

Funerary Emblems in Manila and the Rise of Devotion to Jerónima de la Asunción, osc (1555-1630)*

Emblemas funerarios en Manila y el inicio de la devoción a Jerónima de la Asunción, osc (1555-1630)

Wei JIANG

<https://orcid.org/0009-0002-2497-2413>

Universität Zürich (Suiza)

Kunsthistorisches Institut

wei.jiang@khist.uzh.ch

Abstract

This paper examines a collection of 42 funerary emblems, or jeroglíficos in Spanish, crafted in honour of the Spanish Abbess Mother Jerónima de la Asunción (1555-1630), the foundress of the first female monastery in the Philippines in 1621. While the original copies of these emblems, comprising images, biblical references, and Spanish verses, have yet been discovered, detailed descriptions of each emblem provide valuable insights into the production of imagery in relation to local veneration of a potential saint. By situating these emblems within the broader context of emblematics in early modern Asia, this paper reveals their significance in various cultural events in the Spanish Philippines, including the celebrations of canonizations, royal exequies, literary competitions and other festivities. Moreover, this paper emphasizes the role of emblems as an efficient medium for cultivating devotion to Mother Jerónima not only among the Spanish devotees but potentially among non-Spanish-speaking Christians as well. In summary, this paper underscores the potential of emblematic studies in the Spanish Philippines, contrasting with their widespread use in early modern Iberian America primarily at noble exequies and as aids for catechism.

Keywords: *emblem, Jerónima de la Asunción, sanctity, the Philippines.*

Resumen

Este artículo examina una colección de 42 emblemas funerarios o jeroglíficos elaborados en honor a la abadesa española madre Jerónima de la Asunción (1555-1630), fundadora del primer monasterio femenino en Filipinas, en 1621. Aunque aún no se han descubierto las copias originales de estos emblemas, que comprenden imágenes, referencias bíblicas y versos,

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las descripciones detalladas de cada uno proporcionan valiosas ideas sobre la producción de imágenes en relación con la veneración local de una potencial santa. Al situar estos emblemas dentro del contexto más amplio de la emblemática en Asia, este artículo revela su importancia en varios acontecimientos culturales en las Filipinas, incluyendo las celebraciones de canonizaciones, exequias reales, certámenes literarios y otras festividades. Además, se enfatiza el papel de los emblemas como un medio eficiente para cultivar la devoción hacia la madre Jerónima no sólo entre los devotos españoles, sino también potencialmente entre los cristianos que no hablan español. En resumen, se resalta el potencial de los estudios emblemáticos en las Filipinas, en contraste con su uso generalizado en Iberoamérica, principalmente en las exequias nobles y como ayuda para el catecismo.

Palabras clave: emblema, Jerónima de la Asunción, santidad, las Filipinas.

DISPLAYING EMBLEMS IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY PHILIPPINES

In his introduction to the eighteenth volume of the Glasgow Emblem Studies series, the editor Pedro Germano Leal called into question the extent to which Andrea Alciato's conceptualisation of *emblemata* was relevant in the context of colonial America:

The “colonial emblems” were a dynamic entity: they travelled overseas, served as intermediaries between different cultures in “text and image dispute”, wavered between media and, in this process, suffered transformations in their own composition: at times, emblems lost or changed their *inscriptions*; other times, their *subscriptions*; occasionally, the *picturae* vanished; and even the “picture of signification” was subverted or syncretised. Amid so many twists, one may wonder —when does something stop being an emblem? After meditating upon this question and avoiding the creation of structural principles that study cases would easily contradict, I found myself in the “Paradox of Theseus”.¹

Leal hints at a philosophical dilemma on the permanence of beings throughout constant change: if each component of the ship of Theseus had been replaced in the course of time, as reported by Plutarch in his biography of the Greek hero, would that artefact still be the same ship or would

¹ Pedro Germano Leal, “To the New World, on the Ship of Theseus: An Introductory Essay to *Emblems in Colonial Ibero-America*”, in *Emblems in Colonial Ibero-America: To the New World on the Ship of Theseus*, ed. Pedro Germano Leal and Rubem Amaral Jr. (Glasgow: Stirling Maxwell Centre for the Study of Word/Image Cultures, 2017), 51.

it amount to something else?² This question is raised very appropriately by Germano Leal in an edited volume focusing on the viceroyalties of Mexico and Peru, as well as on Brazil. However, if emblems could differ widely across the Atlantic, what sort of modifications took place from one extreme to the other of the Pacific, an ocean often considered as a “Spanish Lake”?³ Would the American “colonial emblems”, often non derivative of European models and deeply embedded in local identities, be a model to understand the emblems produced in the Philippines, the only Spanish colony in Asia, subject to New Spain but *de facto* acting rather independently, thanks to its isolation from both the New and the Old Worlds?⁴

Not surprisingly, the ship of Theseus of Iberian emblematics has not yet anchored in Philippine studies. Until now, Philippine emblematics have remained a neglected field.⁵ In fact, neither the Philippines nor other Asian territories under Iberian influence witnessed a boom of emblematic culture comparable to that recorded in Iberian America, where emblems were also a major visual tool for evangelization.⁶ So far nothing is known about the circulation in the Philippines of emblem books such as Filippo Picinelli’s *Mundus Symbolicus* (1653) and its expanded editions.⁷

² The paradox is still debated by philosophers. See recently David Rose, “The Ship of Theseus Puzzle”, in *Oxford Studies in Experimental Philosophy*, eds. Tania Lombrozo, Joshua Knobe, and Shaun Nichols, vol. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 158-174, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198852407.003.0007>.

³ Oskar Hermann Khristian Spate, *The Spanish Lake* (London: Croom Helm, 1979).

⁴ See a brief description on the administration and government of the *Audiencia* of the Philippines in Antonio García-Abasolo, “Formación de las Indias Orientales españolas. Filipinas en el siglo XVI”, in *Historia general de Filipinas*, ed. Leoncio Cabrero (Madrid: Cultura Hispánica, 2000), 187-189. A recent synthesis of the human mobility between the Philippines and New Spain can be found in chapter 1 “Intertwined Histories in the Pacific” in Eva María Mehl, *Forced Migration in the Spanish Pacific World. From Mexico to the Philippines, 1765-1811* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 32-79, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316480120>.

⁵ In this article I translate *jeroglífico* as ‘emblem’. See the discussion on the Spanish term in Pedro Germano Leal, “On the Origins of Spanish Hieroglyphs. Part One”, *Imago. Revista de Emblemática y Cultura Visual*, no. 6 (2015): 27-38, <https://doi.org/10.7203/imago.6.4234>, and Pedro Germano Leal, “On the Origins of Spanish Hieroglyphs. Part Two”, *Imago. Revista de Emblemática y Cultura Visual*, no. 7 (2016): 25-32, <https://doi.org/10.7203/imago.7.4235>.

⁶ The most relevant studies to the Philippine emblematics are found in works on New Spain. Out of the large literature on the topic, here I just mention a recent chapter by Víctor Mínguez Cornelles, “Emblems for a Caesar, Hieroglyphs for an Empire. Emblem Culture in the Viceroyalty of New Spain”, in Germano Leal and Amaral Jr., *Emblems in Colonial Ibero-America...*, 55-93.

⁷ At least there is no reference to emblem books in the published *Catalogue of the Rare Books* of the University of Santo Tomas Library. See Ángel A. Aparicio, ed., *Catalogue of Rare*

The lack of attention paid so far to emblems in the Philippines becomes more intriguing when we consider those other types of artworks, often with a sacred function or carrying at least Christian motifs, that dominate the catalogues of oriental museums in the Philippines, Spain, and Mexico: ivory carvings, folded screens (*biombos*), wood sculptures, furniture, and porcelains.⁸ As the emblems displayed on special occasions are a form of ephemeral art, they hardly survived the passage of time; nevertheless, their traces remain in works of *literatura de sucesos*, in *fête* books, and in hagiographies.⁹ This last literary genre was a particularly favourable venue for recording descriptive emblems that produced an *ekphrasis* effect. In fact, the largest number of Philippine emblems, among all those that are known to us today, is found in the hagiographies on Mother Jerónima de la Asunción, osc (1555-1630), founder of the first female convent in Manila (see figures 1 and 2).¹⁰

