ARTICLE

DEATH AND DISEASES IN SAN FELIPE NERI PARISH DURING THE LATE-NINETEENTH CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, demographic history has attracted historians for its potential contribution to the writing of local history. One rich source of data for demographic historians is parish records. The introduction of Christianity into the Philippines, and the administrative efforts of many hundreds of parish priests, produced counts of all tribute-prayers and souls. That, and the recording of all baptisms, marriages and burials across more than half the country started as early as the seventeenth century. Not all of these documents have survived, needless to say, but for most areas of the Philippines there exist large quantities of nineteenth century parish records. The Philippines has by far the most voluminous and detailed evidence for demographic history among the countries of Southeast Asia (Owen 1987). These records were a most reliable source of information on individuals and were widely used in a variety of transactions in colonial society and are a powerful tool for demographic and historical analysis (Cullinane and Xenos, 1998).

This paper attempts to contribute to the past efforts of other historians in writing local history. The paper will describe the buried persons in San Felipe Neri Parish Cemetery using its burial records and vecindarios, *the* Plan de Almas *and* Estado General delos Pueblos *of the province of Manila.*

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This study explores the parish records of San Felipe Neri (Paco, Province of Tondo) and reveals that during the late nineteenth century the population of San Felipe Neri witnessed sudden losses due to mortality crisis episodes. The parishes burial records, when grouped and computed into percentages and rates, provide a good description of the different social classes, age groups, genders, civil statuses, places of residence, political statuses, and the nature of burial and reported causes of death.

KEY WORDS: *Death and diseases, seasonal variations of diseases*

INTRODUCTION

Studying mortality patterns is an important part of developing the demographic history of the Philippines. According to Palmore and Gardner (1983, 9), "...the fate of a population... depended more on mortality than on fertility or migration." This is particularly true in the Philippines during the nineteenth century since birth rates fluctuated relatively little from year to year. The rate of population increase was controlled largely by what Smith (1978) has termed crisis mortality episodes. These were occasions when the number of deaths in a parish reached abnormal levels, typically due to epidemic disease (de Bevoise, 1995), "subsistence crises" or a combination of the two. Owen (1987) suggests, however, that it is important to look beyond crisis mortality episodes to the everyday pattern of death and disease in Southeast Asia. The Philippine parish records offer a realistic opportunity to do this. By studying everyday deaths one can describe a parish with regard to social composition, age, gender, political and civil status, possible reasons of death and kind of burial received.

METHODOLOGY

The aggregative analysis methodology was used in this study. This is commonly used in studying the history of local populations because with aggregative analysis the investigator can explore local trends such as "... large-scale migration movements, epidemics and famines, fluctuations of illegitimacy and other speciali(z)ed fields of inquiry" (Eversley, 1966, 45). "Aggregative analysis allows conclusions to be drawn from vital events (like death and diseases) ... in conjunction with occasional population estimates" (Xenos and Ng, 1998, 189).

To describe the mortality experience of San Felipe Neri Parish during the late nineteenth century, its burial registers (*Libro de Defunciones*) and the *Plan de Almas* and *Estado General de los Pueblos* of the province of Manila were used as the raw data. The microfilm of the burial register of San Felipe Neri Parish was available at the library of Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. The *Plan de Almas* and *Estado General de los Pueblos* of the province of Manila were available from the Archives of the Archdiocese of Manila. The information was extracted, numbers of events were counted, and then translated into rates and percentages to generate more meaningful data like population trends, social classes, age groups, genders, civil statuses, places of residence, membership in political elites, the nature of burials and reported causes of death.

However, several limitations were encountered. First, exactitude could not be fully ascertained due to the limitations of the burial records themselves. Although Filipinos were generally eager for Church blessings, those who could not afford the ceremonial fees, those who were on the move or those who were isolated by distance or weather might escape the priest's notice (de Bevoise, 1995) making the burial records incomplete. Second, information from the burial records was dependent on the information given by the person who registered the deceased person and to the scribe who wrote the burial entries. Finally, sources had to be linked in quantifying deaths and diseases in San Felipe Neri Parish. The burial registers provided the numerator information while the denominator information had to be linked to San Felipe Neri's *Plan de Almas* and *Estado General de los Pueblos.*

A GLIMPSE OF SAN FELIPE NERI PARISH IN 1885-1891

San Felipe Neri Parish was a newly founded parish during the nineteenth century and was first known as a barrio of Sta. Ana de Sapa, which was part of the District of Paco, Province of Tondo. The Franciscan missionaries who founded the town in honor of the Patron Saint of Rome later named the barrio San Felipe Neri. It was separated civilly from Sta. Ana de Sapa in 1841 and had its first appointed *gobernadorcillo* the following year. On September 15, 1863, San Felipe Neri established its own parish under the administration of the Congregation "*Dulcisimo Nombre de Jesus*" with its own church, convent and school. The following month, the parish was erected canonically (Anonymous, 2003).

