

Music at the University of Pavia-Cremona (2001) and a Ph.D. in Modern History at the University of Bologna (2015). She has held post-doctoral research fellowships at the University of Bologna, the Newberry Library in Chicago, and the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel. She has produced a complete critical edition of an anthology of late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century music, *Florence, BNC, Panciatichi MS 27: Text and Context* (Brepols, 2010), and has published articles on various aspects of musical life in Italy between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries. Her interest focuses mainly on how music interacted with social life.

LAURA DIERKSMEIER

“CHARITY FOR AND BY THE POOR:  
FRANCISCAN AND INDIGENOUS CONFRATERNITIES  
IN MEXICO, 1526-1700”

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Missionary reports claim the existence of at least one confraternity per parish church in colonial Mexico. As was the case in late medieval and early modern Italy, France, and Spain, confraternity members in Mexico worked together to build community infrastructure, to staff hospitals, to dower orphans, to search for abandoned babies, to release prisoners jailed for petty debt, to give loans, to comfort the dying, and to bury the dead. In many cases, the poor were both providers and recipients of care, pooling agricultural goods to store for times of hardship, or to loan to members in need. While Mexican confraternities resemble their Europe counterparts, the transplantation of this medieval tradition into a hybrid society in Mexico led to changes in their activities and administration.

Largely due to the limited number of missionaries, indigenous confraternity members operated autonomously, adapting to the needs of their members. Aztec currencies, Nahuatl record-keeping, and indigenous musical instruments were all incorporated into confraternity life. While archconfraternities, church authorities, and local governors attempted to restrict the power of these local groups, numerous court cases show that indigenous people were willing (and able) to go to court

to settle their conflicts of interest. In contradiction to *encomiendas* and *repartimientos*, confraternities were one of few colonial institutions based on voluntary indigenous participation. Theoretically, confraternity members could be equal to Spaniards in both entitlements (status, benefits, protection) and responsibilities (fees, conduct restrictions, tasks). In practice, power structures varied from group to group. Records show that some confraternities were ethnically mixed and others restricted membership by ethnicity (e.g. blacks, pardos, mulatos, mestizos, creoles, or Spaniards).

This social and cultural history of Mexican confraternities is divided into three main sections. The first section (Context) examines the historical background of Mexican confraternities against the backdrop of missionary work, bilingual catechisms, and moral theology. The second section (Structures) studies how confraternities operated, who their members were, how those members financed their works, and which governance systems were employed to elect their leaders. This section incorporates a study of an extensive sixteenth-century confraternity manual that has yet to be analyzed. In the last section (Outcomes), the thesis examines the works of confraternity members in depth, including confraternity-run orphanages and hospitals that gave assistance not only to the sick, but also to widows, travelers, and pilgrims. The thesis argues that confraternities made up a large part of 'the moral economy,' where economic relations also took moral and social concerns into account (e.g. loans to the poor). A concluding chapter summarizes the main arguments and offers suggestions for future research.

### **Biographical note**

Laura Dierksmeier is a postdoctoral researcher in the project "Religious Knowledge in Pre-Modern Europe: Transfers and Transformations" at the University of Tübingen in Germany. She has conducted archival research in Mexico, Spain, USA, and Germany. Dierksmeier holds a master's degree in Spanish from Simmons College (Boston, MA), where she was named 'Distinguished Graduate Student for Civic Engagement.' She received the American Academy of Franciscan History Fellowship in 2014.