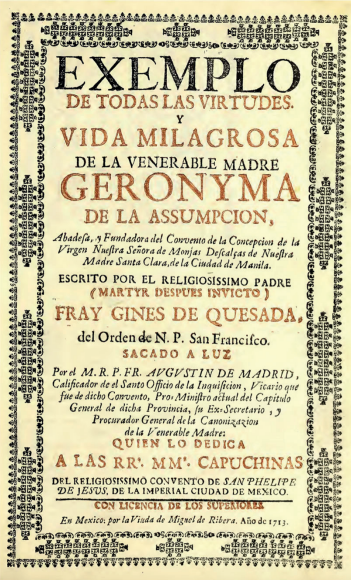
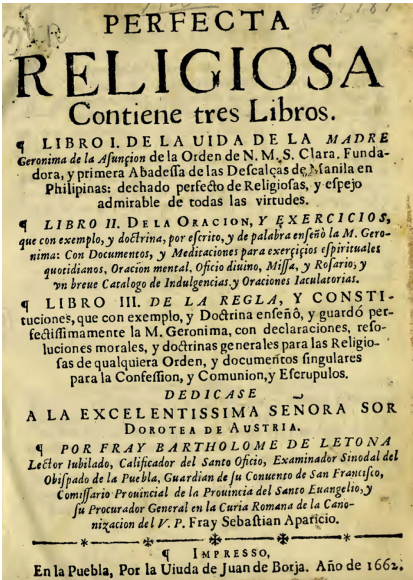
Up to 42 emblems were known to be displayed at the funeral rites (*honras*) dedicated to Mother Jerónima in 1630. Each consisted of an image (*pictura*), an inscription (*moto*), and in subscriptions (*letra*) (see figure 3).

Books. University of Santo Tomas Library, 4 vols. (Manila: University of Santo Tomas, Miguel de Benavides Library/Union Bank of the Philippines, 2001-2015).

⁸ By way of overview, fruitful discussions on trans-Pacific artistic change can be seen in Donna Pierce and Ronald Otsuka, eds., *Asia & Spanish America. Trans-Pacific Artistic & Cultural Exchange, 1500-1850: Papers from the 2006 Mayer Center Symposium at the Denver Art Museum* (Denver: Art Museum, 2009), as well as in Florina H. Capistrano-Baker, ed., *Transpacific Engagements: Trade, Translation, and Visual Culture of Entangled Empires (1565-1898)* (Makati City: Ayala Foundation, 2021). Particularly, on ivory carvings, see the pioneering studies by Regalado Trota Jose, published respectively in Regalado Trota Jose, *Images of Faith: Religious Ivory Carvings from the Philippines* (Pasadena: Pacific Asia Museum, 1990), and Regalado Trota Jose and Ramon N. Villegas, *Power, Faith, Image. Philippine Art in Ivory from the 16th to the 19th Century* (Makati City: Ayala Foundation, 2004). See also a recent study in Stephanie Porras, "Locating Hispano-Philippine Ivories", *Colonial Latin American Review* 29, no. 2 (April 2020): 256-291, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10609164.2020.1755940>.

⁹ See recent studies on festival books in Europe, mentioned by Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, "The Early Modern Festival Book. Function and Form", in *Europa Triumphans: Court and Civic Festivals in Early Modern Europe*, eds. J. R. Mulryne, Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, and Margaret Shewring (London: Ashgate, 2004), 3 and 14-15.

¹⁰ A total of 28 emblems were first mentioned in Jerónima's first published biography in Bartholomé de Letona, *Perfecta Religiosa...* (Puebla: por la viuda de Juan de Borja, 1662), 61v-66r, and then a group of 42 emblems was described in the second biography in Ginés de Quesada, *Exemplo de todas las virtudes...* (Mexico: por la viuda de Miguel de Ribera, 1713), 618-626. The set of 42 emblems was reprinted in the official "Position" on the life and virtues of Mother Jerónima, undertaken by the Congregatio de Causis Sanctorum Prot. 1720 (Congregation for the Causes of Saints) in *Manilen, Beatificationis et Canonizationis Ven. Servae Dei Sororis Hieronymae ab Assumptione (in saec. H. Yáñez)... Positio super vita et virtutibus* (Rome: no publisher, 1991), 613-620.



Figures 1 and 2. Cover pages of Bartholomé de Letona, *Perfecta Religiosa...* (Puebla: por la viuda de Juan de Borja, 1662) [left] and Ginés de Quesada, *Exemplo de todas las virtudes...* (Mexico: por la viuda de Miguel de Ribera, 1713) [right]. Courtesy of John Carter Brown Library

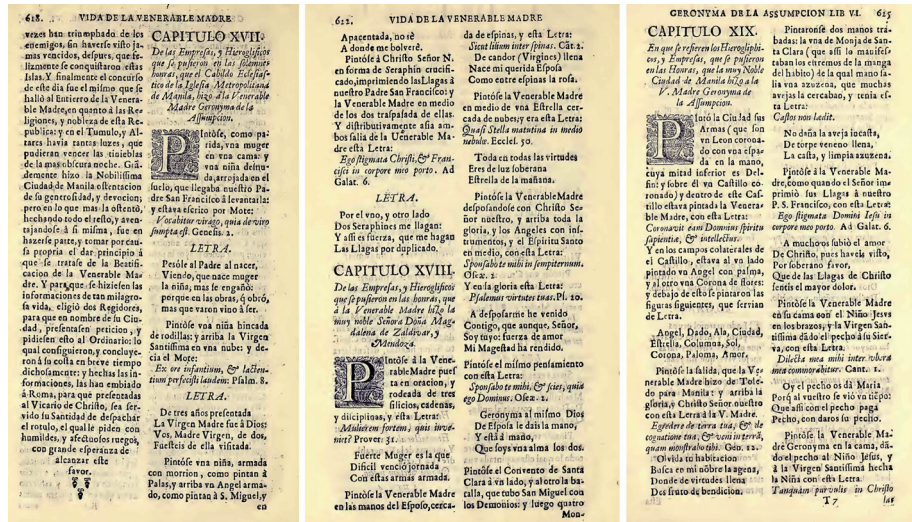


Figure 3. Chapters that contain emblems dedicated to Mother Jerónima's funeral, Ginés de Quesada, *Exemplo de todas las virtudes...* (Mexico: por la viuda de Miguel de Ribera, 1713), 618, 622, 625. Courtesy of John Carter Brown Library

This article aims at a preliminary discussion on the emblems dedicated to Mother Jerónima, to understand the role played by emblematic culture as a visual tool for the promotion of sanctity. Emblems are considered here as part of social practices and community-binding events. Before discussing the emblems for Mother Jerónima, it is useful to look at all the Philippine emblems that, thanks to descriptions in early printed books, are currently known to us. In this respect, a first research aid was offered by the philippinologist and bibliographer Wenceslao E. Retana, whose systematic study on the Philippine theatre from the seventeenth to the late nineteenth centuries, is an access point to one of the realms in which emblems were produced.¹¹ Furthermore, we need to refer to the scholarship by the cultural historian Doreen G. Fernández and the studies on the *Fiesta filipina*, exemplified in particular by Reinhard Wendt's social-anthropological overview on festivities in colonial Philippines.¹² Retana, Fernández and Wendt's works highlighted the visual and textual dimensions of the festival culture. It was, however, particularly thanks to the recent contribution from literary historians based at the Universidad de Navarra, that emblematics was fruitfully distilled from the various literary expressions originating in the Philippines, with special reference to festival books published in Manila during the seventeenth century.¹³

During the first half of the seventeenth century, emblems were profusely seen at festivals held on the occasion of beatifications and canonizations. In particular, the proclamation of five new saints in 1622 gave momentum to the social cultivation of sanctity across Catholic Asia, by the means of ceremonial installations, literary compositions, and newly printed publications, devoted especially to the first two Jesuit saints,

¹¹ Wenceslao Emilio Retana, *Noticias histórico-bibliográficas de el [sic] teatro en Filipinas desde sus orígenes hasta 1898* (Madrid: Librería General de Victoriano Suárez, 1909).

¹² Doreen G. Fernández, "Pompas y Solemnidades. Church Celebrations in Spanish Manila and the Native Theater", *Philippine Studies* 36, no. 4 (1988): 403-426; Reinhard Wendt, *Fiesta filipina. Koloniale Kultur zwischen Imperialismus und neuer Identität* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach, 1997).

¹³ See the project coordinated by Miguel Zugasti, "Teatro, fiesta y cultura visual en la monarquía hispánica (ss. XVI-XVIII)", in *Teatro, Literatura y Cultura Visual (TriviUN)*, <https://www.unav.edu/web/facultad-de-filosofia-y-letras/profesores-e-investigacion/grupos-y-centros-de-investigacion/triviun>, accessed May 17, 2024. Particularly promising is the attempt of relating the Philippine emblematics with sacred oratory in José Javier Azanza López and Silvia Cazalla Canto, "Arte, emblemática y oratoria sagrada en un festejo filipino del siglo XVII", in *El tablado, la calle, la fiesta teatral en el Siglo de Oro*, ed. Miguel Zugasti and Ana Zúñiga Lacruz (Castelló de la Plana: Servei de Comunicació i Publicacions, 2021), 33-59.