The establishment of the parish brought along with it the task of maintaining parish registers, which date back to December 1863. On an annual and monthly basis, the years 1864-1893 were examined in this study. Only these years have complete burial entries for the entire year. No burial entries were found during 1894-1898, while for 1899, only the months from October to December had burial entries. The burial entries of San Felipe Neri Parish examined in detail for this study include the year when there was the least number of deaths, 1885, and the year which registered the third highest number of deaths, 1889, during the late nineteenth century. A total of 2,731 burial entries were examined for this study.

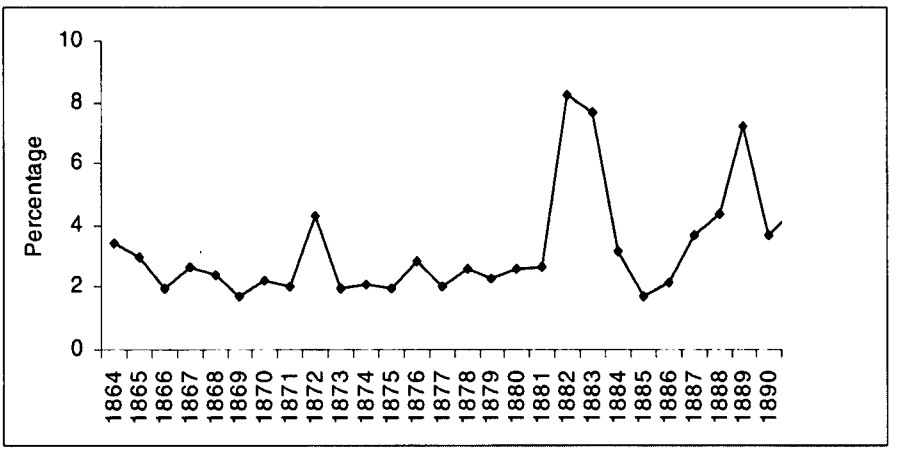
Population

San Felipe Neri Parish was a community of a little over 5,000 persons in 1867. By 1892, its population was almost 8,500. Between 1867 and 1892, the population of San Felipe Neri grew at an annual rate of 1.84 percent. Despite the growing population in San Felipe Neri Parish over a span of twenty-five years, the population of San Felipe Neri was at times disturbed by what Smith (1978, 51) calls "mortality crisis episodes". For instance, in the year 1881 the population was estimated to be a little over 8,000. However, during the years 1882 and 1883, San Felipe Neri experienced a sudden increase in the number of deaths leaving the population of San Felipe Neri Parish at a little over 7,400. In 1882, 1883 and 1884, the population had negative annual growth rates of 6.78, 1.24 and 0.81 percent respectively. The population then recovered over the years 1885 through 1888. During these years, San Felipe Neri grew at a slower pace — 0.50, 1.61, 3.52 and 1.10 percent respectively. However, another mortality crisis took place in 1889. Unfortunately, the *Plan de Almas* of San Felipe Neri was not available for the years 1889 and 1890 so the growth rate could not be computed. However, available population estimates for the years 1888 and 1891, revealed that the population grew at a very minimal rate of 0.03 percent.

Endemic or constantly present diseases from 1885 to 1891 were *alferecia* (epilepsy), *calentura* (fever), *empacho* (indigestion), *pasmo* (spasm) and *tisis* (tuberculosis). However, during 1889, the number of deaths was unusually high (the percentage could not be computed due to the unavailability of the *Plan de Almas)* due to a sudden rise in the number of deaths caused by

diarrhea and *viruelas* (small pox). The number of deaths due to diarrhea and *viruelas* added to the number of deaths due to endemic diseases in San Felipe Neri causing the sudden fluctuation in mortality levels. The annual percentage of deaths, computed as the number of deaths per year divided by the total number of deaths from 1864 to 1893 multiplied by 100, is shown in Figure 1 to illustrate the yearly fluctuation in mortality levels.

