andrade reported that “as he is currently bedridden with a malignant catarrhal, assisted by the doctor with many bottles of medicine, that he has no means to get treated for this disease”.⁸⁴

Sometimes the petitioners indicated their age: António José de Carvalho claimed to have 73 years, in 1816, in addition to being “broke”, unable to work due to old age and disease. In 1809, he stated that he served the Confraternity for 27 years and, in 1810, that he had been a brother for 48 years.⁸⁵ Joaquim Manuel Pereira also indicated his age, in this case, 83 years.⁸⁶

In short, the number of reasons is greater in women than in men. Petitions from men, in general, indicated disease or advanced age that prevented them from working, whereas those from women cited widowhood, old age, disease, and the existence of several minor children, some of them being sick. In many petitions, more than one cause was reported, while others only referred to poverty, without adducing the reasons for it.

Let us try to summarize the answers to the questions initially raised. Between 1806 and 1821, the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament of Santo Estêvão de

⁷⁶Lisboa, AHPL, PLSB36/ISS/13, doc. 93.

⁷⁷*Ibidem*, doc. 70.

⁷⁸*Ibidem*, doc. 107.

⁷⁹*Ibidem*, doc. 110.

⁸⁰*Ibidem*, doc. 176.

⁸¹*Ibidem*, doc. 177.

⁸²*Ibidem*, doc. 30.

⁸³*Ibidem*, doc. 86.

⁸⁴*Ibidem*, doc. 180.

⁸⁵*Ibidem*, docs. 60, 81 and 197.

⁸⁶*Ibidem*, doc. 243.

Alfama provided monetary assistance to 51 members, especially to the brothers' widows who abstained from getting remarried. The 51 beneficiaries earned 225 alms, which gives us an average of 4.4 donations per person. This fact, as was previously noted, shows serious disparities, as eight people received 10–20 donations during the years under study, having received monetary aid more than once per year.

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The documentation only provides us data on the confreres' occupational areas. However, we do not believe assuming these men were linked to maritime occupations, along with some clergymen and some serving military, to be far from the truth. Consequently, widows, even those dedicated to sewing or similar activities, upon losing their husbands — their most important source of income — were in extreme poverty, exacerbated by the fact that they are old, ill, or had several children to provide for. The existence of unmarried daughters, in these female hearths, was yet another concern often mentioned. Even if some confraternities had hospitals, and others granted endowments to the marriage of maidens, this was not the case with Santo Estêvão de Alfama, which limited material aid to monetary assistance. The exception was timely, in the year 1814, when one legacy intended for the needy women, whether or not sisters, married, single, or widowed, was distributed.

Poverty was, in this context as in many others, a mostly female prerogative. The alms distributed by the Confraternity to these 51 men and women were certainly very relevant to address the daily hardships of these poor people. However, we cannot help noticing that the Confraternity cared or at least invested far more in the worship and spiritual support than in the material support. The festivals celebrated during the Holy Week and on the day of Corpus Christi — alongside the services of the deceased and the masses for the souls of the deceased members and their wives — were, judging by the expenditures, that is, by the practice of effective assistance, the true foundations of this Confraternity, like so many others.