Ignatius of Loyola and Francis Xavier. A typical example of the *literatura de sucesos* produced on such occasions is the *Traça da Pompa Triumfal... (Account of the triumphal pomp)*, published in Goa in 1624.¹⁴ This booklet described the allegorical figures that were paraded on seven triumphal chariots in the capital of Portuguese India to celebrate the canonization of Loyola and Xavier, hence giving permanence to an otherwise evanescent festival. Quite interestingly, as observed by María Gabriela Torres Olleta, the *Traça...* qualifies systematically the allegories represented on the chariots as “hieroglyphs”, hinting at the symbolic richness that could be perceived in them.¹⁵

Emblems were used also in the ceremonies in honour of Loyola and Xavier, held in Manila in 1623. If Xavier, who had been an apostle of Goa and other parts of South India, had not evangelized the Philippines, nonetheless apocryphal accounts were produced on an alleged passage of his through Mindanao and other islands of the archipelago.¹⁶ The ceremony held in Manila coincided with the ongoing campaign for the beatification of the 26 Nagasaki martyrs of 1597. Hence, in the Jesuit Church in *Intramuros*, icons of Xavier were paired with vivid depictions of the martyrs of Japan. A combination of words and images could be observed throughout the celebration, featuring a poetic competition (*certamen poético*), theatrical performances of praise (*alabanzas*) staged by the students of the Jesuit and the Dominican colleges in Manila, as well as flags made of colourful taffeta, presented by the Dominicans to the Jesuit church, with emblems and poems in honour of Xavier.¹⁷ Such emblems employed a variety of languages, such as Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Spanish,

¹⁴ The text was reproduced as a facsimile in Georg Schurhammer, *Gesammelte Studien*, ed. László Szilas, vol. 4, *Varia I Anhänge* (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu; Lisbon: Centro de Estudos Históricos Ultramarinos, 1965), tables xxvii-xli.

¹⁵ María Gabriela Torres Olleta, *Redes iconográficas. San Francisco Javier en la cultura visual del Barroco* (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2009), 373.

¹⁶ A conclusive debunking of the legends on the Philippines apostolate of Xavier is offered by Georg Schurhammer, SJ, in his *Francis Xavier. His Life His Times*, trans. M. Joseph Costelloe, vol. 4, *Japan and China 1549-1552* (Rome: Jesuit Historical Institute, 1982), 188-190, fn. 260. Nonetheless, there are authors who still consider a passage by Xavier through some part of the Philippines, such as Peter Schreurs, “Did Saint Francis Xavier Come to Mindanao?”, *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society* 22, no. 1 (March 1994): 16-22, accessed May 20, 2024, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/29792140>.

¹⁷ Diego de Oña, *Labor evangélica. Ministerios apostólicos de los obreros de la Compañía de Jesús. Segunda parte (ca. 1701)*, ed. Alexandre Coello de la Rosa and Verónica Peña Filiu (Madrid: Sílex, 2020), 159.

Italian, Portuguese, Basque (*lengua viscaína*), Japanese, Tagalog, and Visayan, the last three of which suggest a local audience and readership, both of immigrants and natives.¹⁸

The dialectic between Jesuit and Dominican initiatives, already visible in the celebration of Loyola and Xavier in 1623, contributed to the growth of an emblematic culture in the Philippines. During the second half of the seventeenth century, the two most prominent educational institutions of Manila —namely the Jesuit college of San José and the Dominican one of Santo Tomás— competed in exercises of ingenuity and wit (*ingenio y agudeza*) on the occasion of canonizations. Like playing on a “chessboard” (*tablero de ajedrez*), as the historian José Javier Azanza López nicely put it, the two orders engaged in producing the best poetry, literary games, and theatrical works in honour of the newly proclaimed saints of their respective order.¹⁹

On 12 April 1671, Pope Clement X proclaimed five new saints, among whom Francisco de Borja (1510-1572) was a former general of the Society of Jesus, while Rosa de Lima (1586-1617) and the Spanish missionary Luis Beltrán (1526-1581) belonged to the Dominican family. Furthermore, three beatifications had an echo in the seventeenth-century Philippines: the Jesuit novice Stanislaus Kostka (1550-1568) was beatified in 1605, whereas the great Dominican theologian Albertus Magnus (*ca.* 1200-1280) achieved that honour in 1622 and the Dominican nun Margherita di Savoia (1390-1464) in 1669. As an example of the way in which emblems were used in the celebrations held in Manila in honour of these new blessed and saints, we can consider the festivities for the canonization of Francisco de Borja. The Jesuits mounted an artificial façade in front of their church of Saint Ignatius, upon which they hung ingenious emblems and a variety of painted cards. The Jesuit authors of a festival book praised this spectacular installation, of such eloquence that, so to say, even the stones were made to speak.²⁰ It is for this reason that the historian Azanza López refers to this sort of ephemeral artwork as “speaking

¹⁸ Pedro Murillo Velarde, *Historia de la provincia de Philipinas de la Compañía de Jesus... desde el año de 1616 hasta el de 1716* (Manila: D. Nicolás de la Cruz Bagay, 1749), 23v.

¹⁹ José Javier Azanza López, “Teatro, poética y oratoria sagrada: la fiesta como tablero de ajedrez entre jesuitas y dominicos (Manila, s. xvii)”, *Rilce. Revista de Filología Hispánica* 37, no. 2 (June 2021): 451-482, <https://doi.org/10.15581/008.37.2.451-82>.

²⁰ See José Sánchez del Castellar, *Descripción festiua y verdadera relación...* (Manila: Imprenta de la Compañía de Jesús, 1674), 2v.

walls” (*fachadas parlantes*), as they were visual devices that solemnized the celebrations as if they were voices.²¹

The Dominican celebrations were also highly productive in terms of poetry, school theatre, and literary enigmas.²² Following the festivities held in 1672 in honour of Luis Beltrán and Rosa de Lima, the Convent of Santo Domingo in Manila celebrated in 1676 two other Dominicans beatified in 1672, namely Pope Pius V (1504-1572) and the Umbrian friar Giacomo Bianconi (1220-1301). Quite strangely, on that occasion the tertiary Dominican Margherita da Città di Castello (1287-1320) was also celebrated, who had been beatified already in 1609. The celebration held in 1676 was described by Felipe Pardo, commissioner of the Holy Office of New Spain in Manila and Dominican Provincial, in a book entitled *Sagrada fiesta...*²³ The activities covered a wide range, from liturgy to theatre, encompassing solemn masses, sermons, contests of poetry, polyphonic devotional songs (*villancicos*), theatrical preludes (*loas*) and intervals (*entremés*), courtly dances (*saraos*), and hagiographic comedies, often involving multi-ethnic participants.²⁴ Felipe Pardo recorded in his book also 14 emblems, or “enigmas”, fixed onto silk cloth and hung on walls, during the three-day festival in Manila. These emblems, containing an image and inscription (*mote*), were interactive, inasmuch as prizes were offered to those who would be

²¹ Azanza López, “Teatro, poética y oratoria sagrada...”, 459. Quotation from Sánchez del Castellar, *Descripción festiva*, 2v., “las piedras han de solemnizar a voces”.

²² See an analysis on a piece of school theatre (*teatro escolar*) composed in Manila, entitled *Loa a las fiestas de los beatos Pio V, Diego de Bebaña y Margarita de Castello* in Miguel Zugasti, “Una loa en Filipinas a la fiesta de tres beatos dominicos (Manila, 1677)”, *Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana* 44, no. 88 (2018): 55-88.

²³ Felipe Pardo, OP, *Sagrada fiesta ...* (Manila: por el Capitán D. Gaspar de los Reyes, 1677). There are two copies available, one in the National Library of the Philippines, and another in the Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg (the one which I use). See a number of studies on the different genres of works in that book in Miguel Zugasti, “Dos ejemplos del teatro cómico breve hispanofilipino: el *Entremés del envidioso* y el *Sarao agitanado entre ocho hombres y mujeres* (Manila, 1677)”, *América sin Nombre*, no. 21 (December 2016): 141-165, <https://doi.org/10.14198/AMESN.2016.21.11>; Zugasti, “Una loa en Filipinas...”, and Azanza López, “Teatro, poética y oratoria sagrada...”, and José Javier Azanza López, “Catorce enigmas para un festejo filipino (Manila, 1676)”, in *Identidades y redes culturales. V Congreso Internacional Barroco Iberoamericano* (Granada: Editorial Universidad de Granada, 2021), 43-54 .