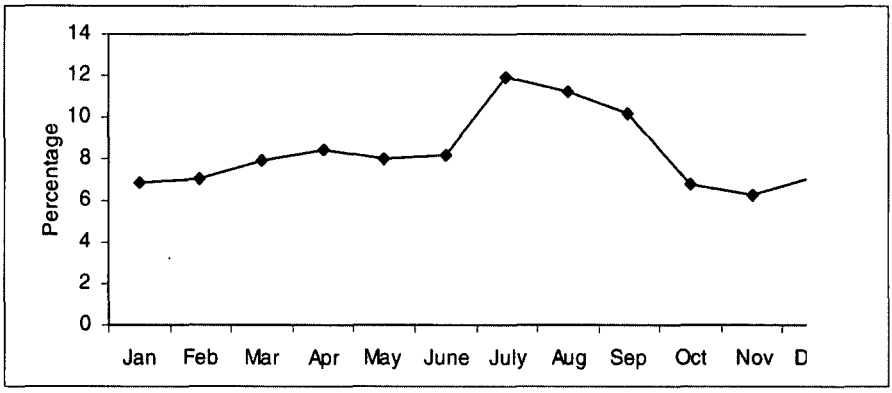
Figure 1
Annual Percentage of Deaths in San Felipe Neri Parish, 1864-1893



Data computed from the burial registers of San Felipe Neri Parish

Aside from yearly fluctuations, deaths were also distributed unevenly during the year. Between 1864 and 1893, mortality was highest during the months of July to September - a time of heavy rain, followed by the months of April to June – the time of the year when temperatures were highest (Algue, 1904).

Figure 2
Seasonal Percentage of Deaths in San Felipe Neri Parish
1864-1893



Data computed from the burial registers of San Felipe Neri Parish

Social Classes

The registered dead of San Felipe Neri Parish were classified either as *indios, mestizos de sangley, mestizos, naturales, mestizos de Español, sangleys* or *Ygorrot. Indios* were the indigenous Filipinos, the Malay inhabitants of the Spanish Philippines. *Mestizos de sangley* were Chinese mestizos, generally offspring of a male Chinese and a Filipina mother. *Naturales* were the natives of the place. The *mestizos de Español* were Spanish mestizos. The name 'Sangley,' by which the Chinese are known even to the present day, appears to be derived from the Chinese words 'Kang Liu,' or trader. Navarrete (United States Bureau of the Census 1905, p. 484), writing about 1650, states:

> "The Chinese merchants that sailed to Manila, being asked who they were and what they came for, replied Xang Lei – that is, we come to trade. The Spaniards, who understood not their language, conceiving it to be the name of the country and putting the two words together, made one of them, by which they still distinguish the Chinese, calling them Sangleyes"

Finally the Ygorrot, "...It is used in its original form, 'Igolot,' by Morga 1609 (as cited in US Bureau of the Census 1905). It means in several Malayan languages 'people of the mountains.' Some writers have tried to restrict its use to the tribes of Benguet and the southern ramification of the Cordillera Central. Meyer and Schadenberg limit it to Benguet and Lepanto, but in point of fact its use in northern Luzon is much wider" (United States Bureau of the Census 1905, p. 471)

Those buried in San Felipe Neri Parish Cemetery were mostly indigenous Filipinos and Chinese mestizos. Being greatest in number, *inaios* would naturally have the highest numbers of death followed by *mestizos de sangley.* The percentage of all deaths ranged from 64.0 to 70.3 percent. This means that roughly two-thirds of all the registered dead were *indios.* Roughly three of every ten registered dead in San Felipe Neri Parish were *mestizos de sangley.* The percentage of deaths among *mestizos de sangley* ranged from 28.1 to 35.5. The *naturales, sangleys, mestizos, mestizos de Español* and the *Ygorrotas* accounted for the remaining 1 percent of deaths.

Age Group

In San Felipe Neri Parish, the youngest recorded death was aged one day while the oldest was aged one hundred and thirty years. However, readers must be cautioned that the reliability of the ages at death, most especially of the supposed centenarians, is questionable. Of all recorded deaths, only seven, or 0.26 percent, were stated as centenarians.

Information regarding the stated age of the deceased was classified into age groups to see trends as to which age group accounted for most deaths. The grouping used in this study is common to most demographic analysis (Palmore and Gardner, 1983). The first age group is for infants, those aged below 1 year. Those aged 1-4 and 5-9 comprise the second and third age groups. Then, we use ten-year age groups starting from age ten until aged ninety and above..

Death rates are highest among the youngest and the oldest ages but lower in the young adult ages (Weeks, 2002). This strongly suggests that resistance towards diseases was lowest during younger years, slowly developed during young adult years and slowly declined during old age. Mortality in San Felipe Neri, was at its peak during the first four years of life. During 1885-

1888 and 1891, the highest percentage of deaths was registered among those aged one day to eleven months , who died mainly of *alferecia* (epilepsy). During 1888-1890, the highest percentage of deaths was registered among those aged 1-4, who died mainly because of *viruelas* (smallpox). The trend rapidly declined for those aged 5-9. Then, the percentage of deaths gradually increased among those aged 10-39. Afterwards, the percentage of death slowly declined for those aged forty and above, since by this point only a small proportion are still alive.

Gender

Generally, males have higher mortality rates than females (Friis and Sellers, 2004). In general men are relatively frail in survival terms and so died in greater numbers than females. But, just as generally, more males are born than females (about 105 males for every 100 females), such that numbers of males and females tend to equalize.

A descriptive indicator for interpreting the percentage of deaths among males and females is the sex ratio, the number of males per 100 females. Under normal circumstances, the sex ratio of deaths should be just above 100. Between 1885 and 1891, the sex ratio in San Felipe Neri Parish ranged from 105.13 to 126.99. This means that more males than females died during these years. Among males, *pasmo*, diarrhea and *alferecia* were the common reported causes of death. Among females, *calentura, empacho, tisis* and *viruelas* were the common reported causes of death.

Civil Status

The civil statuses of those buried in San Felipe Neri Parish are categorized as follows: children were *parvulo(a)s* if aged six and below or *escuela hijo(a)s* if aged between seven and fourteen or fifteen (this varies somewhat across the burial entries), *soltero(a)s* were unmarried individuals, *casado(a)s* were married individuals and *viudo(a)s* were widow(er)s.

A high percentage of deaths among *parvulos* was expected since children aged from 0 to 4 belonged in this category. It is worth noting that *casados* and *viudos* ranked second and third respectively in the percentage of deaths. This implies that a good portion of the registered dead in San Felipe Neri were married individuals.

Based on the percentage of deaths from 1885 and 1896, the percentage of deaths among *parvulo(a)s* ranged from 47.5 to 58.4 percent. Among *parvulo(a)s* who were registered dead, 55 percent were males while 45 percent were females. The percentage of deaths among *casado(a)s* ranged from 18.6 to 31.9 percent. Among married persons who were registered dead, the youngest was seventeen years old and two percent were in their teens. This reflects the marrying age in San Felipe Neri Parish during the nineteenth century. Of all the registered married persons 49 percent were males while 51 percent were females. The percentage of death among *viudo(a)s* ranged from 8.9 to 13.8 percent. Among them, forty-six percent were males while fifty-four percent were females. The youngest widower was aged twenty-four. The percentage of deaths among *soltero(a)s* ranged from 5.6 to 11.9 percent. Among them, the oldest unmarried person was aged seventy-five years old. Almost 66 percent were males while 34 percent were females. The percentage of deaths among *escuela hijo(a)s* ranged from 1.9 to 5.6 percent. Among them forty-three percent were males while fifty-seven percent were females.

Place of Residence

Those buried in San Felipe Neri Parish had resided in pueblos from the district of Morong, namely Antipolo, Binangonan de Bay, Bosoboso, Cainta, Caloocan, Cardona, Jalajala, and Morong. From the province of Manila, others resided in Binondo, Dilao, Ermita, Manila, Mariquina, Montalban, Pandacan, Parañaque, Pasig, Pateros, Pineda, Quiapo, S. Felipe Neri, S. Francisco de Malabon, S. Jose de Navotas, S. Juan del Monte, S. Mateo, S. Miguel, S. Pedro Macati, Sampaloc, Sta. Ana, Sta. Cruz de Manila, Taguig, Tambobo, and Tondo. Others came from nearby and far flung provinces such as Antique, Batangas, Bulacan, Cagayan, Camarines Sur, Cavite, Laguna, Nueva Ecija, Pampanga, Pangasinan, Surigao, Tayabas, Ylocos Norte, Ylocos Sur and Yloilo.