²⁴ José Javier Azanza López, “‘Fueron teatro las calles de Manila.’ Máscaras y loas como expresión multiétnica y multicultural (ss. XVII-XIX)”, in *No sólo fiesta. Estudios sobre el teatro hispánico de los siglos de oro*, ed. Iñaki Pérez-Ibáñez and Miguel Zugasti (New York: Peter Lang, 2022), 39-53.; Silvia Cazalla Canto, “‘Comenzaron a ser teatro las calles de Manila’: Máscaras como reflejo del poder de la monarquía hispana (ss. XVII-XVIII)”, in Pérez-Ibáñez and Zugasti, *No sólo fiesta...*, 69-81.

able to decipher their enigmas.²⁵ These visual components of those emblems included relatively clear images such as skeletons, philosophers and sirens, but also puzzling symbols such as a pair of fish, a person hanging in gallows, or a single number like “156”.²⁶

Emblems were also employed in exequies in the Philippine islands, as much as in Spain and New Spain. An example were the commemorations of Baltasar Carlos, Prince of Asturias, who died in Zaragoza, in October 1646. Due to the distance from Spain and the Dutch occupation of Cavite (near Manila), the official news of the death of the prince reached the Philippines only in 1648. The son of King Felipe IV and Queen Isabel of Bourbon was then commemorated in Manila with a solemn celebration.²⁷ A festival book of that exequy, entitled *Aparato funebre, y real pyra de honor*, recorded the ceremonial apparatus, consisting of allegorical decorations, orations, sonnets (*sonetos*), epigrams, epitaphs, anagrams, and poems with eight-line or ten-line stanzas (*octavas* and *décimas*), that were hung throughout the royal chapel of the cathedral of Manila.²⁸ In particular, the late prince was commemorated with six allegorical emblems. One of them showed Death driving the sun chariot around the globe. Seated in the chariot, instead of sun rays, the prince spread the fragrance of his virtues as well as his advances in learning.²⁹ The representation corresponded to an anagram: the letters of *In hoc curru solis dat balsama* (“In this sun’s chariot [he] gives balms”) could be rearranged into the complete Latin name of the Prince, *Baltasar, Carolus, Dominicus*.

To summarise, the Philippine emblems studied above had three characteristic features.

First, they were drawn and written on paper and hung on a cloth. Even though we lack specific evidence, we cannot rule out a circulation or production of some sort of printed emblems in the Philippines. Such a

²⁵ These emblems have been recently studied in Azanza López, “Catorce enigmas...”. See the list of emblems in Pardo, *Sagrada fiesta...*, 9r-12v. Pardo explains the use of those emblems on fol. 9r.

²⁶ Pardo, *Sagrada fiesta...*, 10r-10v.

²⁷ Antonio Alvar Ezquerro, “Un temprano testimonio de la presencia de la poesía latina en Manila: las exequias fúnebres en honor del príncipe Baltasar Carlos de 1648”, *Indagación. Revista de Historia y Arte* 4 (1999): 15-16.

²⁸ A reprint of this rare book was included in Wenceslao Emilio Retana, ed., *Archivo del bibliófilo filipino. Recopilación de documentos históricos, científicos, literarios y políticos y estudios bibliográficos* (Madrid: Vda. de M. Minuesa de los Ríos, 1895), t. 2, 105-158.

²⁹ Retana, *Archivo del bibliófilo filipino...*, 150.

possibility must be considered because already in the early seventeenth century, the Jesuit missionaries in China made use of printed emblems for doctrinal explanation. By then, copperplate engravings, including emblems, were widely circulated among the Jesuit missions. A diary published in 1631 by a Christian *litteratus* called Stephanus Li Jiubiao (李九標), referred to two sets of images shown to him by the Lithuanian Jesuit missionary Andrzej Rudomina (1596-1632). According to Eugenio Menegon, they can be identified with two series of Flemish emblems.³⁰ Hence, we may wonder whether this is a clue to a much wider circulation of printed emblems in Asia, encompassing not only China but also the Philippines.

Secondly, the available evidence suggests that emblems were primarily displayed in the Philippines in festivities celebrating beatifications and canonizations, as well as on funeral rites. Contrary to what is attested in Spanish America, the Philippine emblems were neither catechetical tools for the conversion of the natives, nor devotional images for the private devotions of the Christians, nor were they deemed to possess miraculous powers.

Thirdly, the images drawn on those emblems were in general of allegorical character. In the case of the sun-chariot emblem produced for the exequy of prince Baltasar Carlos, there was a combination of allegory with the depiction of a concrete individual.

On such a general background, the 42 emblems displayed at the funeral rites of Mother Jerónima in 1631 provide new insights into Philippine emblematics. Being an unproclaimed saint, Mother Jerónima was not entitled to receive any of the triumphant pomps used for celebrating successful saints or commemorating the death of members of the royal family. According to the rules *de non cultu* imposed by Urban VIII in the undertaking of canonization causes, it was not allowed either to place images of Jerónima on altars, or to address any act of worship towards them. With these restrictions, the figures drawn on the emblems in her likeness were among the very first images of Mother Jerónima through which the people of Manila could see her in a public and sacred space, in addition to the

³⁰ Eugenio Menegon convincingly identified the images mentioned in this Chinese account with the *Cor Jesu amanti sacrum* series, originally engraved in Antwerp by Anton II Wierix, and the images in Jan David, S. J.'s *Typus occasionis in quo receptae commoda neglectae verò incommoda, personato schemate proponuntur* (Antwerp, 1603). Eugenio Menegon, "Jesuit Emblematica in China. The Use of European Allegorical Images in Flemish Engravings Described in the *Kouduo Richao* (ca. 1640)", *Monumenta Serica* 55 (2007): 396 and 412.

effigies, made at her sick bed immediately after her death, that were rather destined for private devotion, as we will see soon.

“HONOURS” FOR JERÓNIMA

On the night of 21 October 1630 Mother Jerónima de la Asunción, abbess of Saint Clare’s convent of Manila, made her last confession and received the Extreme Unction. While other friars left the sisters’ convent, Friar Ginés de Quesada (d. 1634, Osaka), lecturer of Theology at the Convent of Saint Francis of Manila, remained with the moribund nun.³¹ Even though Friar Ginés came to know Mother Jerónima only one month and a half before, as spiritual director he assisted her in the final passage of her life.³² The seventy-five year old nun had survived the fiercest storms in her voyage from Toledo to Manila in 1620-1621, and underwent years of mortifications and ascetic practices. Yet now she realised that her chronic diseases, like lethal “spears”, were about to pierce her body to death. Mother Jerónima requested the nuns, who had all gathered at her bedside, to spread ashes on the floor in the shape of a cross, and then to place her body upon it. Even in the very last hours of her life, the Toledan nun refused to let her body be rested on anything that could provide some comfort, be it even a mat of woven palm leaves. Once laid on the ground, Jerónima adjusted her torso and arms to the shape of the ash-made cross, while the nuns recited the last Seven Words of Jesus. The nuns chanted the Creed and continued their prayers until the words *veni electa mea* (Come, my chosen one) from the liturgical antiphon of the Common of the Virgins. At that point, at 4 am on 22 October 1630, the abbess completed her terrestrial transit.³³

³¹ Quesada arrived in Manila in 1621 and left for Osaka in 1632, where he died on 6 July 1634. See Quesada’s biography in Eusebio Gómez Platero, *Catálogo biográfico de los religiosos franciscanos de la Provincia de San Gregorio Magno de Filipinas desde 1577 en que llegaron los primeros á Manila hasta los de nuestros días* (Manila: Imprenta del Real Colegio de Santo Tomás, 1880), 201-202; Antonio Sánchez Maurandi, *Fr. Ginés Quesada. Gloria franciscano-muleña* (Murcia: La Verdad, 1927).

³² Ginés de Quesada gave testimony to the Bishop of Cebú, Pedro de Arce, OSA, acting Administrator of Manila, *sede vacante*, on 28 May 1631. Archivio Apostolico Vaticano (henceforward, AAV), *Congregazione dei Riti*, Processus 1654, f. 412v.

³³ A few months after the death of Jerónima, the nuns at Saint Clare’s Convent sat in interrogations organised by the bishop Arce, giving detailed information on the death of the abbess. Based on personal experience and the nuns’ verbal descriptions, both authors of

The night-long chanting from Saint Clare's convent, located in the walled city (*Intramuros*) of Manila, reached the ears of clerics and citizens living in that neighbourhood, informing them about the death of Mother Jerónima, whose reputation as a living saint had long been acknowledged by the locals.³⁴ The Franciscan order had anticipated the coming of a large number of visitors to the convent for the veneration of her body. To avoid potential damage and chaos that uncontrollable crowds might cause to the body and to the religious house, the friars and the Chapter of the Cathedral (*cabildo eclesiástico*) made an extraordinary decision, recalling one of the narrative scenes depicted by an anonymous master of the early fourteenth century in the Basilica of Santa Chiara, in Assisi. It shows how Saint Clare's body was transported from the convent of San Damiano to that of San Giorgio in that same city during the feast of her canonization.³⁵ Following that model, the Franciscans in Manila celebrated the funeral mass in the church and then held a solemn procession, carrying Mother Jerónima's body publicly across the main streets of the city. Devotees came to kiss her hands and habit, and also tried to touch her rosary, loudly acclaiming "Holy Mother" (*Santa Madre*). To prevent the exceedingly fervent relic-seekers from taking anything further from her body, more guards came to secure the procession. The procession lasted from early morning until afternoon, when the coffin was returned and placed under the altar of the church of the Holy Conception, attached to the convent.

The closest companions of Mother Jerónima carefully observed the unusual physiological changes occurring in her dead body.³⁶ Not only it did

Jerónima's *vitæ* dedicated a chapter to Jerónima's transit. See Ginés de Quesada, *Exemplo de todas las virtudes...*, 606-607; Bartholomé de Letona, *Perfecta 5 Religiosa...*, 58v-60v.

³⁴ Upon arrival in Manila, the first Saint Clare nuns resided in the house of a lay woman, Ana de Vera, located in Sampaloc, on the northern side of the river Pasig. The construction of a new convent under royal patronage started in 1624. See Pedro Luengo, *The Convents of Manila. Globalized Architecture during the Iberian Union* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2018), 122-123; María Lourdes Díaz-Trechuelo Spinola, *Arquitectura española en Filipinas, 1565-1800* (Sevilla: Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos, 1959), 261-263.

³⁵ See a recent analysis on these fragmentary frescoes in Nirit Ben-Aryeh Debby, *The Cult of St Clare of Assisi in Early Modern Italy* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2017), 35. The persistence of this motif, namely the exhibition of Saint Clare's body to public veneration, is attested by an engraving in the album on Saint Clare's life, included in Henricus Sedulius, *Icones Sanctæ Claræ B. Francisci Assisiatis primegeniæ discipulæ vitam, miracula, mortem repræsentantes* (Antwerp: Jan van Meurs, 1630), 30.

³⁶ Leonor de San Francisco gave testimony to the Bishop of Cebú, Pedro de Arce, on 4 April 1631, AAV, *Congregazione dei Riti*, Processus, 1654, fs. 519r-762v, especially 759v. For

not show any signs of corruption, but even her facial muscles remained as soft as in life. The latter observation was made around 7 am, three hours after her transit, when two painters came to the convent. They were commissioned by the governor of Manila, don Juan Niño de Tavera, and by a certain householder or homeowner (*vecino*) to make portraits of Mother Jerónima.³⁷ Sor Leonor de San Francisco (1583-1651) regretted that the two artists could not paint the intimate joy that had enlightened the eyes of the abbess, as her eyelids were closed. However, all of a sudden and in a miraculous way, the eyes opened up and the mouth, which had been slightly open until then, closed itself, so that the painters were amazed and filled with a sense of humbleness.³⁸

Unfortunately, none of these first paintings have survived, nor has any reference to the existence of her death mask been found yet. How these early drawings influenced the production of effigies, or true images of Jerónima, for instance the ones made in the early eighteenth century, in the form of engravings, still requires more research.³⁹

Let us observe the “true portrait” (*verdadero retrato*) engraved by the Mexican painter Joseph Mota in 1712 (see figure 4), which appeared in *Exemplo de todas las virtudes...*, whose first edition was published in Mexico the following year.⁴⁰ It captured Mother Jerónima in a moment of

more on Leonor’s life and her influence on Ana de Christo’s writings, see Sarah E. Owens, *Nuns Navigating the Spanish Empire* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2017), 123.

³⁷ See the meaning of *vecino* in Margarita Hidalgo, *Diversification of Mexican Spanish. A Tridimensional Study in New World Sociolinguistics* (Boston; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 99.

³⁸ “[...] un pintor que embio [sic] el Governador de estas islas y otro que embio [sic] un vezino de esta ciudad para que retratasen a la dicha sancta Madre, y estando les diciendo esta testigo el modo que avian de tener en retratar los ojos porque entonces estaban cerrados y no podía ver el alegría de ellos fue la sancta madre a vista de esta testigo y de los pintores abriendo los ojos y serrando [sic] la boca de suerte que quedaron como mirando con humillación [...]”, AAV, *Congregazione dei Riti*, Processus, 1654, f. 759v.

³⁹ Three engraved effigies of Mother Jerónima are known to us. The first one was made by Joseph Mota in Mexico and attached to Quesada’s *Exemplo de todas las virtudes...* published in Mexico in 1713. See a brief reference to this image in Felipe Pereda, *Crimen e ilusión. El arte de la verdad en el Siglo de Oro* (Madrid: Marcial Pons Historia, 2017), 154. The second one was engraved in Rome in 1713 by Arnold van Westerhout after a sketch by Giuseppe Nicola Nasini. The third one was engraved by Nicolás de la Cruz Bagay in Manila, in 1744. The latter two images were included in the appendix of “Lamina” in Congregatio de Causis Sanctorum Prot. 1720, *Manilen, Beatificationis...*

⁴⁰ On “true portrait” see Marta Cacho Casal, “The ‘True Likenesses’ in Francisco Pacheco’s *Libro de Retratos*”, *Renaissance Studies* 24, no. 3 (2010): 381-406, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-4658.2009.00599.x>. Joseph Mota was also known as José Mota. Several paintings of the crucifix conserved in Mexico have been attributed to him, including one in



Figure 4. Joseph Mota, Verdadero retrato de la Venerable Madre Geronima de la Asunción, engraved in Mexico, 1712, printed in Quesada, *Exemplo de todas las virtudes...* (Mexico, 1713). Courtesy of John Carter Brown Library

praying towards a crucifix placed amid a skull, a hourglass, whips, a crown of thorns, and cilices, indicating the physical mortifications she had observed during life. The nun's face is proportionally large comparing to her leaning and hence shortened torso. The dark etchings on both cheeks, both edges of her mouth, and her philtrum heightened an atrophied and even moribund countenance, further adorned by an uplifting gaze. Such a distinctive and personalised face might call in question whether it had been

the chapel of Conchita or De la Purísima Concepción, Coyoacán, and one in the Sanctuary of Señor de Chalma, Ocuilán. See reference to the one in Chalma in José Rogelio Ruiz Gomar, "Las pinturas de la Profesa", *Artes de México*, no. 172 (1973): 30. Mota also painted the Virgin of Guadalupe in the *basílica* of Macarena, in Sevilla. I am grateful to one of the peer reviewers for all the information on Joseph Mota.

modelled after images lively painted, or soon after the death. As this engraving of a true portrait was commissioned by Friar Augustín de Madrid, the procurator of Jerónima's beatification cause, who had travelled from Manila to Rome via Mexico in 1711, it is possible that certain images of Jerónima were brought with him.⁴¹ Nevertheless, those early efforts to portray Jerónima, as if she were alive, could at least satisfy an immediate need for commemorating a potential saint in her funeral rites, especially one who had never been seen in public outside her cloistered convent in Manila during the last decade of her life.

The intensity of the funeral rites commissioned in her honour, and the pompous decorations that were set up at Saint Clare's church and at her tomb, reveal the emergence of a public veneration so dynamic that it hardly limited itself in accordance with Roman regulations on beatification processes that were by then in vigour. A sequence of funeral rites started with a major ceremony celebrated on 31 October by the bishop of Cebú, the Augustinian friar Pedro de Arce, who was then also administrator of the Archbishopric of Manila, as this was *sede vacante*. The ceremony took place in front of a large audience, with the governor don Juan Niño Tavera, civil judges (*oidores*), as well as all the religious orders in attendance. The guardian (*i. e.* superior) of the Convent of Saint Francis proclaimed the virtues of Mother Jerónima in his sermon.⁴² No references were made to uses of Jerónima's portraits on those specific occasions, but a few people reported on her portraits being seen in the city.⁴³ More funeral rites followed, sponsored by noble women in Manila. For instance, on 8 November, doña Magdalena de Zaldívar y Mendoza, wife of the governor, commissioned a sumptuous funeral rite in the church of the Saint Clare's convent. Those ceremonies displayed features of funeral *apparati*, namely spectacular ephemeral decorations within church interiors on the

⁴¹ According to the caption in the engraving, this portrait was commissioned by Friar De Madrid and dedicated to the Convent of the Poor Capuchin nuns in Mexico.