Among all the registered dead from 1885 and 1891, the majority buried at San Felipe Neri Parish Cemetery were from San Felipe Neri and San Juan del Monte. The percentage of deaths among those who once resided in San Felipe Neri ranged from 51.1 to 64.5 percent while the percentage of deaths among those who once resided in San Juan del Monte ranged from 23.1 to 35.4. Residents of the remaining mentioned pueblos of the province of Manila followed. The percentage of deaths among them ranged from 7.0 to 11.9 percent. The other deceased were residents of other provinces. Among them,

the percentage of deaths ranged from 0.5 to 4.0 percent while the percentage of deaths from those who once resided in the district of Morong ranged from 0.7 to 2.2 percent. Some of the names recorded in the burial registers did not specify the place of residence of the deceased.

This tells us that a deceased person does not have to be buried at the place of his or her place residence. Possible reasons could be because of sudden death, unwillingness of the relatives to have the body returned to his or her place of residence or for convenience. In addition, knowledge of the place of residence of the deceased reveals an inherent limitation of information taken from *plan de almas* since the number of burials reported in it does not classify who among the deceased registered in a stated parish for burial were residents of the said parish. Here, we can see the advantage of studying burial registers over *plan de almas* if one wants to study the mortality experience of a certain parish.

Political elites

The political elite can be identified by the honorific title of Don or Doña that precedes the name of the deceased. In the burial registers of San Felipe Neri Parish, one hundred thirty four or 4.9 percent of the total registered dead bore this title. All the local elites had either the status of *casado(a)* (married) or *viudo(a)* (widower) and were usually married to an individual who also bore the title of Don or Doña. Of all the Dons and Doñas, only six or 4.5 percent were married to an individual who did not bear the honorific title, which suggests that political elites tended to marry their kind. It is also likely that titles were conferred upon marriage. The youngest was aged twenty while the oldest was aged one hundred. More than half of all Dons and Doñas, 55.0 %, were *mestizos de sangley* (Chinese mestizos) followed closely by *indios* (natives) at 44.8 percent. One was a *mestizo de Español* (Spanish mestizo) while the two remaining were *mestizos.*

To have an additional description of the Dons and Doñas of San Felipe Neri Parish, its existing *vecindarios* for 1888, 1890 and 1891 were consulted. A *vecindario* is a population listing of the inhabitants that reside in each *pueblo.* Several pieces of information can be gleened from the *vecindario.* This information includes the amount of tribute collected for each tribute-paying resident and the name, age, civil status and occupations of residents. In the *vecindarios* of San Felipe Neri, the first name to appear on the list was that of

the *cabeza de barangay* followed by members of his family. This was followed by the names of the other Dons and his family members. The last names to appear were those who could not pay the tribute.

From the *vecindarios,* it was found that the honorific title of Don was attached to the *cabeza de barangay* of each *cabeceria* in San Felipe Neri. A *cabeceria* is an administrative unit equivalent to a barangay. During 1888, 1890 and 1891, San Felipe Neri had forty *cabecerias.* If the *cabeza* had a wife, she was given the title of Doña. The reported occupation of the Dons of San Felipe Neri included *jornalero* (day laborer), *labrador* (farmer), *musicero* (musician) and *sacatero (one who takes out grass or hay).* On the other hand, the reported occupations of the Doñas of San Felipe Neri included *costurera* (dressmaker), *tendera* (vendor) and *bordadera* (embroider).

Nature of Burial

As noted in the burial entries of San Felipe Neri Parish, at times the word *pobre* (poor person) was written below the word *gratis* (free) that signifies that the burial was free since the deceased person was poor.

In the Philippines, the Spanish Government assumed the task of maintaining the clergy and the churches. Stipends were granted to the ministers of the Christian doctrine. However, the royal subsidy was not enough to support the needs of the church ministers. It was deemed necessary to institute the payment of stole fees. This is "an offering given on certain occasions; e.g., at a baptism, wedding, or funeral, for the support of the clergy who administer the sacraments and perform other sacred rites" (Erlandson, 2009). Dues had to be paid by Filipinos and Spaniards for marriages, baptisms, burials and masses (Fernandez OP, 1979, 255).