⁴² Quesada, *Exemplo de todas las virtudes...*, 615.

⁴³ For example, the Jesuit priest Ignatius de Mocija referred to Jerónima's images in his testimony to Bishop Arce, in *Manilana Philippinarum in Indijs Orientalibus beatificationis, & Canonizationis Ven[erabilis] Servæ Dei Sororis Hieronymæ ab Assumptione fundatricis, & primæ Abbatisæ Vener[abilis] Monasterij Monialium Excalceatarum Sanctæ Claræ Ordinis Sancti Francisci sub Invocatione Purissimæ Conceptionis in Civit[at]e Manilæ. Summarium super signatura Commissionis Introductionis Causæ*, printed in Rome in 1739, 118. I consulted the copy in Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (henceforward, BAV), *Stamp. Barb.* LL. IV 56.

occasion of festive *requiem* masses, normally dedicated only to royalty and the nobility.⁴⁴

In Quesada's own words, those funeral rites were nothing sorrowful, because they were meant to demonstrate only the glory that Mother Jerónima had irradiated throughout her saintly life. Both the church and the tomb were decorated with colourful draperies (*colgaduras*), while many emblems and poems were disseminated all around (*sembradas*).⁴⁵ On 9 November, the Chapter of the Cathedral celebrated a funeral rite with the same decorations and in the same church, but with different poems and new emblems, made on golden cards (*tarjetas doradas*) and painted with fine colours.⁴⁶ Again on 18 November, the Third Order of Saint Francis celebrated their own rite at the tomb of Mother Jerónima, with artificial flowers that resembled "a happy and bright spring".⁴⁷ Later on similar rites were commissioned by two major benefactors, doña Catalina de Esquerera, wife of Captain Vasco Gutiérrez de Mendoza, and a *beata* close to the Dominican Order, called María de Jesús. Both had made generous donations to the establishment of Saint Clare's convent.⁴⁸ In one of their funeral rites, the guardian of the Convent of Santa Ana, Friar Alonso de Ampudia, preached in Tagalog, to satisfy the non-Spanish speaking *indio* devotees, whose involvement and presence in all those public events were considered by Quesada as very edifying.⁴⁹

It is worth pointing out that all these noble devotees claimed to have received graces from Mother's Jerónima's intervention. Though many of them gave testimonies at the investigation for Mother Jerónima's beatification, organised by the Bishop Arce in 1631-1632, none of them had mentioned any of these funeral rites, not to mention any of the images or poems being used on these occasions. Curiously, the two biographies of Jerónima kept not only a description of the use of those emblems, but also

⁴⁴ See a recent study in Minou Schraven, *Festive Funerals in Early Modern Italy. The Art and Culture of Conspicuous Commemoration* (London; New York: Routledge, 2017).

⁴⁵ Quesada, *Exemplo de todas las virtudes...*, 615-616.

⁴⁶ Quesada, *Exemplo de todas las virtudes...*, 616.

⁴⁷ Quesada, *Exemplo de todas las virtudes...*, 616.

⁴⁸ María de Jesús was among the first benefactors of the nuns, offering her own house for the first residence of the religious women in 1621. See Luciano P. R. Santiago, "'To Love and to Suffer'. The Development of the Religious Congregations for Women in the Philippines during the Spanish Era (1565-1898) Part I", *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society* 23, no. 2 (1995): 178.

⁴⁹ Quesada, *Exemplo de todas las virtudes...*, 617. A shorter report on these funeral rites is also found in Letona, *Perfecta Religiosa...*, f. 61v.

the content of each of them. In order to understand the “enigmas” depicted in the image and the verses, it is necessary to trace the emergence and development of the textual sources in this particular process of saint-making.

WRITING JERÓNIMA’S LIFE

Unlike the production of portraits, which took place shortly after Jerónima’s death, a project of writing down her life was initiated long before her final transit. Mother Jerónima’s companion Abbess Ana de Christo (1565-1636) was the first writer of the life of the former, but the text remained in manuscript form. Twentieth-century biographers of Jerónima such as Lorenzo Pérez,⁵⁰ Encarnación Heredero,⁵¹ and Pedro Ruano⁵² all acknowledged Mother Ana’s active role in the hagiography-writing, while Sarah Owens shed light on the concrete process of writing, as well as on the spiritual and intellectual formation of the writing nuns surrounding Mother Jerónima.⁵³ As early as the first Clarisan nuns embarked on their voyage in 1620, Sister Ana de Christo received orders from her confessor Friar José de Santa María to note down the details of their itinerary. Later, Mother Leonor San Francisco encouraged Sister Ana to prepare an account of the mother abbess’s life.⁵⁴ In 1626 Ana de Christo, now vicaress herself, accomplished the task with a manuscript of 450 folios, with an estimated length of 216 000 words.⁵⁵

The bulk of Jerónima’s life written by Mother Ana, never published, can be read again in the interrogation accompanying the petition to Rome for the beatification of Jerónima, organised by Bishop Pedro Arce between

⁵⁰ Lorenzo Pérez, *Compendio de la vida de la venerable madre Sor Geronima de la Asuncion de la Orden de Sta. Clara, fundadora del monasterio de la Inmaculada Concepcion de esta ciudad de Manila, Filipinas* (Manila: St. Paul Publications, 1963).

⁵¹ María de la Encarnación Heredero, *Ilustre hija de Toledo. Primera misionera de Oceanía* (Toledo: Editorial Católica Toledana, 1929).

⁵² Pedro Ruano Santa Teresa, *La v. M. Sor Jerónima de la Asunción: fundadora del Monasterio de Santa Clara de Manila y primera mujer misionera en Filipinas* (Madrid: P. Ruano, 1993).

⁵³ Sarah Owens published extensively on this topic. I quote only her latest study in chapter 5 of her book, *Nuns Navigating the Spanish Empire* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2017), 117-136.

⁵⁴ Archivo del Monasterio de Santa Isabel de Toledo (henceforward, AMSIT), 4-a, no pagination; Owens, *Nuns navigating...*, 122-123.

⁵⁵ Owens, *Nuns navigating...*, 6.

March 1631 and November 1632. As prime witness, Ana de Christo's sessions took place respectively on 4, 6, 28 February and 3 March 1631.⁵⁶ The 28 questions in the investigation concerned the life, theological virtues, prophetic gifts, mortifications, miraculous healings, granted intercessions, incorrupt body, and Custody Angel of Jerónima.⁵⁷ The extensive length and clear order in the nun's answer imply that these remarks were more likely given in written rather than in a free-spoken form. It is also possible that Ana's testimonies served Quesada in his composition of Jerónima's first biography, because both texts display great similarities in terms of content and structure. Hence, it is obvious that Ana de Christo contributed the main text for creating an official and public profile of Mother Jerónima. In a complementary way, the companions of Mother Ana de Christo at the Convent of Saint Clare all contributed information on the former abbess from different perspectives. In the later phase of the investigation taking place in 1632, Ana de Christo was also active in passing petitions to the Bishop Pedro Arce. The nuns' voices were heard and scrutinised eventually at the Congregation of Rites in 1709, when the interrogations of 1631-1632 eventually reached Rome, after the original efforts had vanished with the untimely death of the procurator Pedro Gabriel Díaz de Mendoza in Goa, in 1633.⁵⁸ How the nuns' narratives on the miraculous life of the potential saint were evaluated by the Roman theologians of almost one century later is a question that requires further research.

While the nuns in Manila made their efforts in elaborating the texts, the Franciscan priests in both Mexico and Madrid brought these texts to a public and global readership, but only a few decades later. The first published biography was composed by Bartolomé de Letona, a Basque missionary in Mexico who had made his religious profession in Bilbao.⁵⁹ Letona came to Manila in 1644 aiming at undertaking a reform of the Observant branch in the Philippines. Unable to achieve this, he returned to Mexico in 1654.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ AAV, *Congregazione dei Riti*, Processus, 1654, fs. 27v-216v.

⁵⁷ AAV, *Congregazione dei Riti*, Processus, 1654, fs. 14r-27v.

⁵⁸ "Memorial de Juan Grau y Monfalcón", dated on 18 November 1633, Manila, in Archivo General de Indias (henceforward, AGI), *Filipinas*, 27, N. 108. No pagination. See the death of Mendoza in Ruano, *La v. M. Sor Jerónima de la Asunción...*, 75.