> "(W)e ordain that in the burial of the Filipinos, they may not be asked to give either money or any other thing, both for the burial either inside or outside of the chapel, in the Church or in the cemetery, for burying them in a coffin, or with the pall or the cross until the grave; or for solemnities...
>
> We ordain that those who wish to have mass said for their dead or out of their devotion, if it is a low mass, they shall offer alms of four *tominees*; if sung, eight; six of which will be for whoever

> celebrates the mass, and two for the ministers. And if someone requests mass with the body present, they shall offer alms of one peso, if it is a sung mass, two of which will be for the ministers, as has been said. And, if he be a principal who heads a barangay, let him offer one and a half pesos, the half peso being for the ministers (Anonymous, n.d., 249)."

From the above mentioned order from the Church, it is clear that several kinds of burial were available for the deceased and that an accompanying fee had to be paid. It was more expensive to hold a burial with a sung mass than a recited burial. This may explain why the majority of those buried in San Felipe Neri Parish Cemetery opted to have a recited burial. It was even more expensive if one requested a mass with the body of the deceased present and more so if the mass were sung with the body present. The most expensive burial mass was for the *cabeza de barangay.* Before one could become a *cabeza,* one must have had enough property to cover the deficit of tribute collection.

From the burial entries of San Felipe Neri Parish, several kinds of burial were available for deceased persons as indicated in the second to the last phrase of each burial entry. This included *Fue su entierro gratis* (free burial), *Fue su entierro rezado* (recited burial), *Fue su entierro cantado* (sung burial), *Fue su entierro cantado y vigilia (*sung burial with vigil), *Fue su entierro cantado y Misa (*sung burial with mass), *Fue su entierro cantado con posas* (sung burial with body present), *Fue su entierro cantado con posas y Misa (*sung burial with body present with Mass), *Fue su entierro cantado con posas y vigilia (*sung burial with body present with vigil) and *Fue su entierro cantado con posas y vigilia y Misa (*sung burial with body present with vigil and Mass).

Between 1885 and 1891, the three most common burials were recited, free and sung burials. 56.0 percent received a recited burial, 30.4 percent were given free burials and only 9.3 percent received sung burials. Only three or 0.1 percent of the burial entries did not indicate the kind of burial given. This suggests that burial ceremonies from the Church were given importance by society, at least among those who had their deceased registered at the parish, during the late nineteenth century. Free burials were given by the parish to encourage the relatives of the deceased incapable of paying burial fees to have their dead receive burial rites.

Also, the kind of burial given to the deceased suggests a hierarchical society. The majority of those who received a sung burial with vigil, a sung burial with deceased present, a sung burial with deceased present and with a mass, a sung burial with deceased present with vigil, and a sung burial with deceased present and with a vigil and mass were political elites. Based on the total number of burials, only two were given a free burial (*Fue su entierro gratis)* while 33.6 percent received a sung burial with the deceased present (*Fue su entierro cantado con posas).* More than half of those given a sung burial with the deceased present bore the honorific title of Don or Doña; 28.4 percent were given a sung burial (*Fue su entierro cantado)* and 23.9 percent were given a recited burial (*Fue su entierro rezado).*

Reported Cause of Death

The list of the reported causes of death found in the burial records of San Felipe Neri may describe the outlook of Filipinos towards diseases, the language used at that time and the limitations in determining real causes of death. For instance, Filipino prevailing notions about illness causation during the nineteenth century may illustrate the terms used as the causes of death. Michael Tan (1987) mentions several causes of illness. There is a widespread belief about winds, *hangin,* in most Philippine languages, as a cause of illness. An example of illness associated with wind in San Felipe Neri was *mal viento* (bad wind). Another cause of illness was vapors. "The 'vapors' are believed to be particularly harmful when it rains during particularly hot weather. It is the contact between the warm earth and the rain that results in the *singaw*...rains occurring during warm weather (result) in discomfort and illness" (Tan, 1987, 54). In San Felipe Neri, *vapor de tierra* (vapors from the earth) was reported as a cause of death. Another "...illness is believed to be caused by a disturbance of the balance of forces within the body....Balance is determined by the distribution of various attributes of living matter: hot and cold, wet and dry" (Tan, 1987). It is this concept of hot or cold that explains the occurrence of *pasma* or *pasmo* (spasm). A person who becomes hot due to physically strenuous activities was advised not to take a bath in cold water. Doing so might result to *pasmo* (Tan ,1987).

A number of the causes of death in the burial registers were in Spanish. Some examples are *serampion* (measles), *mal parto* and *sobre parto* (incidents

of death due to child bearing), *mal de corazon* (heart condition), *mal de madre* (a sickly mother), *hidropesia* (edema), *viruelas* (smallpox), *colera* (cholera), *diarrea* (diarrhea) and *empacho* (indigestion).