⁵⁹ Friar Antonio de Padua de la Llave, the vicar of the Saint Clare's convent, composed the first life of Jerónima, whose whereabouts are still unknown. Gómez Platero, *Catálogo biográfico...*, 74-75.

⁶⁰ Gómez Platero, *Catálogo biográfico...*, 259-260.

Letona's biography entitled *Perfecta religiosa* was published in 1662, eight years after he had left Manila. By then, Letona was known as a retired lecturer, *calificador* of the Holy Office of Mexico, synodal examiner of the Bishopric of Puebla de los Ángeles, guardian of the Convent of San Francisco, and provincial commissary of the Province of the Holy Gospel (*Santo Evangelio*). Most importantly, Letona was engaged in the promotion of several Franciscan exemplary figures in Mexico, including Clarisan nuns and the lay brother Sebastián de Aparicio (1502-1600), who was later beatified in 1789.⁶¹ Acting as the procurator general of Aparicio's cause, Letona potentially linked the cause of Jerónima with those in America, which implies some overlap in the way their biographies and images were respectively written and made.

The second published biography, entitled *Exemplo de todas las virtudes y vida milagrosa de la venerable madre Geronyma de la Assumpcion*, was edited and completed by Ginés de Quesada shortly before he embarked on the ship to Japan in 1632.⁶² This manuscript was published for the first time in Mexico in 1713, with a second edition appearing in Madrid in 1717 and falling under the censorship of the Inquisition.⁶³

No personal letters or spiritual writings by Mother Jerónima have been found yet. A Jesuit called Ignacio de Mojica remembered his conversations with Mother Jerónima about ecstasy and "rapture" (*arrobamiento*). According to him, Jerónima wrote a book that deserved to be printed.⁶⁴ The disappearance of autograph documents or books by Jerónima was likely deliberate and intended to prevent any possible investigation for heresy by the Holy Office. With hindsight this proved to be a very real risk, as was demonstrated by the case of a close companion of Jerónima at Saint Clare's convent, the Abbess Juana de San Antonio (1588-1661). The

⁶¹ Bartolomé de Letona and Francisco Robledo, *Sermon de n. m. s. Clara virgen y matriarca insigne de innumerables virgines esposas de Dios, predicado en su grauissimo monasterio de Mexico...* (Mexico: por Francisco Robledo, 1645).

⁶² See Quesada's martyrdom in Juan Ruiz de Medina, *El martirologio del Japón, 1558-1873* (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1999), 726.

⁶³ In 1634 Ana Christo presented Quesada's text to the Franciscan provincial. See the explanation of the composition process in Quesada, *Exemplo de todas las virtudes...*, in the postscript after page 657. See the prohibition of the Madrid edition in Francisco Pérez de Prado, *Index librorum prohibitorum ac expurgandorum novissimus pro... Fernandi VI regis catholici* (Madrid: ex calcographia Emmanuelis Fernandez, 1747), 500.

⁶⁴ Ignacio Mojica gave testimony to Bishop Pedro Arce on 8 July 1631, in AAV, *Congregazione dei Riti*, Processus, 1654, f. 507v.

mystical writings of this nun were charged by the Mexican Inquisition with spreading *alumbadismo*, a heretical instance that had never happened before in the Philippines.⁶⁵

DRAWING JERÓNIMA'S LIFE AND VIRTUES: A REPERTOIRE OF 42 EMBLEMS

General features and patrons

As observed before, emblems were among the very first images produced posthumously for the veneration of Mother Jerónima in Manila, but long forgotten and unknown today. The best studied image of the Toledan nun is a life portrait painted by Diego Velázquez in Sevilla, in 1621, now hanging permanently in the Museo del Prado.⁶⁶ Nowadays a photographic copy of Velázquez's masterpiece hangs above the tomb of Mother Jerónima inside the Real Monasterio de Santa Clara in Quezon City, Manila, relocated after the original site in *Intramuros* was bombed during the Second World War.⁶⁷ Velázquez's painting of Jerónima was also included in the latest *Positio super vita et virtutibus* printed by the Congregatio de Causis Sanctorum Prot. 1720 in Rome, in 1991, together with other engraved effigies. Many scholars consider that baroque masterpiece as the archetype of Jerónima's iconography ever since the seventeenth century.⁶⁸ Devotees today receive tokens of linen that had touched her bones, together with her portrait by Velázquez printed on the paper attached to the relic. There is no doubt that copies of that baroque artwork are now used as actual devotional objects. However, we need to clarify that Velázquez's painting did not participate

⁶⁵ See the extensive accounts by Abbess Juana in four volumes conserved in AMSIT, 3-a and 3-b. See Juana's early life in Owens, *Nuns navigating...*, 103.

⁶⁶ About Velázquez and Mother Jerónima in Seville, see Tanya Tiffany, "Portraiture and the 'Virile Woman'. Madre Jerónima de La Fuente", in *Diego Velázquez's Early Paintings and the Culture of Seventeenth-Century Seville* (Louisville: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), 55-59. See the rediscovery and the verification of the third copy in Hugh Brigstocke, "The Rediscovery of a Velázquez Portrait", *Artibus et Historiae* 36 (1997): 129-136.

⁶⁷ See the damage of the convent during the war and its relocation in Jose Victor Z. Torres, "Real Monasterio de Santa Clara: A History of the Order of Saint Clare in the Philippines (1621-1950)" (master's thesis, The Pontifical and Royal University of Santo Tomas, 1995), 184-218.

⁶⁸ Fernando Quiles García, "Cerca del cielo. La creación de los santos y su imagen en la América hispana", *Semata. Ciencias sociales e humanidades*, no. 24 (2012): 96.

at all in the iconographic scheme that early modern Manila envisaged for Mother Jerónima's cult. Instead, promoters of her cause relied heavily on the funerary emblems we have mentioned before. Jerónima's second biographer, Bartolomé de Letona, made explicit remarks about printing emblems about Jerónima across the entire Spanish empire: "I will refer to some [emblems], so that the Imperial City [Toledo], or any other city might have the devotion and courage to print them on a plate for future imprints."⁶⁹

Letona's remarks imply that the total and actual number of emblems made for Jerónima's funeral rites might exceed the known repertoire, and that there were also prints related to her cult. Quesada indicated that the emblems were placed at the tomb of the deceased abbess together with some unspecified prints.⁷⁰

We can now examine the general features of the emblems produced to commemorate Mother Jerónima. They all followed a tripartite structure, starting with a description of each image introduced by "it was painted" (*pintóse*), followed by a Latin quotation from the Bible as inscription (*mote*), and ending in a Spanish quatrain or quintuplet of octosyllables as subscription (*letra*). No references were made to any non-European languages as being used in those emblems. It is certain that the sponsors, devisers, producers, on the one side, and the targeted audience, on the other, belonged to the educated circles in Manila, including both Spaniards and Tagalog elites.⁷¹

The patrons for those emblems were the chapter of the cathedral (*cabildo eclesiástico*), doña Magdalena de Zaldívar Mendoza, and the municipal government (*cabildo secular*). Each set displayed a distinctive focus. The 19 emblems commissioned by the chapter of the cathedral synthesised the life passages of Mother Jerónima from her birth to infancy, until reaching her maturity as a professed nun. This group also highlighted the ascetic features of the nun, which will be analysed in the next section. The municipal government provided a set of 11 emblems that referred to the cross-continental voyages of Mother Jerónima and the various cities touched by her life trajectory. She was presented as a new Abraham, called by God to leave her homeland of Toledo and wander to a promised land, Manila. One emblem

⁶⁹ Letona, *Perfecta Religiosa...*, f. 62r. I am grateful to Rubén González Cuerva for reminding me of Toledo's qualification as imperial city, for having been chosen as the court of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles.

⁷⁰ Quesada, *Exemplo de todas las virtudes...*, 618.

⁷¹ Letona, *Perfecta Religiosa...*, f. 61v.

showed Mother Jerónima at her departure from Toledo to Manila. On top of the scene stood Christ and an allegory of divine glory.⁷² The last set, commissioned by doña Magdalena de Zaldívar Mendoza, included 12 emblems providing a mystic view based on the biblical revelation. Typically, Mother Jerónima was drawn as the spouse of God, sitting in His hands, with a verse from the Song of Songs as an inscription, *Sicut liliū inter spinas* (“like a lily among thorns [so is my love among the daughters of Adam]”).⁷³

In Spain and the Iberian Americas, hagiographic emblems played a role in delineating the life, visions and miracles of a saint. Jerónima’s emblems are comparable to those produced around other female religious contemporaries, for instance Rosa de Lima. Contrary to the scarcity of visual representations of Madre Jerónima, Saint Rosa enjoyed a great variety of images, spread through a truly global circulation. An emblematic repertoire about Rosa was designed for being displayed on canvases (*lienzos*) during the beatification ceremonies that took place in three churches in Rome, in 1668. As Ramón Mujica Pinilla points out, images on those emblems provided bases for pictorial cycles for Rosa’s cult undertaken later in Spanish America.⁷⁴ As far as we know, Jerónima’s emblems did not circulate outside the Philippines, nor were prints made of them in Spain or in Mexico. Further studies are required to compare the engraved effigies of Mother Jerónima with her emblematic repertoire. In the next section, we will go back to the set of emblems sponsored by the chapter of the cathedral, which reveals a distinctive profile of the abbess.

VIRILE WOMAN AND ASCETIC HERO

In her insightful analysis of Velázquez’ portrait of Mother Jerónima, the art historian Tanya Tiffany stressed “the intense outward gaze as a means of communicating her status as a ‘virile woman’ (*mujer varonil*): a contemporary term for women of exceptional fortitude”.⁷⁵ Jerónima’s virility was

⁷² Quesada, *Exemplo de todas las virtudes...*, 625.

⁷³ Quesada, *Exemplo de todas las virtudes...*, 626.

⁷⁴ I thank Lucía Querejazu Escobarí for bringing to my attention this repertoire, reconstructed and published in Appendix 3 “Iconografía jeroglífica rosariana” in Ramón Mujica Pinilla, *Rosa Limensis: mística, política e iconografía en torno a la patrona de América*, 2a. ed. (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2005), 449-459.

⁷⁵ Tiffany, “Portraiture and the ‘Virile Woman’...”, 74.

also explicitly demonstrated in the first emblem, chronologically speaking, that was devoted to her. This emblem showed a woman lying in bed after having given birth to a baby girl, kept naked for some reason (*niña desnuda*), who had slipped on the floor. Meanwhile, Saint Francis of Assisi came to lift the baby. The Latin inscription introduced Adam's remarks on the creation of Eve whom he named as a woman (*virago*), "this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken" (Genesis 2: 23).⁷⁶

This emblem corresponds to the narrative of Jerónima's birth as a disappointment to her father, the *licenciado* don Pedro García Yáñez, who had expected her to be a male heir. To his dismay, the third child he fathered was once again a girl. No one in the house dared to clothe the newborn (hence the caption *niña desnuda*), until her grandmother came to pick her up.⁷⁷ The meticulous information and theatrical turn in the narrative, from an unwanted child to an extraordinary abbess, was likely told by Jerónima herself to Ana de Christo, who first recorded this story. To a certain extent, this narrative might reflect Jerónima's own understanding of her life trajectory and aspiration to join the Asian missions, overcoming the underwhelming impression her father received initially and certainly projected also upon her.

Expectations regarding the ideal abbess can be found in manuals on funeral rites composed in the seventeenth century. In *Teatro funeral de la Iglesia Catholica* (Madrid, 1637) written by Francisco de Rojas, *calificador* of the Spanish Inquisition and friar from the Franciscan Province of Castilla, the chapter on funeral orations for a late abbess starts with a discussion on the story of Jael in the Book of Judges (4: 17-22).⁷⁸ With a hammer, Jael killed Sisera, commander of the Canaanite army of King Jabin, after having given him milk and lulled him to sleep. According to Francisco de Rojas, there is no other bravery (*valentía*) for a religious woman than mortification of herself until death.⁷⁹ Heroic figures like Jael might have been cited in the various sermons preached in honour of Mother Jerónima at her funeral rites.

⁷⁶ Quesada, *Exemplo de todas las virtudes...*, 618.

⁷⁷ This unfortunate story of misogyny appeared in all the main accounts of Jerónima's life. The earliest one is in Ana de Christo's travelogue, in AMSIT, 4-a, chapter 2, no pagination.

⁷⁸ Francisco de Rojas, *Teatro funeral de la Iglesia Catolica...* (Madrid: Imprenta del Rey-no, 1636), f. 89r. I found an original copy of this book in the Archive of the Province of San Pedro Bautista, Manila. It is not clear when this original copy arrived in the Franciscan repository in Manila and whether it was used during the seventeenth century.

⁷⁹ Rojas, *Teatro funeral...*, f. 89v.

Again, related to asceticism, another emblem showed that the venerable Mother Jerónima not only wore a cilice, but that worms were entangled all around it. Among them, a bigger worm would lift its head from her chest. The Spanish quatrain praised her rigorous flesh for expelling the worm inside her body and chasing away those on her skin.⁸⁰ In another emblem, Mother Jerónima held in her hands a cloth stained with rotting blood, in addition to said worms. The Latin inscription quoted Job “if I say to corruption, you are my father, and to the worm, my mother or my sister” (Job 17: 14).⁸¹ Worms were common symbols for visual representations of death and corruption of the human body.⁸² However, these emblematic worms were created out of Jerónima’s own ascetic practices and reflections in relation to Job’s sufferings. She followed the afflictions (*trabajos*) that Job suffered, and she did so with the purpose of converting the heathen.⁸³ Mother Jerónima also imitated holy women by putting worms on the wounds inflicted on her flesh by the cilices.⁸⁴ Out of reasons still to be explored, those insects were depicted only on emblems and not in the engraving of Jerónima’s true portrait as discussed above.

CONCLUSION

Emblems were not alien to the early modern Philippines, and certainly the residents of seventeenth-century Manila were familiar with them. Such visual and literary symbols were used profusely in the Philippines on a variety of occasions, ranging from the celebration of canonizations and solemn exequies, to literary competitions and academic rituals. The few references that are currently available on the early modern Philippine emblems display features, functions, and artistic styles that are similar to the ones attested in the emblematic cultures of Spain and Spanish America. It is in this context that we have examined the production, the purpose and function of the 42 emblems displayed at the funeral rites of the first abbess of the Saint Clare’s

⁸⁰ Quesada, *Exemplo de todas las virtudes...*, 619-620.

⁸¹ Quesada, *Exemplo de todas las virtudes...*, 620.

⁸² See a recent discussion in Johanna Scheel, “Feeding Worms. The Theological Paradox of the Decaying Body and its Depictions in the Context of Prayer and Devotion”, in *Picturing Death 1200-1600*, ed. Stephen Perkinson and Noa Turel (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2020), 164-187, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004441118_010.

⁸³ Quesada, *Exemplo de todas las virtudes...*, 582.

⁸⁴ Quesada, *Exemplo de todas las virtudes...*, 581-582.

convent of Manila in 1630. That repertoire is by far the largest set of funerary emblems recorded in the seventeenth century Philippines.

Closely drawing on the Poor Clare nun's biography and following the model of heroic female saints of the early modern Hispanic world, almost certainly the 42 emblems and the Spanish captions inscribed on them were received by an audience of not exclusively Spanish speakers. Just as in the case of the conversations on Flemish emblems taking place between the Jesuit missionary Rudomina and the Chinese Christian literatus Stephanus Li Jiubiao, a similar transcultural dynamic could have occurred also in the reception of the funerary emblems of Mother Jerónima. In fact, emblems were not only objects of an individual fruition, but could also trigger social practices: missionaries or other educated actors of the colonial society could explain and translate drawings following a European iconography and verses in Spanish or Latin to the benefit of the native Christians, and even of non-Christians, to propagate the life and heroic virtues of the saint-to-be.

Once such a transcultural dynamic is recognised, then it appears also clear how the emblematic representations of Mother Jerónima as a virile woman would produce a particular impact in the Philippines, whose indigenous populations had associated women and femininity with shamanic powers. Hence, even if those emblems appear to us at first sight as purely European, we can sense a hidden line, connecting Mother Jerónima's virile femininity to a model of religious femininity that would be embraced by native nuns decades later.⁸⁵

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SOBRE LA AUTORA

Wei Jiang es doctora en Historia por King's College. Desde 2021, trabaja como investigadora posdoctoral en la Universidad de Zúrich, Suiza, incorporada en el proyecto titulado "GLOBECOSAL: Global Economies of Salvation. Art and the Negotiation of Sanctity in the Early Modern Period" financiado por European Research Council y Der Schweizerische Nationalfonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung. Sus intereses de investigación examinan las interacciones católicas con las religiones y sociedades locales en el este, sureste y sur de Asia, entre los siglos XVI y XIX. Su última monografía se titula "*True Catholicism*" in Colonial South Asia. *The Independent Catholics in Ceylon and India in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2023).