Some of the reported causes of death may be symptoms of underlying diseases. An example of this is *calentura* (fever). Most of the infants and children aged 2-6 in San Felipe Neri Parish were reported to have died because of *calentura*. Glenn May (1987, 74), in his *A Past Recovered* has these words to offer:

> "Unfortunately, though, such information tells us little since, as we all know from experience, fever is but a symptom of disease, not a disease itself. To learn what killed those ...fever victims..., we must know what caused their fever. Were they suffering from malaria, or typhoid fever, or perhaps a strain of influenza?"

Another example is *alferecia* (epilepsy). Between 1885 and 1891, 43.1 percent of infants were stated to have died because of *alferecia*. Epilepsy infrequently causes death. The person who gave the information to the parish clerk may have confused epilepsy with the convulsions that accompany fever-producing diseases (May, 1987). During the initial reading of this paper, Dr. Luisa Camagay shared that an example of a disease that may trigger convulsions is *beri-beri*, caused by the lack of Thiamine or Vitamin B1. Unfortunately, back in the late nineteenth century, beri-beri was not well understood. In fact, out of the 2,731 burial entries used in this study, only 2.4 percent were caused by *beri-beri*. Dr. Camagay further shared that the lack of Thiamine may have been due to the eating of polished rice. More and more Filipinos turned to polished rice because those who could buy it were displaying that they could afford to do so.

A significant percentage of deaths (12.9) were due to unknown cases, indicated as N on the burial entry. This is an important limitation about the causes of death of those buried in San Felipe Neri Parish. The persons who reported and the person who filled out the register were likely not qualified to give an accurate assessment of the cause of death. The cause of death stated in the burial registers was usually determined by what manifestations the deceased relatives could remember. There was an effort on the part of the

Spanish Government to address this problem. In 1894, health regulations were issued making it mandatory to examine the deceased and issue a certificate of death before any burial could take place. However, this regulation proved to be impractical outside of Manila considering the shortage of qualified personnel and the problems of time and distance (De Bevoise, 1995).

Despite the limitations mentioned above, a profile of the seven most reported causes of death in San Felipe Neri Parish during the years 1885 to 1891 may provide us some basis for analysis. Due to the long list of reported causes of death mentioned as the reported of cause of death, only those that registered more than 5 percent of the total number of deaths between 1885 and 1891 were examined in detail. Included on this list are *alferecia* (epilepsy), *calentura* (fever), diarrhea, *empacho* (indigestion), *pasmo* (spasm), *tisis* (tuberculosis) and *viruelas* (small pox). A profile of the seven leading reported causes of death is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Profile of San Felipe Neri Parish by Reported Cause of Death, 1885-1891

Reported Cause of Death	Political Status	Age Group	Gender	Race	Peak Month
Alferecia	Non-elites	11 months and below	Males	Mestizo de sangley	October
Calentura	Political elites	5-9	Females	Mestizo de sangley	June
Diarrea	Non-elites	10-19	Males	Indio	May
Empacho	Non-elites	1-4	Females	Indio	August
Pasmo	Non-elites	10-19	Males	Indio	December
Tisis	Political elites	60-90+	Females	Mestizo de sangley	August
Viruelas	Non-elites	5-9	Females	Mestizo de sangley	April

Data were summarized from the computed crude death rates (age group), ratios (political status, gender and race) and correlation (peak month) of San Felipe Neri burial entries.

Data from each column may be correlated with another column in Table 1 for us to understand why certain groups were more prone to a particular reported cause of death. Take the case of *tisis.* Those who belonged to the age group of 60 and above had the highest crude death rates which may explain why political elites were more prone to *tisis.* The age of political elites ranged from 20 to 100 years old with a computed mean age of 53.1. A greater percentage of political elites were *mestizos de sangley* which may be the reason why *tisis* was more common to this social group..

Seasonality of diseases is also quite evident from Table 1. Deaths reported to have been caused by *viruelas* (smallpox), diarrhea and *calentura* (fever) were highest during the months of April, May and June respectively. Cases of death caused by *empacho* (indigestion) and *tisis* (tuberculosis) were highest during the month of August. *Pasmo* (spasm), on the other hand had the highest percentage of deaths during the month of December. Understandably, some of the mentioned diseases were really prone to take place during specific times of the year. *Calentura* (fever) is really expected as soon as the rainy season comes during the month of June. *Pasmo* (spasm) was traditionally believed to have been caused by an attack of cold on someone who is too hot or vice versa. Considering the kind of work of the inhabitants of San Felipe Neri, *jornalero* (day laborer), *labrador* (farmer), *sacatero (one who takes out grass or hay), costurera* (dressmaker), *tendera* (vendor) and *bordadera* (embroider), most entailed manual labor. Someone who just came from work is considered hot and may have been attacked by the cold temperature during the month of December which in effect may make people from San Felipe Neri prone to *pasmo* (spasm).

Seasonality of diseases makes us wonder why the percentages of deaths were consistently high during certain times of the year. If these patterns continued to recur over the years, why was the colonial government unable to curb high mortality levels? Smith (1978, 75) had his reasons as follows:

> "It was during this period that the Spanish administration came under attack on many fronts: revolutionary and reformist fervor grew and manifested itself in numerous ways; anti-clericalism

> began to challenge the church's position; and, finally, various forms of violence culminated eventually in revolution....Climatic variation, the collapse of Spanish programs for disease control and public health, increased internal trade and interconnectedness of localities – interacting with declining levels of living – may have affected the distribution and timing of mortality."

Following the lead of Smith, several factors may have contributed to why diseases continued to recur in San Felipe Neri despite the observed seasonality. First, the colonial government's ineffective program for disease control which was worsened by the native's attitude towards vaccination. This is illustrated by deaths due to *viruelas* (smallpox). During 1805, vaccine for smallpox was already available in the Philippines. However, during the late nineteenth century, an effective program for vaccination was not the priority of the colonial government. Its main efforts may have been directed to quelling the revolution. In addition, the natives believed that smallpox would eventually go away as rainy days came, so vaccination seemed unnecessary. In hindsight, an effective vaccination program averted deaths due to smallpox as evidenced by its eradication in the 1980s.

Second, diseases may be prevalent because of poverty (de Bevoise, 1995). Individuals at the bottom of the socio-economic scale in any society are at a greater risk for infection and have the least access to the health care system. The opening of the Philippines to international trade in the nineteenth century might have brought new wealth but this was concentrated among the newly emerging middle class, leaving the poor unable to rise from their socio-economic status.

Third, topography of the place may cause diseases. The city of Manila and its bordering provinces namely, Bataan, Bulacan, Pampanga and Rizal, are situated at a low and extensive plain bordering upon the bay and inclining towards it. Pampanga and the Pasig River drain the area. Along the banks of these rivers, many small towns (including San Felipe Neri) thrived. A number of these places are below sea level and are flooded during periods of high tide. Prior to the construction of sanitary sewers in Manila, it was considered one of the unhealthiest cities in the Orient. Manila had ill-smelling moats, broken sewers, unsanitary latrines and infected cistern water. Drainage was

defective in the towns that bordered the bay. The soil was constantly damp, thus making the antiseptic action of the actinic rays of the sun almost ineffective. This resulted in a condition that favors the growth of organisms that thrive in water (Bantug, 1953).

Lastly, certain habits of Filipinos contributed to the spread of diseases. Garbage and refuse thrown directly into the rivers together with eating with bare fingers without washing them first gave rise to infections by direct means. The custom of visiting the sick and the celebration of the *katapusan* upon the death of a sick person made the house, where the celebration, was held a focus of infection in the spread of diseases (Bantug, 1953). Relatives and friends of the deceased usually attended the katapusan, done nine days after the death of the person. During *katapusan*, prayers for the soul of the deceased were offered. Usually, a feast followed. Utensils used during the feast may not have been properly disinfected. All this may result in the spread of infection that can cause others to become ill.

CONCLUSION

Parish records, along with other records like *vecindarios, are* a rich source of data that demographic historians may use to further the writing of local history. The everyday deaths studied in this paper have supported a description of nineteenth century San Felipe Neri. Scrutinizing details in each burial entry made it possible to answer questions such as who composed the parish, *indios, mestizos de sangley* or *mestizos de Español*? Which age group was most vulnerable to death? Did males live longer than females? How can we describe the *Dons* and *Doñas* during that time? What kinds of burials were given to deceased persons? What were the possible reasons for their deaths? Burial records may provided a limited view of the real causes of death during the late-nineteenth century but they do contain much of value to the demographic and social historian.

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